

## Developed India@2047 Is a National Commitment: LG Manoj Sinha

LG Calls on Youth to Lead in AI, Urges Campuses to Become Innovation Hubs

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEB 17: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday called for a transformative overhaul of educational campuses to realise the vision of Developed India@2047, asserting that the country must strive to become a global leader in emerging technologies rather than remain a passive participant.

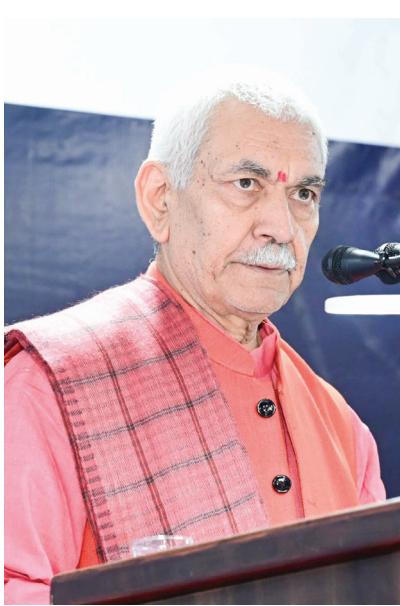
Addressing the valedictory function of the 48-hour national-level Hackathon "Innovation 1.0" at University of Jammu, the Lieutenant Governor said Developed India@2047 is not merely a slogan but a solemn commitment and a promise to future generations.

"Youth of India are not standing on the sidelines watching the future unfold; they are the architects and builders of what comes next," he said, adding that

pathbreaking innovations, fresh ideas and cutting-edge research possess the power to reshape the nation's destiny.

The Hackathon, organised by the Skill, Incubation, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Centre (SIIEDC), focused on five thematic pillars—Artificial Intelligence, Cyber-Physical Systems, Sustainability, Health-Tech and Responsible Tourism—areas the Lieutenant Governor described as central to India's developmental journey.

Highlighting the rapidly evolving technological landscape, he observed that skills guaranteeing employability just a few years ago are fast becoming obsolete. Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Blockchain, Quantum Computing and Synthetic Biology are no longer distant concepts but defining forces of the present era.



He emphasised the need for classrooms to transition from passive learning environments to centres of active creation. "The question is no longer 'What do you know?' but 'What can you build?' Institutions must shift the spotlight from individual brilliance to interdisciplinary teamwork," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor also underlined the importance of cultivating entrepreneurial spirit, strengthening startup ecosystems and bridging the gap between prototypes and market-ready products. He urged young innovators to convert relevant ideas into viable commercial solutions capable of uplifting society and driving national progress.

Stressing responsible technological advancement, he said AI tools should augment and amplify human

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## Restoration of Statehood for J&K Soon: Arjun Meghwal

Union Law Minister Reiterates Centre's Commitment; CM Omar Says Talks With Centre Ongoing

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES



SRINAGAR, FEB 17: Union Minister for Law and Justice Arjun Meghwal on Tuesday said that a decision on the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir would be taken soon, drawing a cautious yet hopeful response from Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

Speaking to reporters after attending a function at the Sher-i-Kashmir International

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## Omar Thanks Amit Shah as 14 Tourist Destinations Reopen in J&K

CM Says Move Will Revive Tourism, Ease Losses for Locals

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, FEB 17: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday expressed gratitude to Union Home Minister Amit Shah for facilitating the reopening of 14 tourist destinations across the Union Territory that had been shut following last year's Pahalgam terror attack.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a function in Srinagar, Abdullah said he had raised the issue of reopening the tourist spots during his



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### J&K GST Collections Cross Rs 24,000 Cr in Three Years; IGST Share Nears Rs 16,000 Cr

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEB 17: Jammu and Kashmir recorded a consistent rise in Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections over the past three financial years, with total revenue reaching Rs 24,080.79 crore, Chief Minister Omar

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## J&K Govt Asserts Legal Safeguards for Migrants' Land, Defends 2022 PM Package Order

Deputy CM tells House No Illegal Acquisitions Reported; 1,263 Migrant Registration Cases Under Review, 75 Pending Verification

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEB 17: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Tuesday asserted that no land belonging to Kashmiri migrants has been acquired in violation of prescribed legal procedures, reiterating its commitment to protecting the rights and interests of the displaced community.

Replying to a starred question raised by CPI(M) legislator M Y Tarigami in the Assembly, Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary said that as

per the report of the Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, all land acquisitions in the Valley are undertaken strictly in accordance with applicable laws, including prior notification and due verification.

He was responding on behalf of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who holds charge of the Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (DMRR) department.

Addressing concerns over a June 2022

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## SIA Charges Two in Online Radicalisation Case Linked to HM

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 17: The State Investigation Agency (SIA) Kashmir on Tuesday filed a comprehensive chargesheet before a competent court against two individuals accused of propagating secessionist and pro-terror content linked to the banned outfit Hizbul Mujahideen.

In a statement, the agency identified the accused as Altaf Hussain Wagay of Reban Gund Behram in Shopian and Shabir Ahmad Sheikh of Rampur, Qaimoh in Kulgam, who is presently operating from across the border. The duo has been booked for their alleged involvement in unlawful and anti-

national activities connected to the proscribed organisation.

According to the SIA, the case relates to the dissemination of anti-national, secessionist and pro-terror propaganda through various social media platforms with the intent to radicalise youth and disturb public order in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

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## Six Policemen Suspended After Gangster, Two Pak Nationals Escape from Jammu Juvenile Home

DGP Nalin Prabhat Orders Probe as Massive Manhunt Launched; Security Lapses Under Scanner

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

JAMMU, FEB 17: Six police personnel, including an Assistant Sub-Inspector, were suspended on Tuesday for alleged dereliction of duty after three inmates—a local gangster and two Pakistan nationals—escaped from a juvenile home in the R S Pura sector of Jammu, officials said.

The escape occurred around 5:15 pm on Monday when Karanjeet Singh alias Gugga, a resident of Dablehar in R S Pura, along with Pakistan citizens Mohammad Suna-ullah and Ahsan Anwar, allegedly attacked on-duty police personnel before fleeing the facility. Two policemen sustained injuries during the scuffle.

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## Omar Abdullah Reviews Ramadan Preparedness, Calls for Seamless Public Services Across J&K

Directs Departments to Ensure Uninterrupted Power, Water, Healthcare, Transport and Strict Market Regulation During Holy Month

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 17: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday chaired a high-level meeting to review arrangements for the forthcoming holy month of Ramadan, directing all departments to work in close coor-



dination to ensure uninterrupted public services across Jammu and Kashmir.

Stressing the significance of efficient governance during the sacred month of fasting, the Chief Minister instructed authorities to adopt

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### Warm Winter Grip Tightens: J&K Records Above-Normal Temperatures, Dry Spell to Persist

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 17: Jammu and Kashmir continued to reel under an unusual warm spell on Monday, with both day and night temperatures remaining significantly above seasonal averages and no major rain or snowfall forecast till the end of February.

According to the Meteorological Department, minimum temperatures were recorded 1-5°C above normal at scattered places in the Kashmir region, while several locations in the Jammu division saw night temperatures 2-3°C higher than the usual levels.

The coldest night in the Valley was recorded at Pahalgam, where the mercury

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# DC Srinagar reviews preparations for forthcoming Ramzan ul Mubarak

Calls for proactive measures to ensure uninterrupted essential services for smooth observance of holy month

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR, FEB 17:** In connection with forthcoming Holy month of Ramzaan ul Mubarak, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo on Tuesday chaired a comprehensive meeting of District and Sectoral Officers here at Meeting Hall of DC Office Complex to review preparedness and finalize arrangements to ensure smooth and hassle-free observance of the auspicious month across the district.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Intiyaz Ul Aziz, Superintendent of Police, Umar Shah, Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Superintending Engineer R&B, Shabir Ahmad, Superintending Engineer SMC, Sajad Ahmad Kawoosa, SDM, West, Irfan Bahadur, SDM East, Zubair Ahmad, Executive Engineers of KPDC, PHE, SMC, R&B, all Tehsildars, Senior Officers from all concerned Departments and representatives from J&K Wakf Board.

At the outset, the DC sought a detailed action plan from the concerned departments regard-

ing arrangements related to electricity, water supply, essential commodities, sanitation, transport, parking and medical facilities during the holy month.

The DC directed the KPDCL engineers to ensure uninterrupted power supply, particularly during Sehri and Iftari hours. The PHE Department was asked to make proactive arrangements for adequate drinking water supply across all areas of the district.

Similarly, the FCS&CA Department was instructed to ensure sufficient availability of essential commodities, including ration and LPG, and to maintain government-approved rates in the markets. He stressed the deployment of special teams under the supervision of SDM East and SDM West to conduct market inspections to curb profiteering and hoarding and to maintain quality standards of food items.

The DC also instructed the Assistant Commissioner Food Safety, AD FCS&CA and Tehsildars to keep strict vigil on the quality of chicken, meat, milk, vegetables, fruits and other daily consumables to prevent adulteration in Srinagar markets.



The SMC authorities were directed to conduct special san-

itation and cleanliness drives in all areas and prominent Masjids and Shrines, besides instructions were given that all defunct street-lights be restored on war footing in all areas.

Regarding road repairs and filling of potholes, the DC asked concerned departments to immediately identify and address spots requiring urgent attention, especially roads leading to major venues of religious congregations.

He further directed that adequate public transport arrangements be ensured during evening hours for the convenience of the public. The Health Department was instructed to make necessary medical arrangements as per past practice throughout the district.

During the meeting, the DC was apprised of the arrangements being made by the Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board for smooth observance of religious obligations during the holy month, when thousands of devotees are expected to visit shrines.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Commissioner extended his warm greetings to the people on the commencement of the holy month of Ramzan-ul-Mubarak.

## KU holds ANRF-MoES sponsored geological field workshop

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR FEB 17:** The Department of Earth Sciences (DES), University of Kashmir (KU), organised a two-day ANRF and MoES sponsored Pre-INQUA Geological Field Workshop.

Conceived as an academic and field-based preparatory platform for the forthcoming conference of the International Union for Quaternary Research (INQUA), scheduled to be held in 2027 at the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences, the workshop aimed to align Quaternary observations from the Kashmir Valley with global research priorities.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Dean Research, KU, Prof. Mohammad Sultan Bhat, emphasised the



urgent need for systematic identification, documentation, and preservation of Karewa deposits and associated Quaternary archives.

"They are important in reconstructing the palaeogeological and palaeoclimatic history of the Kashmir Valley," he said.

He also assured full institutional support for safeguarding this geological heritage and proposed the development of a formal MoU with the Geological Survey of India (GSI) to strengthen coordinated research, technical collaboration, and long-term conservation of these nationally significant deposits.

Dr. Vinod Kumar, Director, GSI Jammu Division, in his keynote address, highlighted the national relevance of Kashmir's Quaternary sequences for understanding climate variability, geomorphic evolution, and environmental change. Dr. Abdul Qayoom Paul, Director, GSI Kashmir Division, stressed on the importance of sustained institutional linkages between academia and national geoscientific agencies for advancing high-quality field research and heritage conservation.

Dr. Reyaz Ahmad Dar, faculty at DES KU, in his welcome address, outlined the scientific significance of the Kashmir Valley's Quaternary archives and the objectives of the Pre-INQUA initiative.

The workshop featured extensive field excursions to key palaeoclimate archives and classic Quaternary sections of the Kashmir Valley. On day one participants visited Wanihama and Makhai Bagh LPS (Dilpur Formation) of Late Quaternary age. Day two included visits to the type sections of the Lower and Upper Karewa, including the Nagum section (type section of Methowin and Pampore Members), the Khan Sahib section (type section of the Dilpur Formation), and the Waterhail section representing the Dubjan and Rambiera Members of the Lower Karewa. Field discussions and on-site interpretations were facilitated by resource persons including Dr. Reyaz Ahmad Dar, Dr. Rayees A. Shah, Dr. Vinod Kumar, Dr. Abdul Qayoom Paul, Dr. Malik Zubair Ahmad, Dr. Sarah Qazi, Dr. Wasem Qader, and Dr. Omar J. Paul.

The inaugural session concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Malik Zubair Ahmad, co-organising secretary of the event.

Participants from various universities, IITs, national research institutes, and colleges across the country attended the workshop.

## Tele-law benefits 7.5 lakh people in J&K under 'Disha Scheme': Secretary Justice Gol, Niraj Verma

'Ensuring accessible, affordable and timely justice for last person in queue remains our core objective'

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

**SRINAGAR, FEB 17:** Secretary (Justice), Government of India, Niraj Verma on Tuesday said that over 7.5 lakh people in Jammu & Kashmir have directly benefited from the Tele-Law programme under the Disha Scheme, aimed at strengthening access to justice in remote and underserved areas.

He was speaking at a regional event-cum-workshop on Tele-Law activities organised by the Department of Justice, Ministry of Law & Justice, at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC) here.

Addressing the gathering, Secretary Verma, as per the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said Jammu & Kashmir is not only geographically distinctive but also a profound embodiment of India's pluralistic constitutional spirit, enriched by its shared cultural heritage and strong community values.

He expressed gratitude to the Union Law Minister for his visionary leadership in shaping and advancing the Disha Scheme and thanked the Chief Minister and the Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh for their presence, terming it a reflection of collective com-

mitment towards strengthening legal awareness and access to justice.

"Our Constitution assures every citizen justice, social, economic and political. However, the real challenge lies in translating these constitutional promises into lived realities, particularly for citizens residing in remote and underserved areas," Verma said.

He said ensuring that justice is accessible, affordable and timely for the last person standing in the queue remains the central objective of the Department of Justice. "It is with this vision that Disha, Designing Innovative Solutions for Holistic Access to Justice was conceptualised," he added.

Recalling Article 39A of the Constitution, the Secretary Verma said the Department of Justice had earlier implemented a special project for the North-East and Jammu & Kashmir from 2012 to 2017 to enhance legal awareness among the poor and marginalised, including undertrial prisoners.

"Legal aid was extended through law colleges and by establishing village-based legal clinics to ensure grassroots outreach."

Building upon that foundation, he said several impactful programmes are presently underway under the

Disha Scheme, including Tele-Law, Nyaya Bandhu, Pro Bono Legal Services and various legal awareness initiatives.

"In Jammu & Kashmir alone, the Tele-Law programme has directly benefited over 7.5 lakh beneficiaries by providing timely pre-litigation legal advice through a robust network of 4,193 Common Service Centres and panel lawyers," he said.

Verma also informed that during the workshop, a comprehensive presentation titled "Disha in Jammu & Kashmir" would be made, highlighting the progress, outreach and impact of Tele-Law and associated initiatives in the Union Territory. "The presentation, he said, would provide valuable insights into the scheme's performance, beneficiary reach and efforts to strengthen grassroots justice delivery mechanisms."

He also extended gratitude to delegates, officers, stakeholders and field functionaries for their active participation in the regional workshop.

"Together, let us continue working towards strengthening access to justice, deepening legal awareness and upholding the constitutional values that form the foundation of our democracy, especially for the citizens of Jammu & Kashmir," he said—(KNO)

## Locals, tourists welcome reopening of Doodhpathri after 10 months

Tea stall owners, pony walas, traders thank LG administration; visitors 'feel safe & happy'

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

**BUDGAM, FEB 17:** The scenic tourist destination of Doodhpathri in central Kashmir's Budgam district reopened on Tuesday after remaining closed for nearly 10 months, bringing relief and renewed hope to hundreds of families dependent on tourism.

The reopening was announced by the Lieutenant Governor through a post on his official X handle, following which tourists began arriving at the meadow destination.

Locals, including tea stall owners, pony walas, guides, and small traders, welcomed the move and expressed gratitude to the LG-led administration for resuming

tourism activities.

Speaking to the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO), several residents said the prolonged closure had severely affected their earnings, as the majority of families in the area rely directly or indirectly on tourism. "We are highly thankful to the LG administration for reopening Doodhpathri. For the past 10 months, we had no source of income. Our livelihood depends entirely on tourists," said a local tea stall owner.

Pony service providers said the decision has brought hope to many families. "We earn only when tourists visit. With the reopening, we expect our income to improve. We assure the admin-

istration that we will follow all rules and cooperate fully," a pony wala said.

A couple from Maharashtra, who were among the first visitors to reach Doodhpathri after the reopening, said they were happy to see the destination accessible again.

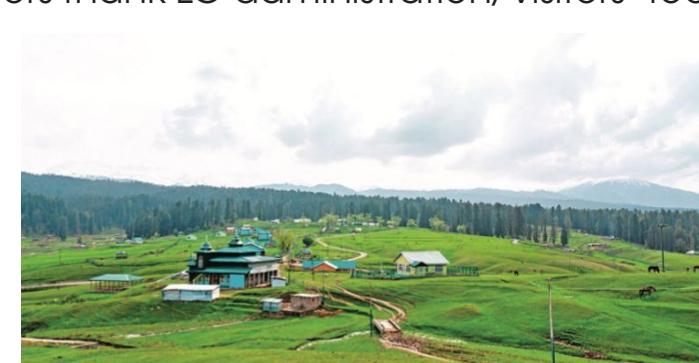
"We feel safe and very happy to be here. We thank the Government of India and the Jammu and Kashmir administration for reopening this beautiful place," the couple told KNO, adding that the atmosphere was peaceful and

security arrangements appeared satisfactory.

Local shopkeepers shared similar sentiments, stating that the reopening will revive economic activity in Doodhpathri.

They said there is no need to politicise the issue and credited the administration for taking the decision in the interest of the public. "We welcome this step wholeheartedly and will ensure that all guidelines are strictly followed to maintain safety and discipline," another local said.

With the reopening of Doodhpathri, residents hope tourist footfall will increase in the coming days, helping the area's tourism sector regain momentum—(KNO)



## Tourism resumes at Wular Lake, locals eye economic recovery

Shikara operators, vendors look to recover losses after months of shutdown

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

**BANDIPORA, FEB 17:** Wular Lake in north Kashmir's Bandipora district has reopened to tourists after nearly ten months, bringing relief to locals and raising hopes of economic revival for hundreds of families dependent on tourism-related activities.

As per the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the reopening follows an announcement by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha that 14 tourist destinations across Jammu and Kashmir would be reopened in a phased manner. The sites had been closed after last year's attack in Pahalgam, which impacted tourist inflow and local businesses.

Residents around Wular Lake said the move has brought relief to hundreds of families reliant on shikara rides, eateries, handicrafts, and guiding services.

"For months, there was no work and no income. We survived on savings and loans. Now we are hopeful that tourists will return," said Fayaz Ahmad, a Shikara operator.

Manzoor Ahmad, who runs a tea stall near the lakeshore, said the closure had brought business to a standstill. "The day the lake was shut, our earnings stopped. Reopening means we can restart our lives again," he said.

Another boatman, Ghulam Nabi, said the local economy is directly linked to visitor numbers. "If tourists come in good numbers during the summer, it will compensate for the losses we suffered," he added.

Shabir Hussain, a handicrafts seller, said many artisans were forced to look for daily-wage work during the shutdown. "Tourism is our primary source of livelihood. We want consistent policies so that such long closures do not happen again," he said.

Visitors also expressed optimism. "Wular is one of the most beautiful lakes in Kashmir. It should remain accessible with proper security and facilities," said Rukhsana Bano, a local visitor.

Residents urged authorities to improve road connectivity, sanitation, and visitor amenities around the lake to unlock its full tourism potential.

"We need better infrastructure so that tourists stay longer and spend more time here," said a local hotel owner, adding that steady footfall would help restore economic stability in the region—(KNO)

## DC Srinagar visits GBMS Baghat Shoor to oversee infrastructural upgradation works

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 17:** Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo on Tuesday undertook a visit to Government Boys Middle School (GBMS), Baghat Shoor at Lal Bazar to oversee the progress of ongoing infrastructural upgradation works.

Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Imtiyaz Ul Aziz; Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar; Superintending Engineer, R&B Circle North, Shabir Ahmad; Chief Education Officer, Ghulam Mohi-Ud Din; Executive Engineer, R&B Division Core, Arif Rehman Hazari; Tehsildar, Eidgah, Mohammad Iqbal Zargar and other concerned accompanied the DC during the visit.

On the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner took stock of the ongoing works and inspected various



### DLSA Kulgam organises awareness programme on LADC Scheme

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**KULGAM, FEBRUARY 17:** In compliance with the directions of the Jammu & Kashmir Legal Services Authority, an interaction-cum-awareness programme was organized by the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Kulgam, on the Legal Aid Defence Counsel (LADC) Scheme, 2022 here at Rest House, Chawalgam, Kulgam.

The objective of the programme was to create awareness among investigating officers (IOs) of District Police Kulgam and other stakeholders about the provisions, objectives, and functioning of the Legal Aid Defence Counsel Scheme, which aims to provide competent and effective legal representation to eligible accused persons.



During the session, resource persons LADC's Kulgam highlighted the importance of the scheme in ensuring fair trials and timely legal assistance. They also discussed the role and responsibilities of investigating officers in facilitating the legal aid process and coordinating with defence counsels appointed under the scheme.

Various investigating officers from different police units participated in the programme and interacted with the resource persons, seeking clarifications on procedural aspects of the scheme.

The participants appreciated the initiative and emphasized the need for such awareness programmes to strengthen coordination between legal aid institutions and law enforcement agencies.

### DTF conducts inspection under Pan India Rescue and Rehabilitation Campaign in Bandipora

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**BANDIPORA, FEBRUARY 17:** The District Task Force (DTF) on Tuesday carried out a comprehensive inspection drive across multiple establishments in Block Bankoot Bandipora district as part of the ongoing Pan India Rescue and Rehabilitation Campaign aimed at eliminating child labour and safeguarding Child Rights.

The inspection was conducted in various bakery establishments, shops, automobile workshops, and service stations across different areas of Block Bankoot.

The drive was jointly undertaken by members of Mission Vatsalya, Labour Department, and District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Bandipora.

During the course of the inspection, the team found one minor engaged in work at a bakery unit. Acting promptly, the officials rescued the child from the establishment and provided on-the-spot counselling to address immediate concerns regarding his well-being and rights. Authorities confirmed that necessary follow-up measures are being initiated to ensure the child's safety,



rehabilitation, and long-term protection.

Officials stated that under Mission Vatsalya, efforts will be made to streamline the rescued child into the formal education system. The initiative aims to ensure that the child resumes schooling and is provided with necessary support services, including counselling and guidance to facilitate reintegration into society.

The owner of the bakery unit has been directed to appear before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC).

In addition to enforcement measures, the DTF members also conducted an awareness and sensitization campaign during the inspection drive.

Shopkeepers, business owners, and general public were informed about the legal implications of engaging children in labour and were sensitized about the provisions of labour laws and the Juvenile Justice Act.

The team urged all stakeholders to strictly comply with child protection regulations and to report any instances of child labour to the concerned authorities.

### SANKALP-HEW Bandipora organises awareness programme on POSH Act, SHe-Box Portal & NMBA

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**BANDIPORA, FEBRUARY 17:** An awareness programme was successfully organized by SANKALP-HEW Bandipora at Chandagi, a far-flung area of the district with SHG members focusing on the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act), SHe-Box Portal, and Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA).

The programme aimed to sensitize participants about workplace safety, grievance redressal mechanisms, and the importance of a drug-free society.

The officials from the SANKALP-HEW emphasized the importance of creating a safe and respectful working environment and encouraged women to come forward without fear or hesitation. Awareness was generated about the Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan.

On the occasion, the harmful effects of drug abuse on individuals, families, and society were discussed in detail.



Participants were motivated to pledge their support for a drug-free society and to act as ambassadors of positive change in their communities.

Pamphlets containing information about SANKALP-HEW were distributed among the participants to reinforce awareness and ensure wider

dissemination of information.

The programme concluded with an interactive question-and-answer session, where participants actively engaged with the speakers and clarified their doubts. The event was appreciated by all attendees for its informative and impactful content.

### Regional Director Land Records Baramulla reviews Digitization Progress in Kupwara

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**KUPWARA, FEBRUARY 17:** Regional Director, Land Records, Baramulla, Riyaz Ahmad Sofi, today conducted a detailed review of the progress under the ongoing digitization programme in District Kupwara.

During the meeting, the Regional Director assessed the status of digitization of land

records, scanning of revenue documents, data verification, and updating of cadastral maps under the Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP). He emphasized accuracy, transparency, and timely completion of the process to strengthen public service delivery.

The Regional Director stressed maintaining data



integrity and directed field functionaries to expedite pending entries strictly as per guidelines. He further instructed officers to enhance coordination among revenue officials to resolve discrepancies and ensure smooth implementation.

Highlighting the benefits of digitization, he stated that the initiative will improve transparency, reduce litigation,

prevent tampering of records, and enable citizens to conveniently access land-related documents online.

The meeting was attended by ADC Kupwara, Gulzar Ahmad Khan; ADC Handwara, Javed Naseem Masoodi; ACR Kupwara, Peerzada Mumtaz Ahmad; SDM Lolab, Dr. Mudassir Ahmad; Tehsildar Kupwara, Niyaz Ahmad, and other concerned officials.

The DC emphasized importance of proactive handholding and coordinated efforts by all stakeholders to ensure that aspiring entrepreneurs receive necessary guidance, credit support.

The meeting was attended by ADDC Kupwara, Mufti Fareed ud din, Lead District Manager, Cluster Head JK Bank, AD Employment, Branch Managers of various banks, and other concerned officers.

### Dubjan Hosts Grand Dubjan Winter Carnival 2026 in Shopian, Showcasing Culture, Snow Sports, and Local Tourism Boost

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**SHOPIAN, FEBRUARY 17:** The scenic locale of Dubjan in Shopian today came alive with colour, culture and enthusiasm as Winter Carnival-II 2026 was organised and celebrated with great fervour by the Department of Tourism in collaboration with District Administration Shopian.

The event was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta in presence of district administration officers and officials from various departments.

The venue was beautifully

decorated and all arrangements ensured smooth conduct of the mega event. Marking the formal inauguration, the Deputy Commissioner released pigeons into the air as a symbol of peace, harmony and communal brotherhood, drawing applause from the gathering. At the outset, the Deputy Commissioner inspected the stalls of various departments showcasing their schemes and initiatives for public awareness and outreach. On the occasion, a bike rally was also flagged off by the Deputy Commissioner along with senior officers. Cultural programmes



presented by the Tourism department, District Information Centre Shopian, students of various educational institutions added vibrancy and traditional charm to the carnival.

The Sports Department organized several thrilling activities including tug of war, martial arts demonstrations, races and other competitions, witnessing enthusiastic participation of youth and local residents.

The event witnessed a large turnout of visitors who appreciated the coordinated efforts of the District Administration and Tourism Department in making Winter

Carnival-II a grand success at Dabjan.

The successful conduct of Winter carnival-II at Dabjan is district's growing reputation as a winter tourism destination and the collective efforts of district administration and local community in making the event more attractive and memorable.

The Winter carnival-II was widely appreciated as a significant initiative towards promoting Dabjan as emerging winter destination, strengthening tourism outreach and opening new avenues for local economic growth.

Traditional folk songs, music skit and cultural performances enthralled the audience and showcased the rich heritage and talent of the region. Various other recreational and adventure activities including horse riding, skiing, snow boarding, snow tubing, snowmobile rides and paragliding attracted youth and visitors in large numbers.

ADDC, Dr. Nasir Ahmad Lone; SSP Traffic Rural Kashmir, Ravinder Paul Singh; ADC, Dr. Zakir Hussain Faaz, civil and police officers besides a large number of people participated in the event.

# CEO Anantnag organizes awareness program on 'Road Safety Measures'

■ **HT NEWS NETWORK**

**ANANTNAG, FEBRUARY 17:** In a landmark initiative aimed at reinforcing student safety and promoting holistic development, the Chief Education Office (CEO), Anantnag successfully organized a comprehensive One-Day Awareness cum Sensitization Program "Road Safety Measures" along with an intensive Training Session on "Safeguarding of Mental Well-being of Students" at the Auditorium of Government Boys Model Higher Secondary School Bijbehara.

The programme was conducted for Teacher Counsellors, HOIs, and key educational stakeholders from across District Anantnag.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Education Officer, Anantnag delivered a comprehensive and inspiring address, highlighting the dual responsibility of schools in ensuring both physical safety and psychological well-being of students. He urged all HOIs and Teacher Counsellors to strictly enforce road safety norms within and outside school premises,



conduct sustained awareness drives, promote student-led safety campaigns, and institutionalize structured counselling

frameworks.

He further stressed that safeguarding the mental well-being of students, particularly adolescents navigating complex social and emotional transitions, is not merely desirable but an educational imperative in today's rapidly evolving environment.

The District Education Planning Officer, Anantnag underscored the alarming rise in road accidents involving youth and the growing mental health challenges among adolescents. He emphasized that educational institutions must serve as catalysts in shaping responsible road users while fostering emotionally resilient learners.

The technical session was conducted by experts from Jammu and Kashmir Traffic Police (Unit Anantnag), and the ARTO Office Anantnag. Detailed presentations were delivered on critical road safety measures including compliance with traffic rules, mandatory helmet and seatbelt usage, prevention of under-age driving, pedestrian safety practices, road signage awareness, and the proactive role of educational

institutions in minimizing road mishaps.

On the occasion, topper students of the online essay writing and painting competitions on Road Safety Measures were felicitated, recognizing their creativity and commitment towards promoting a culture of responsible road use.

Real-life case studies and district-level statistical insights were shared to sensitize participants about the gravity of traffic violations and the urgent need for collective vigilance.

The another session focused on mental health and student well-being. Experts from Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences Kashmir and Sub-District Hospital Bijbehara, conducted comprehensive and interactive deliberations. The sessions covered adolescent development, emotional vulnerabilities, stress management, behavioural concerns, early identification of anxiety and depression, crisis response mechanisms, and the importance of empathetic and confidential counselling practices within schools.

**No plans to de-notify Seer-Hamdan Municipal Committee: Govt**

■ **HT NEWS NETWORK**

**SRINAGAR FEB 17 :** The government informed the Legislative Assembly today that there is no proposal to de-notify the Seer-Hamdan Municipal Committee.

Relying on behalf of the Chief Minister, Minister for Education Sakeena Itoo informed the House that the process of notifying Seer-Hamdan as a Municipal Committee (MC) began in 1996 following recommendations of the District Development Commissioner, Anantnag.

After completing the necessary formalities, she said, a notification inviting objections to declare Seer-Hamdan as a town was issued vide SRO-190 dated 11-07-2005 and subsequently, Seer-Hamdan was notified as a Municipal Committee vide SRO-290 dated 04-07-2006.

"Since creation of the Municipal Committee, significant infrastructure development has taken place in the town," the Minister informed the House during Question Hour of the ongoing Budget Session of the J&K Legislative Assembly.

In reply to a query raised by MLA Anantnag East Reyaz Ahmad Khan, she stated that the projected current population of Seer-Hamdan is approximately 11,064, compared to 8,233 recorded in Census 2011, reflecting steady demographic growth.

Highlighting the town's strategic and developmental importance, she said Seer-Hamdan lies on the route to the Shri Amarnathji Shrine. She added that the broader policy framework across the country envisages strengthening and upgrading the Urban Local Bodies, including the transition from rural to urban status and from Municipal Committees to Municipal Councils.

Further, she said that during the Municipal Elections 2018 and subsequent By-Elections 2020, all wards of MC Seer-Hamdan elected their respective representatives, reflecting sustained public participation in urban governance.

The Assembly was also informed that Municipal Committee Shangus was de-notified by the Government vide SRO-126 dated 22-03-2013.

Following its abolition, the Minister said, regular staff borne on establishment of the Municipal Committee at the time of de-notification was redeployed to the nearby Municipal Institutions for optimal utilization of their services. Movable assets of the erstwhile Municipal Committee were also distributed or transferred to other Municipal Institutions/offices as per functional requirements.

At the time of abolition of MC Shangus, she said, ten (10) CPWs (Sweepers) were working in the Committee who had been engaged purely on a temporary and need basis, and such engagement did not confer any right or claim for regular appointment.

However, she added that after five years of abolition of the Municipal Committee, these 10 CPWs approached the High Court by filing SWP No. 2050/2018 titled Mohammad Ashiq Sheikh & Others vs. State of J&K seeking absorption/engagement as sweepers, which is not being considered.

MLA Pahalgam Altaf Ahmed Wani raised supplementary question, which was replied to by the Minister.

## Free vaccination campaigns held across Bandipora district to prevent post-calamity disease outbreaks among livestock: Government

■ **HT NEWS NETWORK**

**JAMMU, FEBRUARY 17:** The Government today informed the House that free vaccination campaigns were held across Bandipora district to prevent disease outbreaks among livestock after the last year's floods and natural calamities.

This was stated by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary, while replying on behalf of the Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, to a question raised by Legislator Nizamuddin Bhat in the Legislative Assembly today.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that the Department of Animal/Sheep Husbandry conducted free vaccination campaigns with 100 percent coverage



against Foot and Mouth Disease, Lumpy Skin Disease, Haemorrhagic Septicemia and Black Quarter.

He added that free deworming medicines were distributed among the livestock owners to prevent post-calamity disease outbreaks.

The Deputy Chief Minister also stated that Rs. 42,250 for crop loss and Rs. 84,000 for livestock loss have been

paid to the farmers affected by 2025 floods in Bandipora district, under SDRF norms.

Providing details on the relief efforts, he stated that the damage to crops and livestock had been assessed by the concerned departments and verified by a committee, adding that crop loss was reported on 40 kanal of land, and the cases of 40 farmers had been processed for compensation.

The Deputy CM also said that the loss of livestock had been assessed for 21 beneficiaries. He added that for support of affected farmers, Mobile Veterinary Units had been kept operational through a toll-free helpline (1962), providing timely veterinary and livestock healthcare services at their doorsteps, he added.

## 100 % smart metering being implemented in MC Hiranagar under RDSS: Govt

■ **HT NEWS NETWORK**

**JAMMU, FEBRUARY 17** The government today informed that 100 percent smart metering is being implemented in the Municipal Committee (MC) Hiranagar under the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS).

Replying to a question raised by Legislator Vijay Kumar in the House today, Minister Javed Ahmad Rana informed that the smart meters have been installed for 77 percent of consumers in the Municipal Committee Hiranagar, while installation for the remaining consumers is currently under progress.

He was replying on behalf of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

The Minister said that the provision of uninterrupted power supply is contingent upon achieving 100 percent smart metering and reducing Aggregate Technical and Commercial (AT&C) losses below the threshold of 15 percent, as per the Load Curtailment Programme notified by the Department.

"Once 100 percent smart metering is achieved, all the consumers will be billed strictly on the basis of actual energy consumption recorded through smart meters and billing on a flat-rate basis will be completely discontinued," apprised the Minister.

The Minister said that under prevailing JERC Tariff Orders, only those consumers where smart meters are yet to be installed, are being billed on a flat-rate basis.

"This arrangement is purely temporary and shall continue only until smart meters are installed for all such consumers, where-after billing shall be undertaken exclusively on a metered basis in conformity with the regulations in force," he stated.

The Minister attributed the frequent power cuts to scheduled load curtailment under the Load Curtailment Programme (LCP), linked to Aggregate Technical and Commercial (AT&C) loss levels. Feeders with 15 to 40 percent billing efficiency face 3-hour cuts, while those above 40 percent face 6-hour cuts.

## House mourns demise of Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad Shah, Brij Mohan Sharma

■ **HT NEWS NETWORK**

**JAMMU, FEBRUARY 17:** The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly today paid tributes to former Minister Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad Shah and former MLC Brij Mohan Sharma on their demise.

While reading out the obituary references for the deceased public leaders, Speaker Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather termed Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad Shah as an able administrator with distinguished public career, both inside and outside of the Assembly.

He said Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad had many stints as Minister with the former governments headed by former Chief Minister Dr. Farooq Abdullah.

He stated that Peerzada was first elected to the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly from the Devsar Constituency in 1983 and served on several important Committees of the House, including the Public Accounts Committee, Public Undertakings Committee and Committee on Estimates. He was re-elected from the

same Constituency in 1987 and again in 1996.

The Speaker said that Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad Shah was a distinguished public figure and a committed Legislator who devoted his life to public service and welfare of the people. He was widely respected for his dedication, integrity and significant contribution towards development of his constituency and the Union Territory as a whole, maintained the Speaker.

During his distinguished public career, Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad Shah held several important positions. He served as Member of the Public Accounts Committee, Member of the State Transport Authority and Member of the Muslim Augaf Trust.

Paying his tributes to Late Brij Mohan Sharma, Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather said the deceased was humble and disciplined human being and always remained grounded.

Being a member of erstwhile Legislative Council from March 17, 2001, to March 16, 2007, the late leader performed this service purely for the sake of public welfare, without expecting any reward from anyone.

## DC Kathua reviews road safety measures on National Highway

On-ground assessment conducted; engineering and traffic management measures proposed

■ **HT NEWS NETWORK**

**KATHUA, FEBRUARY 17:** Deputy Commissioner Kathua, Rajesh Sharma, today chaired a meeting to review identified black spots on the National Highway passing through the district and to finalise a comprehensive proposal for submission to higher authorities seeking necessary intervention from stakeholders, including the National Highways Authority of India.

The meeting was informed

that a detailed on-ground inspection and technical assessment of accident-prone locations has been undertaken along the 39-kilometre stretch of the National Highway within the district. The exercise focused on identifying structural gaps, traffic management steps and other vulnerabilities contributing to road mishaps.

The committee members highlighted critical locations witnessing frequent accidents, particularly at cross sections, junctions, link roads, tunnels,

merging points and high-speed corridors. Emphasis was laid on traffic channelisation, installation of crash barriers and ensuring adequate lighting at vulnerable spots.

Deliberations were held on short-term measures such as installation of retro-reflective signages, road markings, speed calming interventions, caution boards and improving visibility at blind curves. Long-term engineering solutions, including geometric corrections, widening of

bottlenecks, construction of service lanes, strengthening of shoulders and redesigning of intersections, were also discussed.

The Deputy Commissioner

directed the concerned departments to compile field inputs, technical observations and photographic documentation into a detailed, time-bound proposal for

submission to higher authorities to facilitate approval and execution of major corrective works by the National Highways Authority of India.

He further stressed close coordination among PWD, Traffic Police, Transport Department and National Highway representatives to ensure immediate implementation of feasible safety measures, alongside continuous monitoring of identified black spots to assess

reduction in accident rates. Pertinently, a committee headed by the Superintending Engineer, PWD Kathua, with members including the Regional Transport Officer, District Traffic Inspector and representatives of the National Highways Authority of India, has been constituted to examine the black spots and recommend remedial measures to substantially curb road accidents along the National Highway stretch falling within the district.



HT EDITORIAL

Reopening of closed tourist spots welcomed by one and all

Political parties across the political spectrum of Jammu & Kashmir have welcomed the decision of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha of reopening 14 tourist destinations across the union territory. These tourist destinations were shut last year in April after the Baisaran-Pahalgam carnage in which 25 tourists and a local guide fell to the bullets of tourists and got killed. The incident evoked sharp criticism from the people as well as political parties with all demanding stern action against the attackers.

On Monday February 16, the Lieutenant Governor after thorough review of the law & order situation ordered the reopening of these tourist spots located in both the Kashmir and Jammu divisions. These tourist spots were temporarily closed as a precautionary measure and over the past few months the people in general and more so those associated with the tourism sector have been demanding the reopening of the closed tourist destinations. The decision to reopen these closed tourist spots has come as a big relief for these people.

In the Kashmir division 11 tourist spots have been ordered to be reopened with immediate effect. These include Yousmarg and Doodhpathri in Budgam; Dandipora Park in Kokernag, Anantnag; Peer Ki Gali, Dubjan and Padpawan in Shopian; Astanpora and Tulip Garden in Srinagar; Thajwas Glacier and Hung Park in Ganderbal and Wular/ Watlab in Baramulla. Three tourist spots in Jammu division- Devi Pindi in Reasi, Mahu Mangat in Ramban and Mughal Maidan in Kishtwar have been ordered to be reopened immediately.

In the order it has been said that three sites in Kashmir division Gurez and Athwato in Bani-dipora, Bangus in Kupwara and one site in Jammu division Ramkund in Ramban will be reopened once snow gets cleared. Given the fact that there has been negligent snowfall in the union territory during this winter one can expect that these three sites would be reopened very soon. As such there would be more options for both the locals as well as tourists to visit in both the Kashmir and Jammu divisions of the union territory.

One can hope that the upcoming tourist season would be a great one with no setbacks in store for the people. Since Kashmir is considered to be the 'Paradise on Earth' more and more people want to come and enjoy the hospitality at this place. Reopening of more tourist destinations means that more options would be available for the tourists to come and enjoy.

# The Mystic Sufi Saint Baba Payam-ud-Din Reshi



■ SAHIL MANZOOR

The Kashmir Valley is one of the most beautiful places in the world, where many mystics, spiritual and pious people, great religious preachers, and true followers of Allah's last Messenger, Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), came from different corners of the globe to preach his teachings to people of different sects, races, colours, sexes, and castes. There are thousands of great Islamic scholars who have played a pivotal role in guiding the people of Kashmir towards peace and prosperity and teaching them the righteous way of life.

Baba Payam-ud-Din Reshi was one of them, who played an immense role in guiding people towards the righteous path and worked tirelessly for the welfare of the people until his last breath.

Baba Payam-ud-Din was born in 1411 into a noble family. His father was a minister of the contemporary



ruler at Chander-Nau-Goan in the region of Lar. It is believed that Baba Payam-ud-Din was a nobleman of high rank and a respected dignitary in the royal court, and he lived a life of ease and luxury. However, he preferred the company of saints and sages and sought their blessings.

It is recorded that one day, while riding a horse, he saw a line of ants carrying food. He dismounted and observed the ants very carefully. He

reflected on how these tiny creatures were working hard to gather food for the winter. He realized that while even the small ants were preparing for the future, he himself was trapped in worldly glamour and was unmindful of life after death. The thought of the hereafter weighed heavily on his mind. As a result, he resigned from his position, renounced his worldly life, and went to Baba Zain-ud-Din Reshi (RA), who guided him towards

prayers and meditation.

Baba Zain-ud-Din (RA) was born into a non-Muslim family. His original name was Ziya Singh of Aishmuqam. He was one of the principal disciples of Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Noorani (RA), the first of the Rishis. Among his four famous disciples were Baba Bam-ud-Din "Nasar," Baba Nasar-ud-Din Reshi, Baba Zain-ud-Din Reshi, and Baba Latif-ud-Din Reshi (RA).

In his later years, on the instructions of Zain-ud-Din (RA), Baba Payam-ud-Din moved to the village of Ramboh. Like others of the Rishi order, he performed miracles, helped common people, and spread the message of faith. Baba Payam-ud-Din is famously known for building a fire oven (Daan — a Kashmiri word for fire oven) at his place. People came from far and wide to plaster his Daan and offer sacrifices. They still continue this tradition to seek the fulfillment of their wishes.

Baba Payam-ud-Din died on 3rd Zil Haj, 889 Hijri (according to the Islamic calendar), and was buried at a place 3 km from Tangmarg, near Gulmarg. People from all corners of Kashmir visit his shrine in large numbers to pay their respects and seek blessings.

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## Another great work done by the BRO!



■ BY M S NAZKI

Hello darkness, my old friend, I've come to talk with you again, because a vision softly creeping, left its seeds while I was sleeping, and the vision that was planted in my brain, still remains, within the sound of silence!

The Border Roads Organization works 24x7 but with sounds of silence!

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO), established on May 7, 1960, is a premier statutory body under India's Ministry of Defence that develops and maintains crucial road networks in border areas and friendly neighboring countries. Led by the Director General of Border Roads (DGBR), it ensures operational preparedness for the Armed Forces in challenging terrains.

### Key Aspects of the BRO:

**Mission:** To provide high-quality, strategic infrastructure, enhancing connectivity and defense capabilities in border regions.

**Scope:** Operates across 19 states and 3 union territories, with key projects in the North-East, Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh, along with international projects in Bhutan, Myanmar, and Tajikistan.

**Structure:** A unique amalgamation of civilian and military personnel (General Reserve Engineer Force - GREF).

**Achievements:** Constructed over 55,000 km of roads, 450+ bridges, and 19 airfields by 2022.

**Motto:** Shramena Sarvam Sadhyam (Everything is achievable through hard work).

With 18 projects, the BRO is considered the "Agency of Choice" for executing critical infrastructure in the nation's most challenging terrains.

The story which someone gave me was, swift response in extreme conditions! After heavy snowfall at Chattergala Pass, 69 RCC & 118 RCC of 35 BRTF under Project Sampark BRO India reopened the strategic Bhaderwah - Bani - Basohli road (J&K), restoring vital connectivity across the mountainous region. Despite deep snow and harsh terrain near Ashapati glacier & Kailash foothills, the 65 km stretch was cleared well ahead of schedule, ensuring safe movement of essential vehicles and commuters. All-weather connectivity, ensured!

But I decided to put in some more inputs into it and they go something like this:

Let us first talk about Project Sampark:

Project Sampark, established by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) on January 1, 1975, is a premier infrastructure project focused on constructing and maintaining strategic road networks in the border districts of Jammu and Kashmir, along with parts of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh. It manages over 3,000 km of roads, including critical high-altitude routes, facilitating military mobility and socio-economic development.

Key aspects of Project Sampark include:

**Strategic Connectivity:** It plays a vital role in connecting remote areas to the mainstream, improving security, and fostering regional development.

**Major Projects:** Known for building crucial infrastructure such as the Bhagal-Mohr-Gul, Basohli-Bani-Bhaderwah, and Nagrota byPass roads. It also handles critical tunnel works, such as the Bhimer Gali tunnel, and maintains key airfields like Rajouri.

**Operational Area:** The jurisdiction spans from the Pir Panjal Range in the north to Pathankot in the south, covering districts like Poonch, Rajouri, Jammu, Udhampur, and Doda.

Headquartered in Jammu, it is one of the oldest and most vital BRO projects in the region, focusing on strengthening the nation's border infrastructure.

About: Lt. General Harpal Singh, Director General BRO:

Lt Gen Harpal Singh assumed charge as the 29th Director General Border Roads (DGBR), marking the formal taking over of the reins of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).

Lt Gen Harpal Singh was commissioned into the Corps of Engineers in June 1991. During his illustrious career spanning more than three decades, he has held a wide range of command, staff and leadership appointments across diverse operational environments.

Prior to assuming the appointment of Director General Border Roads, the General Officer held a senior leadership appointment, wherein he made notable contributions towards strengthening engineering capabilities and infrastructure development, the BRO. On assuming charge the new DGBR lauded the tireless efforts, professionalism and commitment of all ranks and CPLs of BRO.

On the occasion of New Year 2026, DGBR conveyed his heartfelt greetings and best wishes to all personnel, saluting their steadfast service to the Nation and wishing everyone a safe, successful and fulfilling New Year.

Under the DGBR's dynamic and inspiring leadership, Border Roads Organisation will continue to scale greater heights and achieve bigger milestones, the spokesperson added further.

Raised on May 7, 1960, Border Roads Organisation has been at the forefront of developing strategic infrastructure in some of the most remote, inhospitable and challenging regions of the country.

In support of nation building and enhancement of the operational preparedness of the Armed Forces, BRO has constructed over 63,700 km of roads, 1,179 bridges, seven tunnels and twenty-two airfields, significantly contributing to improved connectivity and socio-economic development of border areas.

Working in the most challenging terrains and extreme weather conditions, BRO personnel consistently display unwavering dedication, resilience and high morale, strengthening critical infrastructure that directly contributes to national security and the socio-economic development of the Nation.

In restless dreams I walked alone, narrow streets of cobblestone, 'neath the halo of a street lamp. I turned my collar to the cold and damp, when my eyes were stabbed by the flash of a neon light, that split the night. And touched the sound of silence!.....A soldier from BRO!

The strategic Bhaderwah-Pathankot road was

restored for vehicular traffic on Sunday evening after remaining blocked for several hours due to a snow avalanche at Baingoth in Doda district, even as the 118 Roads Construction Company (RCC) of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) also reopened the Bhaderwah-Bani-Basohli National Highway following heavy snowfall at Chattergala Pass.

Chattergala Pass is a high-altitude mountain pass located at 3,200 meters in the Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir, connecting the Bani area (Kathua district) with Bhaderwah (Doda district). Situated in the Chamba-Doda mountain ranges, it offers scenic landscapes with alpine meadows, deep forests, and heavy snowfall, with a proposed km tunnel aimed at providing all-weather connectivity.

**Key Aspects of Chattergala Pass:**  
**Location & Connectivity:** The pass sits on the Bhaderwah-Chattergala axis in the Greater Himalayas. It acts as a vital link between the Kathua and Doda districts.

**Geography & Climate:** Known for its challenging terrain, the pass is often closed in winter due to heavy snow accumulation, sometimes requiring massive clearance operations by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).

**Infrastructure (Chattergala Tunnel):** A planned 6.8 km tunnel is expected to reduce travel time between Lakhnupur and Doda to four hours, significantly improving regional connectivity.

**Tourism & Biodiversity:** The region is known for its scenic, untouched beauty, alpine grasslands, and biodiversity, including wildlife like Himalayan Monal and Musk Deer. It is a part of the trekking route from Bani to Bhaderwah.

**Strategic Importance:** The pass is strategically significant for both local transportation and military logistics in the region.

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) plays a crucial role in Jammu & Kashmir by constructing and maintaining strategic roads, bridges, and tunnels under projects like Project Beacon and Project Sampark. They ensure year-round connectivity, including snow clearance on high-altitude passes like Zojila, facilitating both defense logistics and civilian access in challenging terrain.

**Key details regarding BRO's work in J&K:**  
**Infrastructure Development:** BRO manages over 2,963 Km of roads under Project Sampark and has constructed over 4,000 Km under Project Beacon, connecting remote areas.

**Strategic Projects:** Key projects include constructing, maintaining, and upgrading critical roads, bridges, and tunnels, such as the Mughal Road and Bhaderwah-Bani-Basohli road.

**Snow Clearance & Connectivity:** BRO, notably through Project Beacon, ensures the quick reopening of strategic passes like Zojila (achieving 32-day clearance in 2025) and maintains mountain passes to avoid isolation. **Socio-Economic Impact:** Projects like Beacon provide employment to over 7,000 locals, supporting regional development.

**Operational Challenges:** Working in high-altitude, mountainous, and harsh climatic conditions, including severe snow and avalanches, to ensure military and civilian connectivity.

The BRO's persistent work is integral to maintaining, connecting, and securing the border areas of Jammu & Kashmir.

# Rumi Nazir: The Quiet Revolution of a Young Woman from Pulwama



■ **SHAHNAWAZ NAZIR**

In the quiet village of Gulzarpura in South Kashmir's Pulwama district, where life moves to the rhythms of orchards, prayer calls, and close-knit community traditions, leadership is not something one easily associates with young women. Here, expectations are often modest, dreams carefully measured, and public life rarely designed for girls.

Yet from these very lanes emerged a voice that refused to be confined.

Rumi Nazir did not raise slogans or chase the spotlight. Instead, she built her path quietly — through education, discipline, and relentless consistency — until the same society that once questioned her presence began to celebrate her leadership.

Today, she stands as one of South Kashmir's most recognized youth leaders and advocates for women's empowerment, reshaping what possibility looks like for an entire generation.

Growing up in a socially conservative rural environment, Rumi's childhood was marked by the invisible boundaries that many Kashmiri girls understand too well. Mobility was limited. Public engagement was scrutinized. Ambition, especially for girls, was often mistaken for rebellion. Every step into the outside world required courage.

But what she had was stronger than circumstance: a deep belief in education and the unwavering support of her family.

From an early age, she distinguished herself in the classroom. A consistent academic topper, Rumi approached studies not merely as a requirement but as a tool of liberation. Her years at Jawahar Nav-

daya Vidyalaya, Srinagar, became formative, shaping her discipline, independence, and leadership skills. The residential environment taught her self-reliance and confidence — qualities that would later define her public life.

She went on to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Mass Communication and Journalism from Women's College, University of Kashmir, graduating as a journalism topper. Later, she completed a Master's degree in English Literature, combining technical media expertise with literary depth — a rare and powerful blend that sharpened both her voice and vision.

Even before she completed her graduation, her promise drew national attention. During her final year, her journey and work were featured in The Indian Express, a rare achievement for a student from rural South Kashmir. It was an early sign that her story was larger than her surroundings.

Then came a defining milestone.

In 2019, at just 20 years of age, Rumi secured a government position — an accomplishment many spend years preparing for. She joined the Youth Services and Sports Department as a Media Coordinator, stepping into a role that perfectly aligned with her skills and purpose.

Over the years, she has built more than a career; she has built a platform for change.

With experience across print, digital, and electronic media, Rumi has documented youth initiatives, sports movements, and grassroots stories across the Union Territory. Her work spans photography, editing, production, narration, and strategic communication. Through her lens and words, countless young achievers have found visibility.

But what sets her apart is what she does beyond her official responsibilities.

Recognizing that Kashmir's youth often struggle between opportunity and uncertainty, she began conceptualizing and leading youth-driven platforms — including leadership summits and community programmes across South Kashmir. These initiatives focus on discipline, civic engage-



ment, sports participation, and constructive nation-building.

Her aim is simple yet profound: to redirect young energy toward purpose.

For many participants, these platforms became their first exposure to confidence, teamwork, and public expression. For Rumi, they became proof that change begins at the grassroots.

Equally central to her mission is women's empowerment — not as a slogan, but as lived action.

Having personally faced resistance for stepping into media and public spaces, she understands the silent battles Kashmiri

girls fight daily: the fear of judgment, the weight of tradition, the constant negotiation for permission. Instead of merely speaking about these barriers, she works to dismantle them.

Through mentorship, guidance, and example, she encourages girls to pursue education, journalism, sports, and leadership roles. Many families who once hesitated now send their daughters forward with confidence — often citing Rumi as their inspiration.

Sports remain one of her strongest tools of transformation.

A handball player herself, she believes

the playing field can achieve what speeches cannot. Sports build confidence, resilience, and leadership. They teach girls to claim space — physically and socially. Under her encouragement, many young girls who once stayed on the sidelines now step onto courts and fields with pride.

Her contributions have earned wide recognition. She has received a Parliamentary Award from MP Chirag Paswan, a Young Leader Award from the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, and nearly sixty honors from civil, educational, and security institutions. Beyond leadership, she is also a national awardee in singing — a reminder that strength and creativity often walk hand in hand.

Yet, despite the accolades, she remains grounded — focused not on titles, but on impact. Looking ahead, Rumi plans to pursue legal studies to deepen her understanding of governance and policy. Her long-term vision is to contribute to public leadership at a structural level, advocating for youth development, women's rights, and social justice.

Her journey is not merely personal success; it is representation.

It tells every girl in a small village that her dreams are valid. It tells every family that daughters can lead. It tells society that leadership does not always come loudly — sometimes it grows quietly, steadily, until it transforms everything around it.

And when asked what she would say to young girls who hesitate to dream, her words carry the simplicity of truth:

"Your background does not define your potential. Stay consistent, invest in education, and don't be discouraged by criticism. Change is slow, but perseverance earns respect and opens doors for others."

In a region often defined by its challenges, Rumi Nazir represents something rarer and stronger — possibility.

Not a rebellion.

Not a spectacle.

But a quiet revolution.

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## A Narrative of Endurance: A Soldier at His Home in Kashmir



■ **DR. RATAN BHATTACHARJEE**

In the high valleys of Kashmir, where snow rests on rooftops like a quiet blessing and the mountains stand as ancient sentinels, life moves with a strange mixture of beauty and anxiety. For the family of a soldier posted there, every sunrise carries both pride and apprehension. The outside world sees uniforms, medals, and ceremonies, but inside a modest quarter or a temporary rented house lives a family whose daily routine is shaped not by ordinary domestic concerns but by uncertainty. Their story is rarely written in headlines. It exists in waiting, in silence, in unfinished conversations, and in prayers whispered before sleep.

A soldier's family does not live in war, yet war never leaves them. The soldier may patrol distant ridges or guard a checkpoint, but the real battlefield for the family is the mind. A mother wakes before dawn to prepare tea, not merely out of habit but because she cannot sleep deeply. Every sound at night — a barking dog, a distant vehicle, a sudden knock — creates a moment of fear. The telephone becomes both a comfort and a source of dread. When it rings unexpectedly, the heart beats faster. For others, a call means communication; for them, it may mean news that can change life forever.

Children in such families grow up earlier than their age. They learn to read the expressions on their mother's face. If she quietly switches on the television to watch news channels, they understand something serious has happened somewhere in the valley. They do not always ask questions. They have learned that silence sometimes protects parents from breaking down. A school assignment about "My Father" becomes a complex emotional task. While other children write about evening walks

or help with homework, the soldier's child writes about courage and distance. He or she proudly says, "My father protects the country," but at night may hug the pillow and whisper, "Come back soon." The wives of soldiers carry a particularly heavy responsibility. They are not only partners but guardians of emotional balance in the household. They must manage finances, education of children, communication with relatives, and social obligations. When relatives ask casually, "Is he safe there?" she smiles and says yes, though she herself does not know. She learns resilience quietly. There is no applause for her endurance, yet she performs a role that requires remarkable strength. She cannot display fear because children watch her for reassurance. Her courage is silent, practical, and continuous.

Life in Kashmir adds another dimension. The natural beauty of the region is breathtaking: saffron fields in autumn, almond blossoms in spring, and snowy silence in winter. Yet beneath this serenity lies tension. The family becomes familiar with security checks, identification cards, and restricted movement. Evening outings are limited. Markets close early. Festivals are celebrated modestly. Even joy learns discipline. When snowfall blocks roads and communication lines weaken, the distance between soldier and family feels immeasurable. A simple message saying "I am fine" becomes more precious than any gift.

Festivals illustrate the emotional reality vividly. On Diwali, Eid, or Independence Day, families decorate their homes, but a chair remains empty. The children insist on lighting candles or diyas because their father would want them to celebrate. The wife prepares his favorite dish even when he is miles away, almost as a ritual of hope. Sometimes a video call briefly bridges the gap. The soldier appears on a small screen, smiling despite exhaustion. For a few minutes the house fills with laughter, then the connection drops, leaving behind a deeper silence than before.

The elderly parents of soldiers experience a different kind of waiting. Having already lived through decades of struggle, they now measure time by news bulletins. They pray daily, often avoiding discussions

about conflict. When neighbors discuss politics or security situations, they quietly change the topic. Their fear is not ideological; it is personal. They know that behind every statistic is a human life. They have taught their son bravery, yet they privately ask destiny for mercy. Economic aspects also shape the family's life. While a soldier receives salary and benefits, the financial comfort is not always sufficient to compensate emotional cost. Frequent transfers prevent long-term planning. Children change schools often. Friendships are interrupted. The family learns adaptability, packing belongings repeatedly, creating temporary homes in unfamiliar places. The concept of "home" becomes emotional rather than geographical. Wherever the soldier's memory resides becomes home.

Neighbors and local communities sometimes form a support network. In military housing areas, wives of different soldiers share responsibilities and anxieties. They celebrate birthdays together, help during illness, and console one another during difficult times. Their conversations rarely include dramatic language. Instead, they discuss routine matters — school fees, grocery prices, weather — yet beneath these ordinary exchanges lies a shared understanding. They do not need to explain fear; each already knows it. Children raised in such environments develop a unique patriotism. It is not loud or aggressive but intimate. They understand the meaning of sacrifice not from textbooks but from absence.

When they see the national flag, they remember missed birthdays, postponed vacations, and their mother's patient smile. Many of them choose disciplined careers, influenced by the atmosphere in which they grew up. Yet they also carry emotional sensitivity. They value letters, photographs, and memories more than material possessions.

Communication technology has changed some aspects of their lives. Mobile phones and messaging apps allow more frequent contact than in earlier decades. A short text message — "Reached safely" or "On duty tonight" — can ease hours of worry. However, connectivity is not always reliable in mountainous terrain. When communication stops abruptly, imagina-

tion fills the gap. The family learns to live with incomplete information, a psychological exercise requiring immense patience. During times of heightened tension, curfews or operations restrict movement. Schools may close temporarily. Families stay indoors, listening to distant sounds they cannot interpret. The wife avoids showing anxiety but constantly checks the phone. She keeps the television volume low so children do not hear disturbing reports. She becomes both mother and emotional shield, absorbing fear so it does not reach the young minds around her.

Yet despite these hardships, moments of pride sustain them. When the soldier returns on leave, the household transforms. Laughter replaces caution. The children show school notebooks, the wife recounts everyday incidents, and the parents prepare favorite meals. Simple activities — walking in a market, visiting relatives, sitting together for tea — acquire extraordinary value. Leave days pass quickly, and departure day arrives too soon. The farewell at a railway station or airport is a silent ritual. No one cries openly. Smiles are maintained until the soldier disappears from sight. Only afterward do tears flow.

Society often celebrates soldiers on national occasions, but the everyday sacrifices of their families remain largely unnoticed. These families do not demand recognition. Their satisfaction lies in the soldier's safe return and the knowledge that their patience supports a larger duty.

Their contribution is emotional infrastructure; without their stability, the soldier could not perform his duty with concentration. In Kashmir particularly, where the landscape is both paradise and frontier, the soldier's family lives between hope and apprehension. They learn to appreciate small joys: a letter received, a festival spent together, a snowfall watched from a window, a sudden leave granted. Life teaches them gratitude in modest forms. They do not take ordinary peace for granted because they understand its cost.

The psychological dimension deserves attention. Continuous uncertainty creates stress, yet it also develops resilience. Children become empathetic adults. Wives acquire leadership qualities. Parents cul-

tivate spiritual acceptance. Their lives illustrate that courage is not only on the battlefield; it also resides in waiting, trusting, and continuing daily routines despite fear. Education and routine become coping mechanisms. The wife ensures children attend school regularly, believing normalcy protects their minds. Homework, household chores, and storytelling at night create stability. Stories told before sleep often include the father as a heroic yet gentle figure, reinforcing emotional connection even during absence.

The soldier himself draws strength from his family's composure. Knowing that his family manages difficulties bravely allows him to focus on duty. Thus, a silent partnership exists across distance: he guards borders while they guard hope. Each depends on the other's courage. When, after months, he returns safely, celebration is simple but heartfelt. There are no grand ceremonies, only home-cooked meals, shared memories, and long conversations. The family does not speak much about fear endured. Instead, they speak about future plans — education, weddings, small journeys — because hope is their chosen language. The life of a soldier's family in Kashmir is therefore a narrative of endurance shaped by love. It is a story of ordinary people living extraordinary emotional lives. They do not carry weapons, yet they fight despair daily. They do not stand at checkpoints, yet they guard faith. Their heroism is quiet, continuous, and rarely documented. In the stillness of the valley, beneath the watchful mountains, they keep a lamp of patience burning, believing that beyond every uncertain night there will be a morning when the soldier walks through the door again, and for that moment alone every sacrifice becomes meaningful.

**International Tagore Awardee Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee is a former Affiliate Faculty Virginia Commonwealth University & Retd. Associate Professor and Head Post Graduate Dept of English Dum Dum Motijheel College, and President Kolkata Indian American Society Email prfratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com**

# The Importance of Sleep

■ DR. SURINDERPAL SINGH

Sleep is a fundamental biological necessity that is essential for physical restoration, cognitive functioning, emotional stability, and overall health. Far from being a passive state, sleep is an active and highly organized physiological process regulated by complex interactions between the brain, the endocrine system, the immune system, and the body's circadian rhythms. Modern medical science recognizes healthy sleep as one of the three pillars of health, alongside balanced nutrition and regular physical activity. However, chronic sleep deprivation has emerged as a major public health concern worldwide, contributing to a wide range of physical, psychological, and metabolic disorders.

Physiologically, sleep performs multiple restorative and regulatory functions. During deep sleep in particular, the brain undergoes essential repair processes. Neural connections formed during the day are reorganized, strengthened, or pruned, thereby facilitating learning and memory consolidation. Sleep also plays a crucial role in clearing metabolic waste products from the brain, including neurotoxic substances that accumulate during waking hours. In addition, sleep regulates the secretion of several key hormones. Growth hormone, which is vital for tissue repair and development, is released predominantly during deep sleep. Melatonin governs the circadian rhythm and signals the body when it is time to rest. Cortisol, the stress hormone, follows a daily cycle that is closely linked to sleep patterns. Hormones such as leptin and ghrelin, which control appetite, are also regulated by adequate sleep. When sleep is disrupted, hormonal imbalance may occur, increasing the risk of obesity, diabetes, and metabolic syndrome.



Sleep further strengthens the immune system by promoting the production of cytokines and antibodies that help the body fight infections. Insufficient sleep weakens immune defenses, making individuals more susceptible to illnesses and slowing recovery. Cardiovascular health is also closely tied to healthy sleep patterns. Proper sleep helps maintain blood pressure regulation, heart rate variability, and vascular repair mechanisms. Poor sleep has been strongly associated with hypertension, heart disease, and stroke. Equally important is sleep's role in emotional and psychological stability. Adequate sleep supports mood regulation, emotional processing, and stress resilience, while chronic insomnia is closely linked to anxiety disorders, depression, irritability, and impaired coping ability.

Despite its importance, numerous health issues can disturb sleep. Psychological factors such as stress, anxiety, depression, excessive mental stimulation, and trauma-related disorders increase brain arousal and make it difficult to initiate or maintain sleep. Various medical conditions also interfere with normal sleep patterns. Chronic pain disorders such as arthritis and fibromyalgia,

respiratory diseases including asthma and sleep apnea, gastroesophageal reflux disease, neurological disorders, and hormonal imbalances such as thyroid dysfunction or menopause can significantly disrupt rest. Sleep apnea, in particular, causes repeated breathing interruptions, leading to fragmented sleep and reduced oxygen supply.

Lifestyle and behavioral habits further influence sleep quality. Irregular sleep schedules, excessive screen exposure before bedtime, consumption of caffeine, nicotine, or alcohol, sedentary lifestyles, and heavy meals late at night can all interfere with restful sleep. Blue light emitted from electronic devices suppresses melatonin production and delays sleep onset. Environmental factors such as noise pollution, excessive light, uncomfortable temperatures, and poor bedding conditions also contribute to sleep disturbances. Additionally, aging naturally alters sleep architecture, often resulting in lighter sleep, frequent awakenings, and reduced deep sleep.

Adequate sleep offers numerous benefits. It enhances memory, concentration, and learning capacity, strengthens immune defenses, supports cardiovascular and metabolic health, promotes

emotional balance and mental clarity, facilitates tissue repair and muscle recovery, maintains hormonal equilibrium, reduces the risk of chronic diseases, and improves productivity and decision-making abilities. However, both insufficient and excessive sleep can have negative consequences. Sleep deprivation leads to fatigue, daytime sleepiness, impaired cognitive performance, mood disturbances, increased risk of accidents, weakened immunity, obesity, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and hormonal imbalance. Conversely, excessive sleep, or hypersomnia, may be associated with depression, chronic fatigue, metabolic dysfunction, increased cardiovascular risk, and reduced physical activity. Therefore, maintaining an optimal sleep duration of approximately seven to nine hours for adults is essential.

Sleep is not merely a period of rest but a vital biological process necessary for survival, health maintenance, and optimal functioning. It plays a central role in brain health, immune competence, hormonal balance, cardiovascular stability, and emotional well-being. In today's era of digital overstimulation, chronic stress, and irregular lifestyles, sleep disorders are becoming increasingly prevalent and pose serious long-term health risks. Promoting healthy sleep habits through regular sleep schedules, reduced screen exposure, physical activity, stress management, and a conducive sleep environment is essential for safeguarding individual and public health. Recognizing sleep as a medical necessity rather than a luxury is a crucial step toward preventing disease and enhancing overall quality of life.

The author is a Faculty, Science Department Sri Amritsar Sahib Punjab

## Private Hospitals Must Make Healthcare Affordable: Mirwaiz

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 17: Kashmir Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, on Tuesday, called upon private sector hospitals operating in Kashmir Valley to ensure that medical treatment remains affordable and accessible to the common people.

Speaking to reporters at Amandeep BR Medcity after interacting with doctors and patients, Mirwaiz said that health is not a luxury but a basic necessity, and private healthcare institutions must align their services with the needs of the economically weaker sections of society.

He stressed that while the expansion of modern and upgraded hospitals is the need of the hour, affordability must remain central to healthcare delivery. "Healthcare is extremely important for every segment of society. Private hospitals can play a significant role in assisting poor and common people, but their rates should be such that their presence is genuinely felt on the ground," he said.



Mirwaiz underlined that rising medical expenses have become a matter of concern for many families in the Valley and urged hospital administrations to adopt patient-friendly policies that balance quality care with reasonable pricing.

He also appreciated the initiative taken by Ujala Cygnus Hospital for introducing health cards for Imams, describing it as a positive and thoughtful step. He expressed hope that the coverage under such schemes would be extended to include the families of clerics as well, thereby providing broader social support.

During his visit, Mirwaiz interacted with healthcare professionals and patients, and discussed issues related to medical facilities and patient care standards.

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WITH Dr.SUMIT , Mr.TURAB, Former Sr. Audiologist  
at Max Hospital Saket ,Delhi)  
@ Kifayatkifi  
8:00PM On January 18<sup>th</sup> , Sunday



# A Special Tribute to Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad Shah

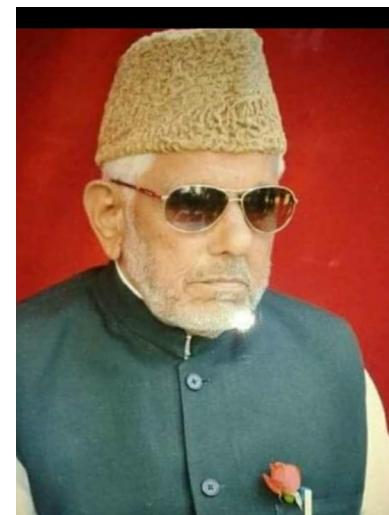
Tributes Pour In for Veteran NC Leader and Former Minister Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad Shah

■ KOUSAR GULL

**ANANTNAG, FEB 17:** The passing of Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad Shah on February 13, 2026, in Jammu after a prolonged illness has left a profound void in the political and social life of Jammu and Kashmir. Born on January 27, 1937, Peerzada Sahib devoted more than six decades to public service, earning respect across party lines for his integrity, accessibility, and unwavering commitment to the people.

His political journey began in 1960 under the guidance of Sheikh Abdullah, the Sher-e-Kashmir. During the Maz-Raj Shumari period, he served as Tehsil President Doru when the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference was active. Rising through grassroots politics, he was elected Block President for Devsar constituency and later served as Babbar Mandal President for Qazigund town and Aqaf President Qazigund—roles that shaped his deep connect with the masses.

A seasoned administrator, Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad Shah held several key positions, including Chairman of the Central Cooperative Bank and Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee of Jammu and Kashmir. He was elected as MLA from Devsar constituency three times—in 1983, 1987, and 1996—and was inducted into the State Cabinet as Minister for Hajj, Aqaf, and Floriculture, before



his pivotal role in securing land for the Eidgah and the Markazi Jamia Masjid through persistent efforts in public interest. He also played a decisive role in shifting the proposed Railway Station site from Ujroo to Qazigund—an intervention that benefited thousands—following the foundation stone laid earlier by former Prime Minister I.K. Gujral. During his tenure, Qazigund witnessed major public infrastructure including the Emergency Hospital, Munsif Court, R&B Division, PHE Division, Treasury, and several other landmark projects. After the devastating 1995 floods, as many as 36 damaged bridges in Devsar constituency were reconstructed in 1996 through his concerted efforts.

Thousands of mourners—political workers, religious scholars, and leaders from various parties—joined the funeral prayers. Prominent among them were Patron Darul-Uloom Rehmania Bandipora, Hazrat Molana Rehmatullah Qasmi Sahib, National Conference leadership, legislators, and senior political figures.

The demise of Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad Shah marks the end of an era. He will be remembered as a principled leader, a compassionate public servant, and a visionary statesman whose lifelong service uplifted institutions and communities alike. His legacy will continue to inspire generations.

being entrusted with the Forest portfolio. As Forest Minister, he was widely known for his firm stance on protecting state forest property and preventing encroachments, setting benchmarks for transparent governance.

In 1994, he was elected Provincial President and Member of the Central Working Committee of the National Conference. Recognizing his seniority and lifelong dedication, party president Farooq Abdullah nominated him as Vice President of the National Conference in 2004.

Beyond politics, Peerzada Sahib's legacy is etched in transformative development. Local resident Fayaz Ahmad Wani of Qazigund recalled

## Public Notice

My name has been wrongly written as RAFIQA BEGUM W/O ABDUL RASHID KOLAS in my Bank Account bearing account No ...007504080000448 while my correct name is RAFFEEQA BEGUM W/O BASHIR AHMAD POSWAL R/O...BANDI BALA which needs to be corrected if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of J & K BANK, BRANCH CHANDUSA within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained

Name...RAFFEEQA BEGUM.  
W/O ...BASHIR AHMAD POSWAL  
R/O....BANDI BALA  
DISTT....BARAMULLA

## Public Notice

This is certificate that Ajaz Ahmad Bhat lost number plate of motor cycle scooter while travelling on the way towards journey Arath to budgam with no JK01A K 9263 . If any body has any objection regarding it, they will invoke Rti office srinagar with in the period of seven days , after completion of said period , no objection will be entertained .

Ajaz Ahmad Bhat  
S/o Abdul Khalig Bhat  
R/o srinagar Gpo jammu and kashmir 190001  
Addhar number 478041953103  
number plat no : JK01A

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I am applying for Fertilizer and Pesticides license under the Name and Lone Pesticides and Fertilizer .

If any body have any objection may contact Chief Agriculture Officer Baramulla within 07 days from the publication of this Notice.

Name:-Irfan Bashir Lone  
S/O :-Bashir Ahmad Lone  
R/O:-Rahmatabad Rafiabadi

## Public Notice

The Electricity connection registered in the name of Mohammad Sultan Sheikh of Arith Mokdam Mohallah, Narbal, is to be transferred in favour of Abdul Quyoom Sheikh of Arith Mokdam Mohallah, Narbal. Objections, if any, to the same must reach concerned authority within a week at the most.

Abdul Quyoom Sheikh  
S/o: Mohammad Sultan Sheikh  
R/o: Arith Mokdam Mohallah, Narbal  
Contact No: 7006350270

## NOTICE

The Electricity connection with consumer ID 0203050001376 & Installation No. 3190-R1 registered in the name of Ghulam Mohammad Bhat of P.C. Depot Parimpura, Srinagar is to be transferred in favour of Mubarik Hussain Bhat of P.C. Depot Parimpura, Srinagar. Objections, if any, to the same must reach concerned authority within a week at the most.

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GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

## Office Of The Executive Engineer (R&B) Division Tangmarg

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER (CIVIL WORKS) | NIT NO: 134/R&B OF 2025-26 | DATED: 17-02-2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, UT J&K, e-tenders (In single cover system) are invited on Percentage basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:-

| S. No | Name of Work   | Adv. Cost (Rs. In Lacs) | Cost of T/Doc. (In Rupees) | Earnest money (In Rupees) | Time of completion | Class of Contractor | Tender call |
|-------|--|-------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| 1     | Permanent restoration of Chuntipathri Sheikh Mohalla road. | 2.98                    | 200/-                      | 5960/-                    | 25                 | DEE                 | 1st         |
| 2     | Permanent restoration of Ganiwani Darakasi Road.           | 5.97                    | 300/-                      | 11940/-                   | 35                 | D/C                 | 1st         |
| 3     | Permanent restoration of Ganiwani link road.               | 2.97                    | 200/-                      | 5940/-                    | 25                 | DEE                 | 1st         |
| 4     | Permanent restoration of Gratabaldai road.                 | 1.49                    | 200/-                      | 2980/-                    | 25                 | DEE                 | 1st         |

M.H of Account: UT Sector

Position of AAA: Accorded

Position of T.S: Accorded

Position of funds: Assured

1. The Bidding documents Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be viewed/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:-

|   |  |                     |
|---|--|---------------------|
| 1 | Date of Issue of Tender Notice             | 17-02-2026          |
| 2 | Period of downloading of bidding documents | 18-02-2026          |
| 3 | Bid submission Start Date                  | 18-02-2026          |
| 4 | Bid Submission End Date                    | 27-02-2026 4:00 PM  |
| 5 | Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)    | 28-02-2026 11:00 AM |

3. Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of Treasury Challan (Dated between bid submission start date and bid submission end date) with NIT No. , Serial No. and name of work to be deposited in M.H. 0059 in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Tangmarg (tender inviting authority)

4. All the bidders must upload Earnest money/Bid security equal to 2% of advertised cost in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Tangmarg (tender receiving authority) (The Date of earnest money/Bid security should be between the Bid Submission start date and Bid submission End date, otherwise bids shall be rejected).

5. The Successful bidder will have to provide performance security @ 5% of contract value in the form of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Tangmarg (tender receiving authority) as per rule-171 (I) of GFR 2017. The earnest money/ Bid security @2% shall be released to the successful bidder only on receipt of Performance Security @ 5% of Contract value which shall be released after successful completion of DLP /maintenance period.

6. The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the Office of Executive Engineer R&B Division Tangmarg (tender receiving authority).

7. The earnest money/ Bid security in favour of unsuccessful bidder shall be released only after submission of original Treasury Challan.

8. The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of Technical bids.

9. The earnest money shall be forfeited, If:-

i. Any bidder/ tenderer withdraw his bid/ tender during the period of bid validity or make any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid.

ii. Failure of Successful bidder to furnish the required performance security within the specified time limit.

iii. Failure of Successful bidder to execute the agreement within 28 days after fixation of contract.

iv. Failure of successfully bidder to submit the performance security within the time period (as per JKPWD Engineering Manual 2020) i.e 21 Days from the issuance of letter of acceptance, after that the work will be put to fresh tenders without any notice to the contractor and the EMD will be forfeited.

10. Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.

i. Bidders are advised to download bid submission manual from the "Downloads" option as well as from "Bidders Manual Kit" option on website www.jktenders.gov.in to familiarize themselves with the bid submission process.

ii. To participate in bidding process, bidders have to get Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) as per information Technology Act-2000. Bidders can get digital certificate from any approved Vendor.

iii. The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with digital Signature. No bid will be accepted in physical form.

iv. Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned in Para-1.

v. Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents with the bid.

Note: Scan all the documents on 100 dpi with black and white option.

No: R&B / Divn./ Tang/8269-97 | Dated: 17-02-2026

DIPK: 11053/25 | Dated: 17-02-2026

Sd/- Executive Engineer R&B Division Tangmarg

UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

## Office Of The Medical Superintendent Sdh Dooru

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

TENDER INVITING AUTHORITY: MS SDH DOORU

E-NIT NO: EST/MS/SDHD/1580-85 | DATED: 16-02-2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, Of Union Territory Of J&K, e-tenders (In Single/ cover system) are invited on item rate basis from approved and eligible Suppliers, Contractors registered within J&K State Govt/Central Government for each of the following.

| S.No | Name of Item  | Estt. Cost | Earnest Money Deposit (EMD In Rs)  | Cost of tender document | Eligibility Criterion of Bidder  | Earnest Money Deposit (EMD In Rs)   |
|------|---|------------|--|-------------------------|--|---|
| 01   | Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of 1 number of All-in-one X-Ray Printer for X-Ray Plant at SDH Dooru. | 2.00       | Rs 4000.00 in the Shape of CDR/FDR/TDR valid for 12 months pledged to the Medical Superintendent SDH Dooru | 200                     | OEM/OEM Authorized Registered & Reputed firms having sufficient experience as per Annexure "C" Similar nature of work. | The bidder may deposit tender fee in the shape of e-Challan through Account no. 0044040100000179 in the name of Medical Superintendent SDH DOORU Name of Bank: J&K Bank Dooru Branch IFSC code: JAKA 0DOORO |
| 02   | Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of 1 number of AC' S*(Hot & Cold) 3 Star for SDH Dooru                | 0.50       | 1000   | 200                     | DEE CLASS (Civil)  |   |

The Bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/ downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates.

S.No. Activity Description Schedule

01 Date & time for downloading of tenders 17/02/2026(09:00am) to 24/02/2026 (06:00pm)

02 Any clarification with regard to e-NIT shall be entertained only from (no representation/clarification shall be entertained beyond the stipulated period) 18/02/2026 to 23/02/2026 (During Office Hours)

03 Start/Last date & time for submission of tenders 17/02/2026(10:00am) to 24/02/2026 (06:00pm)

04 Date &Time for opening of technical bids 25/02/2026(11:30 am)

Complete bidding process will be online at www.jktenders.gov.in(Technical and Price bids shall have to be submitted in electronic format on the said tender portal and in no case be submitted in physical form.

The Medical Superintendent SDH DOORU reserves the right to accept/reject or cancel any tender or all tenders in full or part thereof without assigning any reason.

The tenders should be submitted strictly in accordance with the provisions of the detailed e-NIT.

**Terms and condition:** 1. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the Office of SDH DOORU (tender receiving authority).

# Govt strengthening forest conservation; encroached lands being reclaimed: Javed Rana

## ■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, FEBRUARY 17:** Minister for Forests, Ecology & Environment, Javed Ahmad Rana, today informed the Legislative Assembly that the government of Jammu and Kashmir is implementing multiple UT and Centrally Sponsored Schemes aimed at conservation, preservation and sustainable management of forests, wildlife and ecology across J&K.

Replies to a question raised by Legislator Rajiv Jasrotia, the Minister said that key schemes currently operational included the Capex Budget, Green India Mission (GIM), Forest Fire Prevention & Management Scheme (FFPM), Nagar Van Yojana (NVY), Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SACI), CAMPA and the National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPNA). He also gave out the district-wise details of funds released and expenditure incurred during 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 in his reply.

The Minister stated that procurement and execution of works follow General Financial Rules (GFR) and government



guidelines. Materials like barbed wire, poles and plants aren't purchased separately; instead, works like fencing and plantation are tendered through composite NITs, he added.

Forest Minister further said that the entire process follows

prescribed tendering procedures with due approval of the competent authority. The Lowest Bidder (L1) provides materials as per the approved specifications, ensuring transparency and financial discipline, he added.

Regarding regulation of Khair

trees, the Minister stated that felling is governed by the Jammu and Kashmir Non-Forest Land Khair Trees 'Acacia catechu' (Management Plan) Rules, 2016, framed in compliance with recommendations of the Central Empowerment Committee and

directions of the Supreme Court. He further said that under Rule 8(5) of the said Rules (SRO-111 of 2016), farmers are permitted to sell Khair wood outside the UT in accordance with the prescribed provisions.

The Minister informed the House that 19,496.73 hectare of forest land in J&K is under encroachment as on 31-12-2025. He emphasized that the Forest Department has launched sustained measures to retrieve encroached land, including detailed surveys and demarcation of forest boundaries, issuance of notices under Section 79(A) of the Indian Forest Act, 1927, eviction drives, fencing and restoration of retrieved land with indigenous species, enhanced vigilance by Territorial Wings and Forest Protection Force besides use of modern technology such as remote sensing, GPS and drones.

Reaffirming the government's commitment, the Minister said that sustained efforts are being made to strengthen the forest governance, prevent illegal encroachments and promote ecological sustainability for long-term environmental security in Jammu and Kashmir.

**DC Kathua reviews arrangements for smooth observance of Ramzan**

## ■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**KATHUA, FEBRUARY 17:** Deputy Commissioner Kathua, Rajesh Sharma, today chaired a preparatory meeting to review arrangements for the forthcoming holy month of Ramzan and ensure seamless delivery of essential services across the district.

Officers of PDD, PHE, FCS&CA, Health, Municipal bodies and Food Safety departments attended the meeting.

The DC stressed coordinated efforts and proactive monitoring for hassle-free observance of the holy month.



The Power Development Department was directed to ensure uninterrupted power supply, particularly during Sehri and Iftar and to establish control rooms for prompt redressal of the grievances. The PHE Department was instructed to maintain adequate drinking water supply and keep contingency measures in place to address shortages.

The Assistant Director, FCS&CA was asked to ensure adequate availability of essential commodities and LPG and to intensify market inspections to curb hoarding and overpricing. Food Safety authorities were directed to conduct regular checks of eateries and vendors to ensure hygiene and quality standards.

Municipal bodies were instructed to undertake special sanitation drives, ensure cleanliness around mosques and markets, maintain street lighting and ensure timely garbage disposal. Police and Traffic authorities were directed to maintain law and order and regulate traffic near major congregation points.

The Health Department was asked to ensure availability of medical staff, essential medicines and emergency services, besides keeping ambulances on standby to handle any exigency.

Similar instructions were issued to the ADCs and SDMs to ensure close supervision and effective implementation of all arrangements at the sub-divisional level.

Emphasising public convenience and safety, the DC directed all departments to maintain close coordination, activate grievance redressal mechanisms and ensure round-the-clock monitoring throughout the holy month.

ADC Vishavjeet Singh, CPO Ranjeet Thakur, Dy SP HQ were also present in the meeting.

## DM Kishtwar cracks the whip on hardened criminals; notorious burglar & drug peddler booked under Public Safety Act, 1978

## ■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**KISHTWAR, FEBRUARY 17:** Continuing its relentless drive to curb the menace of drug abuse, theft and hooliganism and to ensure the safety of the citizens, the District Magistrate Kishtwar, Pankaj Kumar Sharma today took stringent preventive action against a habitual offender.

District Magistrate, Kishtwar in exercise of powers vested under the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act (PSA), 1978, issued a detention order against a notorious criminal and drug peddler, namely Riyaz Ahmed S/o Mohd. Iqbal Sheikh R/o Indra Nagar, Tehsil and District Kishtwar.

Acting on a detailed dossier prepared by the Senior Superintendent of Police, Kishtwar, the District Magistrate scrupulously examined the record and found the activities of the said individual highly prejudicial to the maintenance of Public Order.

The accused Riyaz Ahmed was found to be a chronic recidivist deeply entrenched in a diverse spectrum of nefarious activities, ranging from burglary, vehicle theft and violent assault to the illicit trafficking of narcotic substances.

It was observed by the District Magistrate, Kishtwar, that despite being booked in multiple FIRs for serious offenses including house trespass, assault on women and children and possession of Heroin. The ordinary law of the land had failed to desist the individual from his criminal path.

The subject had repeatedly secured bail only to revert to the same illegal trade with impunity. His continuous involvement in criminal activities had shattered the sense of security among peace-loving citizens and posed a grave threat to the youth of the district by influencing them toward substance abuse.

Consequently, to prevent him from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order, the District Magistrate deemed it necessary to detain the said notorious criminal under the stringent provisions of the PSA. He has been taken into custody and lodged in the District Jail Baderwah.

The district administration Kishtwar has issued a stern warning that there is a "Zero Tolerance Policy" against anti-social elements, thieves and drug peddlers.

The District Magistrate warned that anyone found indulging in such activities which disturb the even tempo of life or pose a threat to public peace will face the full force of the law.

## Forest Department conducts Khair assessment visit in Kathua, Samba divisions

## ■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**KATHUA, FEBRUARY 17:** A tour programme of the Jammu and Kashmir Forest Department was conducted today in Kathua and Samba Forest Divisions under the leadership of Chief Conservator of Forests, Jammu V. S. Senthil Kumar accompanied by Conservator of Forests, East Circle, Jammu, Pardeep Chandra P. Wahule.

The visit was undertaken in connection with the Khair Awareness Programme and assessment exercise for formulation of the next ten-year Khair Management Plan for the proposed felling cycle 2027-28 to 2036-37.

In Kathua Forest Division, the Chief Conservator of Forests and accompanying officers visited Panchayat Dilwan of Kathua Range along with



Divisional Forest Officer, Kathua, Ankita Sinha; Anusha Koli; I/c Range Officer Kathua Range, Neeta Khajuria and field functionaries of the department.

An interactive session was held with local farmers and stakeholders regarding preparation of the forthcoming Khair Management Plan.

It was informed that farmers play a central role in assessment of Khair trees on their private land holdings and the data provided by them will form the basis for formulation of the management plan to be implemented from 2027-28 to 2036-37. Khair

Assessment Forms were distributed among farmers to facilitate systematic data collection and participatory planning.

On the occasion, the Chief Conservator of Forests planted a sapling of Aegle marmelos (Bael) near Malooh Temple at Panchayat Dilwan, symbolising the department's commitment towards environmental conservation and promotion of indigenous species.

Emphasising scientific assessment, transparency and community participation, he called for sustainable management of Khair resources to ensure long-term ecological balance. The programme concluded with directions to field functionaries for timely completion of the assessment process and close coordination with local stakeholders.

## DHSJ reviews healthcare services at CHC Nowpachi Marwah in Kishtwar district

## ■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**KISHTWAR, FEBRUARY 17:** Director Health Services Jammu, Dr. Abdul Hamid Zargar today reviewed healthcare services at Community Health Centre Nowpachi Marwah in district Kishtwar.

During the visit, the Director conducted a thorough inspection of various sections including OPD, IPD, Emergency Services, Labour Room, Operation Theatre, Laboratory, Immunization Centre, Pharmacy and store sections. The availability of essential drugs, diagnostic services, blood storage facilities, oxygen supply, power backup, ambulance services and overall patient care management was comprehensively reviewed.

The DHSJ assessed the implementation of various National Health Programmes, maternal and child health services, institutional deliveries, immunization coverage, non-communicable disease screening and Ayushman Bharat related services. Special emphasis was laid on ensuring quality healthcare standards, proper record maintenance, infection control practices, biomedical waste management and patient satisfaction.

The Director also interacted with the general public. The public highlighted issues related to availability of specialist services,



## ■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**KATHUA, FEBRUARY 17:** Deputy Commissioner Kathua, Rajesh Sharma, today chaired a review meeting to assess progress under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) at the DC Office Complex here.

The Deputy Commissioner undertook a detailed component-wise and department-wise review of performance under HADP with special focus on beneficiary coverage, physical and financial achievements, status of applications on the Kisan Sathi Portal and overall saturation of schemes across the district. The meeting reviewed progress under key HADP components including seeds and the seed multiplication chain, promotion of niche and exotic vegetables, agricultural

marketing, apiculture, sericulture, millets and nutri-cereals, farm mechanisation and automation and round-the-year mushroom production.

Progress under allied sectors such as dairy, poultry, fisheries, sheep husbandry, floriculture, oilseeds, integrated farming systems, rainfed agriculture systems, soil and land resource management and fodder development was also assessed. Stressing the need for saturation of all HADP components, the DC directed officers to ensure tracking of beneficiary applications submitted for availing various schemes and to expedite their timely processing. He emphasised removal of rejected or ineligible applications from the portal to maintain accurate data and improve transparency. He further

is committed to address their concerns in a time-bound manner.

While addressing the staff and public, the Director reiterated that the Health Department is committed to equitable and accessible healthcare services, especially in remote and underserved regions. He stressed upon maintaining discipline, punctuality, patient-friendly services and close coordination with the local administration to ensure uninterrupted healthcare delivery.

The visit concluded with clear directions to the concerned officers to ensure optimal functioning of health institutions, improve service delivery mechanisms and submit a detailed report on the requirements and gaps identified during the inspection.

## Awareness camp on Self-Employment & Entrepreneurship Schemes held at GDC Ramban

## ■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**RAMBAN, FEBRUARY 17:** Department of Industries & Commerce/ District Industries Centre (DIC) Ramban, in collaboration with Government Degree College Ramban today organised an Awareness Camp-cum-Outreach Programme on various self-employment and entrepreneurship schemes within the college premises. The event aimed to inspire and equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become successful entrepreneurs.

In his welcome address, Convener Career Counselling and Placement Cell, Dr. Jawaid Sarver warmly welcomed the speakers, staff and students participating in the self-employment awareness programme. The event

sought to create awareness among students, aspiring entrepreneurs and unemployed youth about the wide range of schemes and incentives being implemented by DIC Ramban to promote entrepreneurship, self-employment and industrial development in the district. Emphasising the importance of entrepreneurship in today's world, Principal Prof. Romesh Kumar Atri encouraged students to think beyond traditional career paths and explore their interests. A large number of students participated enthusiastically, raising queries regarding eligibility criteria, documentation requirements and project formulation, which were addressed by the resource persons.

General Manager DIC Ramban, Ravinder Anand, highlighted the efforts

made by the department under the guidance of Director Industries and Commerce Jammu, Arun Manhas, emphasising the need for students to develop an entrepreneurial mindset and encouraging them to pursue their passions. He appreciated the role of all stakeholders in organising the programme and reaffirmed the commitment of DIC Ramban and the college to work jointly for empowering youth and promoting sustainable economic development in the district.

Earlier, keynote speakers Kuldeep Singh, Project Manager DIC Ramban and Lovepreet Singh from District Employment Office Ramban emphasised the importance of innovation, risk-taking and perseverance in entrepreneurship.

## DC Kathua reviews progress under HADP; stresses saturation, beneficiary tracking and portal streamlining

## ■ HT NEWS NETWORK

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# India's exports rise to USD 80.45 bln amid widening trade deficit in Jan: Govt

## ■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**NEW DELHI, FEB 17:** India's trade performance in January reflected a mixed but resilient picture, with overall exports registering a healthy rise even as imports grew at a faster pace, widening the trade deficit during the month.

According to the data released by the Commerce Department here, India's overall trade (merchandise and services combined) exports stood at USD 80.45 billion in January 2026, up from USD 71.09 billion in January 2025.

Imports rose to USD 90.83 billion compared to USD 76.48 billion a year ago. As a result, the overall trade deficit widened to USD 10.38 billion from USD 5.39 billion in the corresponding month last year.

On the merchandise front, exports remained largely stable at USD 36.56 billion in January 2026 as against USD 36.34 billion in January 2025.

However, merchandise imports increased to USD 51.24 billion from USD 59.77 billion compared to the corresponding period last year.

Services trade continued to provide a cushion. Services exports rose to USD 43.90 billion in January 2026 compared with USD 34.75 billion a year ago.

Services imports also increased to USD 19.60 billion from USD 16.71 billion, but the strong growth in services exports helped offset part



of the merchandise trade gap.

For the April–January period of 2025–26, overall exports (merchandise and services) reached USD 720.76 billion, up from USD 679.02 billion in April–January 2024–25, reflecting a growth of 6.15 per cent.

Imports during the same period rose to USD 823.41 billion from USD 772.85 billion, registering a growth of 6.54 per cent.

Consequently, the cumulative trade deficit widened to USD 102.65 billion compared to USD 93.83 billion in the year-ago period.

Merchandise exports during April–January 2025–26 stood at USD 366.63 billion, up from USD 358.75 billion last year, marking a growth

of 2.20 per cent.

Merchandise imports rose more sharply to USD 649.86 billion from USD 606.13 billion, reflecting a 7.21 per cent increase.

Services exports for April–January 2025–26 climbed to USD 354.13 billion from USD 320.28 billion, recording a robust 10.57 per cent growth. Services imports increased moderately to USD 173.55 billion from USD 166.72 billion, up 4.10 per cent.

Non-petroleum merchandise exports during April–January 2025–26 rose to USD 320.94 billion from USD 305.98 billion in the same period of the previous year, registering a growth of 4.89 per cent. Non-petroleum merchandise imports

increased to USD 501.04 billion from USD 451.25 billion, up 11.03 per cent.

Among key export destinations during April–January 2025–26, the United States remained India's largest market, followed by the UAE and China.

Exports to China showed a sharp rise of 38.37 per cent, increasing from USD 11.48 billion in April–January 2024–25 to USD 15.88 billion in the current fiscal period.

Other major destinations included the Netherlands, the UK, Germany, Singapore, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia and Italy.

On the import side, China continued to be the top source, followed by the UAE, Russia and the US. Other significant import partners included Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Switzerland, Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan.

Sector-wise, engineering goods remained the leading export category during April–January 2025–26 at USD 161.13 billion.

Petroleum products, electronic goods, drugs and pharmaceuticals, gems and jewellery, organic and inorganic chemicals, textiles, rice and marine products were among the other major contributors.

On the import side, petroleum (crude and products) and electronic goods dominated the import basket, followed by gold, machinery and electrical equipment, transport equipment, non-ferrous metals, chemicals, coal and iron and steel. UNI

## FAIRPRO 2026 in Chennai from Feb 20-22

### ■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**CHENNAI, FEB 17:** CREDAI Chennai today announced that the 18th FAIRPRO 2026, South India's biggest and most trusted Property Fair, will be held from February 20 to 22.

This year's edition promises to be bigger and more comprehensive, offering homebuyers a one-stop destination to explore residential, commercial, and plotted developments across Chennai and its emerging corridors.

Popular actor Keerthy Suresh is associated as the Brand Ambassador for FAIRPRO 2026, adding further appeal and visibility to the event.

FAIRPRO 2026 will bring together 80 leading developers under one roof and is expected to attract a footfall of more than 50,000 visitors over the three days.

In addition, 15 industry partners will be present, strengthening the overall ecosystem around the event. State Bank of India (SBI) will

be the Title Sponsor and Exclusive Banking Partner for this edition, offering home loan options and on-the-spot assistance to visitors. Apollo Hospitals joins as the Medical Partner, ensuring health and emergency support services throughout the event.

"With over 80 developers and 500 projects on display, FAIRPRO continues to be Chennai's most trusted Property Fair. Over the years, FAIRPRO has evolved beyond an exhibition to become a benchmark for credibility, transparency, and opportunity in property ownership," Mr. Mohamed Ali, President, CREDAI Chennai, told reporters here today.

"The residential market in Chennai remains strong, supported by infrastructure growth and steady demand across segments. This edition brings together the finest developments across apartments, villas, plots, and commercial spaces, enabling homebuyers and investors to make confident



and well-informed decisions," pointed out Mr. S. Sivagurunathan, Advisor – FAIRPRO said.

"With growing aspirations, rising demand, and renewed momentum in Chennai's real estate sector, FAIRPRO 2026 is poised to set new milestones in footfall, engagement, and business outcomes. With a large lineup of projects, exclusive deals, and SBI as the sole banking partner, FAIRPRO will be a one-stop destination for every homebuyer," highlighted Mr. K. Mothish Kumar, Convenor, said.

With the presence of major developers, banks, and industry partners, visitors can take advantage of exclusive property deals and financing options at a single venue. UNI

## AM/NS India expands value-added steel portfolio with world-class branded offerings to power appliance & industrial manufacturing

### ■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**BHUBANESWAR, FEB 17:** ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India) today announced the strengthening of its value-added portfolio with AM/NS Vibrance and AM/NS Optima – two world-class, premium branded steel solutions engineered to meet the increasingly design-led needs of Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) across appliance and industrial manufacturing ecosystems, stated the steel manufacturer in a statement today.

With demand rising for steel that combines consistent surface quality, tight tolerances and reliable performance at scale, AM/NS India is expanding its value-added portfolio with branded offerings that reduce reliance on imports while making premium, internationally benchmarked quality available domestically.



These two branded coated offerings now form part of a value added product portfolio that includes Optigal®, Magnelis®, Optigal® Prime, Optigal® Pinnacle, and others – each validated for consistency, efficiency, and durability across diverse

applications.

Ranjan Dhar, Director and Vice President – Sales & Marketing, ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India), said: "The addition of AM/NS Vibrance and AM/NS Optima is a significant step in expanding our branded steel

portfolio to support OEMs productivity and value creation. These two coated steel offerings strengthen our position as a preferred solution provider with innovative, high-quality steel solutions in line with our brand promise – 'Smarter Steels, Brighter Futures'. By making world-class value-added steels available domestically, we are contributing to the 'Make in India' vision, while enabling our customers to build differentiated products with confidence and gain competitive advantage domestically and globally."

AM/NS Vibrance is a premium colour-coated steel solution for appliance OEMs, combining strength, precision, and superior surface aesthetics. As appliances become increasingly visible design features in homes and commercial settings, manufacturers need materials that combine consistent

colour, controlled gloss and refined finishes with durability and efficient manufacturability. AM/NS Vibrance ensures that manufactured appliances are visually appealing and built to last. It is well-suited for diverse appliance applications, including refrigerators, washing machines, microwave ovens, and water dispensers.

AM/NS Optima is one of India's most premium True Zero-Spangle Galvanised Steel products. It offers a higher degree of surface uniformity and control than conventional Galvanised Steel, enabling manufacturers to achieve cleaner, more consistent finishes. AM/NS Optima steel bends predictably, offers finishes with visual harmony, and performs consistently across production runs. It is well-suited for multiple applications, including AC outdoor units, panels, and cleanroom installations, it added. UNI

## Stock market ends 2-day losing streak; Nifty closes above 25,650 mark

### ■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**NEW DELHI, FEB 17:** The Indian stock markets today snapped their two-day losing streak and ended higher in a volatile session, with the NSE Nifty finishing above the 25,650 mark, on brisk buying in Power, PSU Banks, Realty, Private Banks, Infra, Capital Goods and Energy sectors.

At close, the BSE Sensex rose by 650.39 points or 0.79 per cent to 33,277.15 and the NSE Nifty increased by 211.65 points or 0.83 pc to 25,682.75.

The BSE 150 Mid-Cap Index rose 0.64 pc, while the BSE 250 Small-Cap Index slipped 0.16 pc. The overall market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms rose to over Rs 468 lakh crore from Rs 465 lakh crore in the previous session.

Indian rupee closed unchanged at 90.66 per US dollar.

Among the sectors, Media and Auto shed 0.5-1 pc. On the gaining side were Power, PSU Bank, Realty, Private Bank, Infra, Capital Goods, and Energy in the range of 1-2 pc.

On Nifty, top gainers were Power Grid Corporation, Coal India, HDFC Bank, Adani Enterprises and Max Healthcare.

On the losing side were Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, Maruti Suzuki, Eicher Motors and Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles.

Further, on BSE, over 200 stocks touched their 52-week low. These included Brainbees Solutions, BlueJet, Ola Electric, Inox Wind, C.E. Info, Cello World, Vedant Fashions, Newgen Software, Just Dial, Cohance Life, Sonata Software, Relaxo Footwear, Firstsource Solutions, Clean Science, Tata Chemicals, KEC International, LT Technology, among others.

Shares of IT companies also extended declined pushing Nifty IT index down around 1 pc.

Tech Mahindra fell over 1 pc, Wipro and LTI Mindtree also down nearly 1 pc.

Further, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HCL Technologies were also trading in the red. Infosys shares also fell more than 2 pc.

Among the banking stocks, HDFC Bank emerged as the top gainer, rising up to 3 pc, Canara Bank by 1.95 pc and Axis Bank gained 1.65 pc. Bank of Baroda, Punjab National Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank rose up to 1 pc. UNI

## Ottonomy unveils 'Ottobots' at India AI Impact Summit to boost smart logistics

### ■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**NEW DELHI, FEB 17:** Ottonomy Inc on Monday unveiled its Made-in-India autonomous delivery robots, 'Ottobots', at the India AI Impact Summit here, showcasing how artificial intelligence and robotics can transform deliveries across hospitals, campuses and urban areas. The company introduced a complete autonomous delivery ecosystem that combines its Ottobots with smart storage units called 'Arrive Points' developed by Arrive AI and drone logistics support from Skyeair Mobility. Ottobots are Level-4 autonomous robots capable of moving independently in complex environments such as hospital corridors, elevators, sidewalks and service roads.

Powered by an AI-based navigation system, the robots can understand their surroundings, avoid obstacles and make real-time decisions without human control. Speaking at the summit, Ritukar Vijay, CEO and Founder of Ottonomy, said, "With Ottobots, we're proving that Made in India robots can power world class automation in US hospitals and global industrial sites." "Together with Arrive AI and Skye Air Mobility, we're showcasing at the India AI Impact Summit how India is at the core of advanced, multi modal logistics solutions to the world – aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Made in India, Made for the World' and AI for public good" he added.

The company highlighted its deployment at Hancock Regional Hospital in the United States, where Ottobots and Arrive Points are being used to move medical samples and supplies across the hospital campus without manual handling. UNI

## CEA Nageswaran urges urgent, coordinated action on AI

### ■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**NEW DELHI, FEB 17:** Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) V Anantha Nageswaran on Monday said that progress in Artificial Intelligence (AI) will not occur by "drift" and stressed the need for urgency, political will, and strong state capacity to harness its benefits. Speaking at a session on 'Employability in the AI Age: Preparing for the Jobs of Tomorrow' at the India AI Impact Summit 2026, Nageswaran underlined that India must act with clear intent to ensure AI strengthens, rather than disrupts, the country's growth and social fabric.

"India can become the first large society where human abundance and machine intelligence reinforce, and not undermine, each other," he said.

"This will not happen by drift; this will require urgency. It will require political will, it will require state capacity, and it will require a clear national commitment to aligning technological adoption with mass employability." He emphasised that the efforts must be in a coordinated fashion involving the government, private sector, academia, and policymakers with the spirit of "Team India".

"The window is still open, but it is not indefinite," he cautioned. The CEA called for aligning AI adoption with large-scale job creation and inclusive growth, warning that uncalibrated technological change could lead to social and economic instability. "For India, this is not a debate about the future of work; it is a decision about the future of growth, social stability, and cohesion. We must act, and act now," Nageswaran said.

Hestressed that reforms must begin with strengthening foundational education and upgrading pedagogy and skill development systems.

According to him, improving the teaching of core skills is the starting point for ensuring that AI contributes to employability and shared prosperity.

Nageswaran also highlighted the need to scale high-quality skills training, expand labour-intensive service sectors, and remove regulatory bottlenecks that hinder job creation.

He concluded that India must move

decisively to co-create prosperity with AI, ensuring that technological advancement supports economic growth while safeguarding social cohesion. UNI

which controls the region's airspace.

"The State had earlier sought relaxation in June last year and later submitted a detailed technical justification in November, but the request was rejected without discussions," the survey said.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has sought an impact study to assess whether the proposed airport would affect passenger traffic at Bengaluru or Salem airports. The study is to be conducted by Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation Ltd (TIDCO).

According to the survey, based purely on connectivity gaps and economic geography, priority should be given to developing new airports in the east coast delta region (Nagapattinam-Mayiladuthurai-Karaikal) and the far south-west belt (Tenkasi-Sankarankoil-Western Ghats edge).

While these regions may not generate immediate international traffic, they present strong potential for regional airports to support balanced development and improve accessibility.

The survey said the Bengaluru Airport continues to exceed Chennai International Airport's international passenger traffic in South India, handling 694,550 passengers in December 2025. Meanwhile the survey said, to support airport expansion and modernisation, land valued at Rs. 2,938 crore has been acquired and handed over to the Airports Authority of India (AAI) for ongoing projects at Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai, Tiruchirappalli, and Thoothukudi airports.

Additional land acquisition worth Rs. 350 crore is underway for Salem Airport. Work on the proposed Greenfield Airport at Parandur, near Chennai, has been fast-tracked and a new airport has been proposed at Rameswaram – where AAI has begun the pre-feasibility study and two sites have been shortlisted (Uchipulli and Keelakarai). According to the survey, Chennai International Airport's Phase II expansion, costing Rs. 1,207 crore, is scheduled for completion.

## Defence Ministry rejects TN proposal for airport in Hosur without discussions: TN Economic Survey

### ■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**Chennai, Feb 17:** The Tamil Nadu government has suffered a setback in its plans to establish an airport in Hosur as the Ministry of Defence has denied airspace clearance, notes the state's Economic Survey 2025-26.

According to the survey released here on Monday ahead of the state's interim budget, the Defence Ministry has denied airspace clearance for the airport in Hosur citing operational requirements of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (TIDCO).

According to the survey, based purely on connectivity gaps and economic geography, priority should be given to developing new airports in the east coast delta region (Nagapattinam-Mayiladuthurai-Karaikal) and the far south-west belt (Tenkasi-Sankarankoil-Western Ghats edge).

While these regions may not generate immediate international traffic, they present strong potential for regional airports to support balanced development and improve accessibility.

# Steve Smith Replaces Josh Hazlewood in T20 World Cup Squad

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**BRISBANE:** Steven Smith has been officially added to Australia's T20 World Cup squad, filling the spot created by Josh Hazlewood's absence, meaning he is available to face Sri Lanka on Monday evening if needed.

Smith was flown over after Mitchell Marsh suffered testicular bleeding after a blow in the groin ahead of Australia's opening match against Ireland. He arrived in time to travel with the team to Pallekele, where they will play their final two group matches.

He trained on Sunday ahead of the Sri Lanka match, but it has yet to be confirmed whether he will feature. Marsh had an extensive net session and is making positive progress in his recovery, while Marcus Stoinis has been cleared of serious injury after taking a blow on the hand in his follow through against Zimbabwe.

Following their loss to Zimbabwe, Australia have to beat Sri Lanka to maintain a realistic chance of progressing to the Super Eights.

"ICC regulations stipulate any squad change must be submitted and activated at least one day prior to a match," selector Tony Dodemaide said. "With Steve here, along with some uncertainty around Mitch and Marcus Stoinis, it made sense he [Smith] is activated and available for selection in time for the match, if required."

Hazlewood was ruled out before the tour-

ment started, having not recovered from the Achilles problem he picked up during his recovery from a hamstring injury that curtailed his Ashes, but Australia's selectors didn't immediately name a replacement.

Smith last played T20Is in February 2024 but was in outstanding form in the recent BBL where he hammered 299 runs at 59.80 with a strike rate of 167.97. It led to a clamour for him to be included in the World Cup squad, but the selectors resisted while they still had time to freely amend the 15, opting instead to call-up Matt Renshaw in place of Matt Short with a specific middle-order role in mind.

Overall in T20Is, Smith averages 24.86 with a strike rate of 125.45, but in leagues and franchises since last featuring for Australia, he has an average of 49.73 and a strike rate of 156.19.

However, the form of a number of Australia's batters has been unconvincing at the World Cup. Travis Head's lean run in T20Is has continued early into the tournament, pressure is growing on Cameron Green, and Glenn Maxwell's struggles from the BBL have followed him to Sri Lanka.

Josh Inglis, meanwhile, has a top score of 42 in eight innings since the Ashes and Tim David made a duck against Zimbabwe in his first knock since a hamstring injury on Boxing Day. Sean Abbott is also with the squad as a traveling reserve but can get into the squad only if another player is injured.



## Rashid becomes first to 700 wickets in T20 cricket

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**CHENNAI:** Rashid Khan has become the first bowler to get to the 700-wicket mark in T20 cricket, getting to the mark when he removed Muhammad Arfan in Afghanistan's T20 World Cup match against UAE in Delhi on Monday. Rashid, who started the game with 699 wickets against his name, took his landmark wicket when he had Arfan out hit wicket in the 16th over of the UAE innings, which was Rashid's last.

The Afghanistan captain was made to wait for his milestone after taking his 698th and 699th wickets against South Africa last week and then delivering 3.2 overs in this match without success. He was hit for 17 runs in the 20 balls he bowled before Arfan moved across his stumps to try and reverse-sweep Rashid, but missed completely and hit his own stumps instead. Rashid barely celebrated with Afghanistan needing a win and other results to go their way to qualify for the Super



Eights. Rashid had, in any case, been way ahead of the wicket-takers' pack for a while. The retired Dwayne Bravo is in second place on the table with 631 wickets. Among active cricketers, Sunil Narine is behind Rashid - and in third place behind Bravo - with 613 wickets.

Rashid is also the leading wicket-taker in T20 internationals, the 700th wicket also his 191st for Afghanistan in the format. Behind him on the list are the New Zealand duo of Tim Southee (with 164 wickets) and Ish Sodhi (162 wickets).

The milestone had been a topic of conversation each time Rashid, the Afghanistan captain, faced the media in the lead-up to the T20 World Cup and even afterwards. Last Tuesday, speaking before the game against South Africa, he had responded to the question with, "700 wickets, whatever the achievement is, it will continue. I have not kept any target in my mind that I will take 700 wickets and stop - no, when I play for the national team at the World Cup, then I make 100% effort. And when the team requires it, I take the wicket."

## Reddy: India have belief we can beat any team in the world

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**NEW DELHI:** India are riding the wave of confidence instilled by their ODI World Cup success after starting their tour of Australia in emphatic style at the SCG.

The home side were bundled out for 133, with Arundhati Reddy taking a career-best 4 for 22, and India were well ahead of the DLS target when rain halted their chase shortly after the minimum of five overs was completed.

"I think the Indian team has been playing really good cricket in the last few years," Reddy said. "We've always come very close and not won games, but I think there's a belief in the

team now that we can beat anybody in this world. I think that's the confidence that helps us and we want to continue that."

Despite losing two wickets in the powerplay, Australia were handily placed on 68 for 2 after seven overs but a superb catch from captain Harmanpreet Kaur to remove Ellyse Perry off Reddy began a collapse of 8 for 65 and the last five wickets falling for 12 after a recovery between Georgia Wareham and Nicola Carey.

"Perry is a big wicket, you want to get her early and I think that catch changed the momentum for us," Reddy said. "I think they lost a couple of wickets after that. She's a wonderful



fielder and obviously it's great that she took that one and gave

us the momentum going ahead in the innings."

Reddy also praised the performance of Renuka Singh who bowled three overs straight in the powerplay including a maiden. "I thought she was outstanding today," she said. "To bowl a maiden ... and to Phoebe Litchfield, I think that was an extraordinary over."

"Obviously she's been a quality player for India in the last quite a few years and again, she showed a lot of her experience today. Even in between, we were chatting a lot about what's the right lengths to hit on these wickets for our type of bowlers. Again, I think a lot of credit should be given to her. I think that spell was outstanding."



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