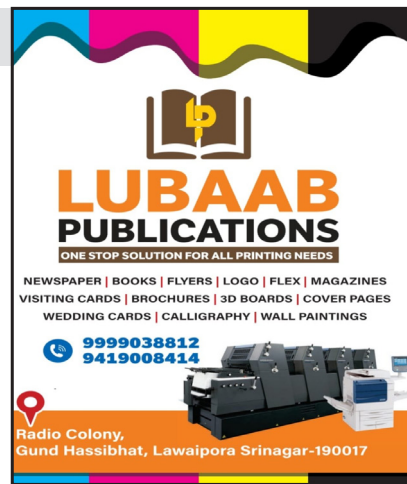


Srinagar
Thursday
February 19 | 2026
01 Ramadan 1447 AH
Issue No: 43
Volume: 16
Pages: 12
Price: Rs 02/-

16TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION
HEADLINES TODAY
Voice To The Voiceless



History in Making: Foundation Stone Laid for Shri Shankaracharya Ji Temple

Six-Decade-Old Vision Turns Into Reality Near Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KATRA, FEB 18: In a landmark development set to redefine the spiritual and economic landscape of Jammu and Kashmir, the Lieutenant Governor on Tuesday laid the foundation stone for the long-awaited Shri Shankaracharya Ji Temple, bringing to fruition a vision first conceived in 1967.

The temple, to be constructed on the adjoining hillocks of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine, marks the culmination of a six-decade-long aspiration. The ambitious project gained momentum in 2025 after a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) and the concerned landowners, clearing the way for formal execution.

In a significant gesture of cooperation,

● Turn on Page 2



J&K Creates History, Storms Into Ranji Trophy Final for First Time

LG Manoj Sinha, CM Omar Abdullah, Mehbooba, Sajad Lone Lead Chorus of Praise; Assembly Hails Team's Grit

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 18: Jammu and Kashmir scripted a golden chapter in its sporting history on Wednesday as the J&K cricket team entered the final of the prestigious Ranji Trophy for the first time, triggering celebrations across the Union Territory.

The landmark achievement drew widespread applause from political leaders, legislators and sports enthusiasts, who termed the feat a defining moment for cricket in the region.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha congratulated the team in a message shared on X, describing the semi-final victory as a "magnificent" performance that has made the entire Union Territory proud. He said the players have etched a new golden chapter in J&K's sporting history and expressed hope that they would carry the winning momentum into the final.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also lauded the collective effort of the players and support staff,

calling the milestone a moment of immense pride for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. He said the success reflects teamwork, perseverance and dedication, and voiced optimism that the achievement would inspire more cricketers from the region to excel at the national level.

"The day is not far when players from Jammu and Kashmir will represent the country and make significant contributions to Indian cricket," he said.

Former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti congratulated the team in an emotional message, praising their grit, courage and determination. She termed the victory historic and wished the squad greater success in the final.

President of the Jammu and Kashmir People's Conference Sajad Lone also extended his congratulations, calling it a proud moment for the entire region. Spokespersons of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference echoed similar sentiments.

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DCRG Ceiling for J&K Govt Employees Enhanced to ₹25 Lakh

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEB 18: The Government of Jammu and Kashmir has enhanced the maximum ceiling of Death-cum-Retirement Gratuity (DCRG) for its employees from ₹20 lakh to ₹25 lakh, following the Dearness Allowance (DA) reaching 50 per cent of the basic pay under the 7th Pay Commission framework.

In a clarification circular issued by the Finance Department, the government stated that the revised ceiling has come into effect from January 1, 2024. The enhancement is in line with provisions laid down under Note 8 below Article 240-BB of the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Service Regulations,

● Turn on Page 2

Omar Abdullah Moves 13 Demands, 19 Supplementary Grants in Budget Session

Abdul Rahim Rather Tables Proposals in House; Debate to Continue Till Feb 19

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEB 18: The Budget Session of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly gathered pace on Tuesday as Chief Minister Omar Abdullah moved 13 Demands for Grants along with 19 Supplementary Demands in the House for the financial year ending March 31, 2027.

The proposals were subsequently presented before the Assembly by Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather for discussion.

Moving the Demands for Grants, the Chief Minister said, "I move that a sum not exceeding

● Turn on Page 2



J&K Anti-Corruption Bureau Traps Girdawar Red-Handed Taking ₹10,000 Bribe in Reasi

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

JAMMU, FEB 18: The Jammu and Kashmir Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Wednesday arrested a revenue official for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe of ₹10,000 for carrying out demarcation of ancestral land in Reasi district.

According to an official statement, the ACB apprehended Mohd. Saleem Bandy, Girdawar of Halqa Judda, Tehsil Arnas, District Reasi, in connection with a bribery case registered

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Markets Across Kashmir Thronged as Ramzan Shopping Peaks

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, FEB 18: Markets across Kashmir are witnessing a surge in activity as the holy month of Ramzan approaches, with shoppers thronging bazaars to stock up on essentials for 'sehari' and 'iftar'. The fasting month is likely to begin on Thursday, subject to the sight-

ing of the crescent moon.

From the heart of Srinagar to major town centres across the Valley, markets have donned a festive look, echoing the traditional pre-Ramzan fervour. Shops dealing in dates and dry fruits are reporting brisk sales as families prepare for the spiritually significant month that culminates with Eid-ul-Fitr. At Maharaj Bazar, one of Sri-

nagar's busiest commercial hubs, customers were seen crowding dry fruit stores. Traders said sales of dates have risen sharply over the past few days.

"The sale of dates has picked up significantly. We have around 30 varieties available, and more consignments are arriving," said Parvaiz Ahmad,

● Turn on Page 2

Saffron Output in J&K Falls to 19.58 MT in 2024-25 Despite Stable Cultivation Area

Productivity dips after last year's surge; export earnings decline to Rs 486.43 crore

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

JAMMU, FEB 18: Saffron production in Jammu and Kashmir has declined to 19.58 metric tonnes (MT) in 2024-25 from 23.53 MT recorded in 2023-24, even as the total area under cultivation remained unchanged at 1,116.27 hectares, official data revealed.

In a written reply to a question raised by National Conference MLA Hasnain Masoodi, Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary informed the House that while



the acreage under saffron cultivation has remained constant, output and productivity have witnessed fluctuations over the past five years.

According to the data tabled in the Assembly, saffron production stood at 17.33 MT in 2020-21, declined to 14.87 MT in 2021-22 and marginally improved to 14.94 MT in 2022-23. A sharp rebound was recorded in 2023-24 when output rose to 23.53 MT, before falling again to 19.58 MT in the

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Jammu and Kashmir Continues Pension Payments to Former Ladakh Legislators

Govt Cites Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, Ministry of Home Affairs Directives to Justify Liability

■ HT NEWS DESK / KNO

JAMMU, FEB 18: The Government of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday clarified that it continues to disburse pensions to former legislators elected from areas now part of the Union Territory of Ladakh, citing provisions



of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, and directives issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

According to an official reply tabled in response to a cut motion moved by Peoples Conference MLA Sajad Gani Lone, the Minister in-charge of

Parliamentary Affairs stated that the continuation of pensions is fully aligned with the statutory framework laid down after the 2019 reorganisation.

"The continuation of pensions for former legislators from Ladakh is

● Turn on Page 2

Srinagar Roads Get Major Decongestion Boost: Dy CM

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEB 18: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary today said that the government has undertaken various key road projects and corridor developments to decongest traffic flow across downtown and arterial roads in Srinagar district.

The Deputy Chief Minister was replying to a question raised by Legislator Tanvir Sadiq in the Legislative Assembly.

He informed the House that projects currently under various stages for execution included Nowshera to Soura (KZP Road), Saida kadal to Ashaibagh (SMS Road), Devi Angan-Hawal road besides Alamgiri Bazar Chowk and Mirza Kamil Sahib (MK Sahib)

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Div Com Kashmir reviews progress of re-creation of dilapidated Massavies, digitization of Jamabandis

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 18: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, on Wednesday chaired a meeting to review the progress of re-creation of dilapidated Massavies and digitization of Jama-bandis, here.

While reviewing district-wise data, the Div Com directed Deputy Commissioners (DCs) to expedite the process of re-creating Massavies through third-party verification. He also instructed them to conduct fresh surveys in cases where reproduction of missing Massavies is not possible.

Appreciating the progress made in the digitization of Jama-



bandis, the Div Com urged DCs to fast-track the digitization process in the remaining villages. Regarding the rehabilitation of terror victims, he enjoined DCs to ensure that all eligible

victims are brought under the ambit of housing construction schemes.

The Divisional Commissioner also reviewed the status of amenities at Migrant Transition Accommodations and stressed the need for augmentation of facilities and timely completion of all the flats. He directed officers to address grievances in a time-bound manner, with special emphasis on the disposal of long-pending cases.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioner Central, Deputy Director Planning, and officers from Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation & Reconstruction departments.

DC Kupwara chairs DRSC Meeting

HT NEWS NETWORK

KUPWARA, FEB 18: Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, today chaired the monthly meeting of the District Road Safety Committee (DRSC) to review road safety measures across the district.

Stressing that road safety is paramount for protecting lives, the DC urged stakeholder coordination to ensure strict public adherence to traffic rules.

He directed enforcement agencies to intensify on-ground regulation with stringent action against violators, including a crackdown on underage and teenage driving, overloading, overspeeding, etc.

Traffic police was instructed to ramp up surprise checking drives, deployment additional personnel at critical junctions and market areas, as well as conduct of frequent anti-encroachment drives by MCs and the revenue department to control congestion.

The DC called for extensive awareness campaigns in schools and colleges targeting students, youth, and commercial drivers, led by ARTO, Traffic Police, and the Chief Education Officer.

He also reviewed action taken regarding the audit of school buses as well as inspections of driving schools by ARTO.

He also reviewed progress made regarding road safety audits, particularly on hilly roads and highways by PWD/PMGSY and BEACON, along with black spot identification and rectification.

Executing agencies were directed to ensure curve improvements and timely patching or repair of main and inner roads, as well as installation of signages at blind curves, and to ensure full safety compliance.

For emergency medical response, the DC emphasized ambulance deployment considering accident-prone spots as well as health institutions' readiness.

Departments were also asked to submit proposals for funding under the Road Safety Action Plan to augment infrastructure and medical care, and were directed to focus on accident-prone areas on the IRAD portal. The meeting was attended by ADC Kupwara, ASP Kupwara, ASP Handwara, SE R&B, CPO, ACD, CEO, CMO, ARTO Kupwara, Executive Engineers (PWD), EO MC, and other officials.

Bait-ul-Ankaboot Launched at University of Jammu

Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami Unveils Poetry Collection by Ayaz Rasool Nazki

JAMEEL ANSARI

JAMMU, FEB 18: The Department of Urdu, University of Jammu, organised an impressive literary function at the Prof. Giyan Chand Jain Seminar Hall to formally release Bait-ul-Ankaboot, the latest poetry collection by noted Kashmiri poet, writer, and intellectual Ayaz Rasool Nazki.

The book was formally unveiled by Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Kulgam, Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami.

The event witnessed the participation of prominent writers, poets, critics, members of civil society, and a large number of students.

The function was presided over by eminent Urdu critic Prof. Qudoos Javaid, while renowned Punjabi fiction writer Khalid Hussain attended as the Guest of Honour.

In his welcome address, Prof. Shuhab Inayat Malik, Head of the Department of Urdu, highlighted Nazki's significant contributions to Urdu language and literature. He noted that Nazki has so far published five poetry collections and that his writings reflect intellectual depth and artistic maturity.

Research scholar Vijay Dhar presented a detailed paper on Bait-ul-Ankaboot, critically examining its thematic concerns, stylistic features, and contemporary relevance. The paper appreciated the collection for its profound engagement with modern existential questions and social realities.

Addressing the gathering, Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami referred to Kashmir's rich five-thousand-year-



old cultural and literary heritage. He observed that the Nazki family has played a significant role in nurturing both Kashmiri and Urdu literature. He paid glowing tributes to veteran poet Mir Ghulam Rasool Nazki and noted writer and broadcaster Farooq Nazki for their lasting contributions. Describing Ayaz Rasool Nazki as a close friend, Tarigami remarked that his poetry reflects the truths of life and awakens social consciousness.

Guest of Honour Khalid Hussain and President of Adbi Markaz Kamraz, Mohammad Amin Bhat, also shared their views on the literary and intellectual merits of the book.

In his presidential address, Prof. Qudoos Javaid described Nazki's poetry as a harmonious blend of emotion and intellect, reflecting a rare balance between heart and mind.

Speaking on the occasion, Ayaz Rasool Nazki expressed his gratitude to the Department of Urdu, University of Jammu, for organising the dignified launch ceremony of his new collection. He thanked the chief guest, the presiding dignitaries, and espe-

cially Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami for gracing the event despite his busy schedule.

Nazki stated that Bait-ul-Ankaboot represents his intellectual and emotional reflections, capturing contemporary issues, the fragility of human relationships, social inequalities, and inner anguish in poetic form. According to him, poetry is not merely a play of words but a responsibility that mirrors the truths of society.

He also paid homage to his elders, particularly Mir Ghulam Rasool Nazki and Farooq Nazki, acknowledging that their guidance and literary environment shaped his creative journey.

Addressing young writers, he emphasized the importance of reading, observation, and intellectual honesty in producing meaningful literature.

The proceedings concluded with a vote of thanks presented by Dr. Abdul Rashid Minhas, who also conducted the event. The ceremony ended in a dignified and intellectually enriching atmosphere.

DSEK Declares 2026 as 'Year of Academic Excellence'

Unveils Academic Calendar for Transformative School Reforms

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 18: In a landmark initiative aimed at transforming the academic landscape of the Kashmir Division, the Directorate of School Education Kashmir (DSEK) has officially declared the year 2026 as the "Year of Academic Excellence."

The announcement was made by Naseer Ahmad Wani, Director School Education Kashmir, during a high-level review meeting convened at DSEK headquarters in connection with the reopening of schools after the winter vacation.

On the occasion, the Director formally issued a first-of-its-kind, comprehensive Academic Calendar 2026, designed to streamline and strengthen academic planning across all government and private schools in the Kashmir Division. The Academic Calendar 2026 stands remarkable for its innovative design and comprehensive scope. It aligns closely with the vision and recommendations of the National Education



Policy 2020, integrating structured teaching-learning strategies with clearly defined timelines and monitoring mechanisms.

Unlike previous editions, the 2026 Academic Calendar incorporates structured timelines for curriculum transaction, assessment practices, co-curricular engagements, and academic monitoring. It clearly specifies advance notification of winter and summer vacations, Schedule for Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs), dates for periodic assessments, annual examinations,

timelines for declaration of results and structured planning for holistic academic activities.

Emphasizing the seriousness of the initiative, the Director stated, "The declaration of 2026 as the 'Year of Academic Excellence' is not merely symbolic, but a focused and action-driven commitment to measurable academic outcomes. To ensure effective implementation, a robust and vibrant monitoring mechanism has been established at divisional, district and zonal levels."

Field officers have been direct-

ed to closely monitor classroom transactions to ensure quality teaching-learning processes, timely conduct of practical examinations, internal assessments, monitoring of regular attendance of students and teachers, completion of the admission process within stipulated timelines and preparation and strict adherence to proper timetables.

Reiterating the department's resolve, the Director said that the academic discipline, structured planning, and continuous supervision will be the key pillars for

achieving excellence in 2026. Stakeholders-including teachers, Heads of Institutions, field functionaries, parents and students have been urged to actively participate in this transformative mission. The Directorate reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to fostering a culture of accountability, innovation and quality education, ensuring that the 'Year of Academic Excellence' translates into tangible improvements in learning outcomes across all government and Private schools of the Kashmir Division.

CSIR-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine Concludes 3-Day Skill Program

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 18: The three-day Skill Development Program on Drug Discovery and Biomedical Research concluded successfully at the CSIR-IIIM Srinagar Branch. The hands-on training program, organized by CSIR-IIIM Srinagar Branch under the CSIR-Integrated Skill Initiatives, focused on practical laboratory techniques in biological assays and in vivo mice experiments. It brought together early-career researchers, laboratory professionals, and students for intensive skill development.

The program was organized by Dr. Fayaz Malik, Chief Scientist, along with his research group, who provided participants with hands-on training in drug discovery and biomedical research. The sessions on biological assays and mice experiments offered practical exposure to experimental design, assay execution, data collection, and ethical conduct of small animal studies.

Over three days, participants completed a structured sequence of laboratory modules. Day 1st focused on assay design and in vitro techniques. Participants learned about assay selection and optimization, sample preparation, cell-based assay setup, and quantitative readouts using spectrophotometric and plate-based methods. Special emphasis was placed on controls, reproducibility, and data integrity.

Day 2nd included hands-on training in biological assays and analytical methods. The sessions covered advanced biological assays, dose-response analysis, basic pharmacokinetic sampling and interpretation of assay results. Practical sessions included ELISA, enzymatic activity assays and troubleshooting common assay-related issues.

Day 3rd introduced ethical considerations in animal studies, including animal handling, dosing techniques, sample collection, and endpoint assessments. Participants practiced humane handling, accurate dosing, and collection of biological samples for further analysis, strictly following biosafety and animal welfare standards.

Dr. Zabeer Ahmed, Director, CSIR-IIIM Jammu and holding additional charge of CSIR-CIMAP Lucknow, addressed the participants through a virtual message. He congratulated the organizers and trainees and highlighted the importance of integrating rigorous laboratory practices with translational

research.

He emphasized that proficiency in assay validation, appropriate animal model selection, and robust data management is essential for advancing drug discovery pipelines and producing reliable, publishable results.

Er. Abdul Rahim, Head, IIIM Srinagar Branch and Chief Scientist, RMBD & IST, also addressed the valedictory session virtually. He appreciated the practical orientation of the program and reiterated the branch's commitment to strengthening local capacity in preclinical research. He stressed the need for standardized protocols, quality assurance in biological assays, and strict adherence to regulatory and ethical guidelines in animal studies.

Dr. Fayaz Malik thanked the faculty members, technical staff, and participants for their active participation. He said the interactive modules were designed to rapidly upgrade the skills of attendees in techniques directly relevant to drug discovery workflows.

Dr. Reyaz Ul Hassan, Senior Principal Scientist, highlighted the importance of careful experimental planning and proper documentation in translating laboratory findings into actionable research leads. Dr. Muzamil Ahmad, Principal Scientist, also addressed the closing session and shared practical insights on data analysis and quality control that participants can immediately apply in their laboratories.

The program was coordinated by Dr. Nasir ul Rasheed, Nodal Officer, Skill Development, under the CSIR-Integrated Skill Initiatives. The training forms part of CSIR's broader effort to bridge academia and industry through targeted, job-oriented skill development programs.

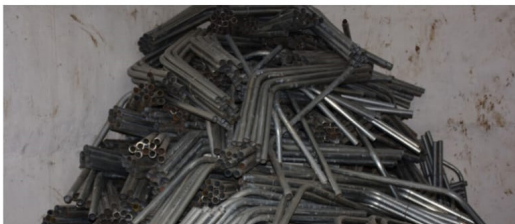


Commissioner SMC inspects EESL Lights Godown to assess quality standards, stock position of LED Street Lights

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 18: Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Faz Lul Haseeb, conducted a comprehensive inspection of the EESL lights godown to assess the quality standards and stock position of LED street lights being installed within the municipal limits under the Street Lighting Management Programme (SLMP).

The Commissioner was accompanied by the Executive Engineer (Electric) and other senior officials from the SMC Electrical Wing during the inspection. The team examined the technical specifications, storage conditions, and inventory records of the lighting



materials to ensure strict compliance with approved standards.

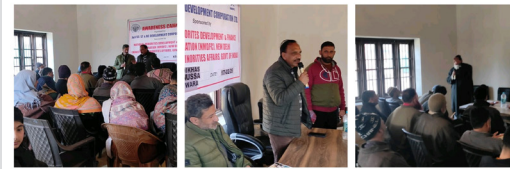
Emphasizing robust quality control measures, the Commissioner directed the concerned officers to ensure that all LED lights conform to prescribed technical benchmarks to guarantee optimal illumination, enhanced public safety, and long-term durability. He also instructed officials to maintain proper stock registers and implement effective monitoring mechanisms to uphold transparency and accountability in procurement and installation processes.

The inspection underscores SMC's continued commitment to strengthening urban infrastructure, promoting energy efficiency, and delivering improved civic amenities to the residents of Srinagar under the SLMP.

JKSCST Corporation organises awareness Camp at Kupwara

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KUPWARA, FEBRUARY 18: J&K Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes & Backward Classes Development Corporation Ltd. today, organised an Awareness Camp at Kandi Khas, Natnussa, Kupwara in collaboration with the National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation, New Delhi.



The event witnessed large participation from diverse communities, with significant presence of individuals belonging to National Minorities. The primary aim of the event was to raise awareness about the self-employment schemes undertaken by Corporation for the socio-economic upliftment of marginalized sections of society.

On the occasion officials of the Corporation, highlighted various low interest loan schemes offered by the Corporation, with special focus on minorities scheme. These Schemes aim to support marginalised section of society, particularly those designed for minorities' categories.

The District Manager, corporation Kupwara, Ghulam Nabi Kataria, delivered comprehensive presentation of Corporation's Schemes for establishing income generating units with special emphasis on Education loan Schemes.

The Deputy General Manager reiterated the Corporation's steadfast commitment to empowering individuals and shared the key features of the Schemes. He encouraged attendees to take advantage of available Schemes and to actively promote them, ensuring wider awareness and impact.

During the programme, information brochures and handbills detailing various schemes and eligibility criteria were distributed among the participants.

JKEDI & GDC Shopian signs MoU to promote Entrepreneurship & Startup Culture

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN, FEBRUARY 18: In a significant initiative aimed at fostering entrepreneurship and strengthening the startup ecosystem among students, the Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) Shopian has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Government Degree College Shopian.

The MoU was formally signed by JKEDI District Nodal Officer, Sayeem Rafiq, along with his team members, Mudasir Mohiuddin and Syed Rizwan Andrabi.

Representing Government Degree College Shopian, the agreement was signed by the Principal, GDC, Prof. Tariq Hussain Mir, accompanied by Dr. Mohd Iqbal Dar and Dr. Nazir Ahmad Bhat.



The collaboration aims to strengthen institutional partnership for the promotion of entrepreneurship development, innovation and startup-oriented activities among students. Under the agreement, JKEDI Shopian will extend technical support through structured training programmes, entrepreneurship awareness sessions, mentorship and capacity-building initiatives designed to encourage students to explore self-employment and enterprise creation as viable career pathways. As part of the partnership, both institutions will jointly organize Entrepreneurship Awareness Programmes (EAPs), skill development workshops, startup boot camps, business plan competitions and incubation support activities.

These initiatives are intended to equip students with practical entrepreneurial skills, enhance employability and contribute to the development of a vibrant startup ecosystem in the region. Officials from both institutions emphasized that the MoU will play a crucial role in nurturing an entrepreneurial mindset among the youth of Shopian, while contributing to local economic growth and job creation.

The initiative aligns with the broader vision of promoting innovation-driven growth and empowering educated youth to become job creators rather than job seekers.

SKUAST-K concludes 21-Day winter school on regenerative agriculture

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 18: In a significant move toward fortifying India's agricultural future against the rising challenges of climate change, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir concluded a 21-day ICAR Winter School today at its Shalimar campus.

The intensive program, 'Fostering Climate Resilience and Sustainability through Organic and Regenerative Agriculture', brought together an elite group of 30 scientists and faculty members representing 10 different states and Union Territories, marking a milestone in national collaborative research.

The program was conducted under the supervision of Course Director Prof Parmmeet Singh, Chief Scientist of Agronomy, who designed a curriculum that bridged the gap between traditional organic practices and modern regenerative science. Over the course of three weeks, the Directorate of Research transformed into a hub of global intellectual exchange, featuring a rigorous schedule of 40 offline and 10 online sessions delivered by some of the most influential voices in world



agriculture.

The academic rigor of the Winter School was underscored by the participation of legendary soil scientist and World Food Prize Laureate, Dr Rattan Lal, whose insights into carbon sequestration and soil health provided a visionary framework for the participants. Other international luminaries included Prof Baghirath Singh Chauhan from the University of Queensland, Australia, and Dr Asmita Murumukar of Ohio State University, USA. The sessions were further enriched by Dr Ramesh Singh, Global Leader for Regenerative Agriculture at ICRIASAT, and Dr K Kathiresan, former Vice-Chancellor of Annamalai University,

alongside specialized resource persons from the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and various State Agricultural Universities.

During the valedictory function, Dr Haroon Rashid Naik, Director, Research SKUAST-K, commended the organizers for maintaining a high standard of scientific discourse. The highlights of the program were interactive lectures, practical laboratory work, and field exposure visits that allowed participants to see regenerative principles in action. He encouraged the visiting scientists to act as ambassadors for these "nature-positive" technologies, urging them to implement and scale the knowledge gained within their home institutions to ensure a ripple effect across India's diverse agro-climatic zones.

The ceremony concluded with the distribution of participation certificates by Chief Guest Vice Chancellor, Prof Nazir Ahmad Ganai, who thanked ICAR for its continued trust in SKUAST-K to lead such vital national initiatives. He said the completion of the Winter School has effectively sown the seeds for a more sustainable and resilient agricultural landscape, positioning Kashmir at the forefront of the global regenerative movement.

AWARENESS UNDER BAL VIVAH MukT BHARAT HELD AT SUMBAL, HAJIN AND AJAS AREAS OF BANDIPORA

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, FEBRUARY 18: As part of the national Bal Vivah MukT Bharat (Child Marriage Free India) 100-Days Intensive Awareness Campaign, officials from the District Child Protection Unit, Child Welfare Committee, Child Helpline and Child Helpdesk conducted extensive sensitization and outreach programmes across the Sumbal, Hajin, and Ajas areas of district Bandipora.

Under the structured drive against early and illegal marriages, frontline child protection officials engaged with diverse community

groups including shopkeepers, drivers, students, general public, and local residents to raise awareness about the legal provisions and serious consequences under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, which prohibits marriages involving minors and mandates reporting of suspected cases.

During the activities, officers emphasized the importance of community vigilance and urged citizens to report any suspected incidents of child marriage immediately by calling Child Helpline 1098, a toll-free emergency number dedicated



to reporting and intervening in child protection concerns. IEC (Information, Education and Communication) materials including pamphlets and posters highlighting legal punishments and how to safeguard child rights were distributed to residents and prominently displayed at markets, bus stands, schools, and other high-footfall locations in these areas.

Officials highlighted that community outreach and awareness are key pillars of the national campaign launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development Government of

India to mobilize stakeholders for prevention of child marriages, promote child Rights and protection, and ensure widespread knowledge about legal remedies and reporting avenues under law.

The outreach in Sumbal, Hajin and Ajas reflects the ongoing drive by district administration to involve local communities in the national mission to make India child-marriage-free by enhancing grassroots awareness, strengthening reporting systems, and reinforcing legal literacy among parents, youth and community members.

JKEDI launches four-week ESDP at ITI Jammu under RAMP scheme

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 18: The Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) today commenced a four-week Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Programme (ESDP) at the Government Industrial Training Institute (ITI), Jammu, under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) scheme. The initiative is funded by the Ministry of MSME, Government of India and implemented by the Industries and Commerce Department, Government of Jammu and Kashmir.

Thirty-two aspiring entrepreneurs are participating in the 104-hour intensive training programme. The ESDP is part of a larger initiative implemented across all districts of Jammu and Kashmir to foster entrepreneurship among youth and equip them with tools to manage sustainable business ventures.

Speaking on the occasion, District Nodal Officer JKEDI Jammu Rajesh Kotwal provided an overview of the ESDP and highlighted



the institute's role in promoting self-employment. He reaffirmed JKEDI's commitment to empowering local youth through capacity-building initiatives.

The curriculum includes modules on enterprise management, marketing strategies, business simulations, market surveys and field visits.

This practical approach is designed to build core entrepreneurial competencies and help participants become self-reliant job creators.

Foundation stone laid for community hall and rooms near Trimbakeshwar Temple, Purmandal

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SAMBA, FEBRUARY 18: DDC Chairman Samba, Keshav Dutt Sharma today laid the foundation stone for the construction of a Community Hall and rooms near Trimbakeshwar Temple, Purmandal, adjoining AIIMS Vijaypur.

The project with an estimated cost of 1.05 crore aims to augment facilities for devotees and visitors at the prominent pilgrimage site.

The foundation ceremony was held in the presence of DDC Vice-Chairman Samba, Balwan Singh and DDC members of the district.

Speaking on the occasion, the DDC Chairman stated that the project will provide improved amenities for pilgrims and strengthen infrastructure in the temple area.

He added that the initiative reflects the commitment towards development of religious and tourism infrastructure in the



district.

The community hall and rooms will serve as a dedicated space for gatherings, accommodation and other community activities, particularly during religious events and peak pilgrimage seasons.

The project will be executed by the Public Works (R&B) Department.



KPDCL observes “Smart Meter Pakhwada” to promote consumer awareness, Digital Power Services

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 18: In a significant step towards strengthening consumer engagement and as a part of a nationwide awareness campaign, Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDCL) is observing “Smart Meter Pakhwada” across the Kashmir Valley.

The fortnight-long programme, which commenced on February 9, will continue until February 23, 2026. The initiative aims to create awareness among electricity consumers about the benefits, features, and functioning of prepaid smart meters, as well as various billing applications line “smartsbs” and “bill sahuliyat+” while encouraging greater adoption of these digital power management tools.

As part of the campaign, help desks and informational kiosks have been established at divisional and sub divisional level throughout the



Valley.

The camps feature interactive sessions and open discussions, allowing consumers to engage directly with officials and seek clarifications on smart meters.

Informative leaflets are being distributed, and live demonstrations are being conducted to explain real-time energy consumption tracking and automated billing features which smart metering offers to consumers.

Officials are also demonstrating consumer mobile application (billsahuliyat+ and smartbs) that enables users to monitor their electricity consumption in real time. Through this digital platform, consumers can conveniently access usage data from their homes and gain advance insights into their electricity bills.

The campaign is witnessing active participation from senior officers, field engineers, PMA representatives, and the implementing agency, along with encouraging response from consumers.

KPDCL has urged all electricity consumers to actively participate in the awareness camps and take full advantage of the initiative.

The corporation emphasized that smart meters represent not merely a technological upgrade, but a vital step toward building a reliable, efficient, and future-ready power distribution system in the region.

DYSS Baramulla continues Block-Level selection trials in district

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BARAMULLA, FEBRUARY 18: District Youth Services & Sports (DYSS) Baramulla, continued the League of Classics Block-Level selection trials for Football, Volleyball, and Cricket (Under-17 & Under-19 Boys) on the third consecutive day under the banner of the Youth Engagement Programme 2026, reaffirming its commitment to strengthening grassroots sports and nurturing young talent across the district.

The selection trials were organised at multiple venues including Block Wagoora, Block Tujjer, Block Zangeer, Block Dangiwa, Block Narwaw, Block Nadihal, and Block Tangmarg, where a large number of young athletes participated with great zeal and competitive spirit. At Block Wagoora, Volleyball trials for Under-17 and Under-19 Boys witnessed the participation of 83 players.

Block Zangeer hosted Cricket selection trials for the same age categories with an impressive turnout of 250 participants.

Meanwhile, Block Dangiwa conducted Volleyball trials with 27 participants, and Block Narwaw recorded the participation



of 30 players in Volleyball trials.

The enthusiastic response from the youth reflects the growing momentum of sports culture in Baramulla and the success of sustained initiatives undertaken by the department to engage young people in constructive and healthy activities.

The trials will continue in other blocks in the coming days, after which the shortlisted players will compete in Inter-Block District-Level Competitions, providing a strong platform for further talent identification and development.

DLSA Reasi organises awareness programmes on social and legal issues

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

REASI, FEBRUARY 18: Under the guidance of Chairman, District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Reasi Khalil Choudhary and Secretary DLSA Reasi Pooja Gupta, an awareness programme on the 'Prohibition of Dowry and its Legal Implications' was conducted today by the Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs) of Tehsil Legal Services Committee (TLSC) Katra at Panchayat Karua.

The programme aimed to sensitise local residents about the adverse impact of dowry on families and society. The PLVs explained how the practice leads to exploitation, harassment, domestic violence and crimes against women. Emphasis was laid on promoting gender equality and respecting the rights of women.

Separately, an awareness programme on 'Mediation for Nation 2.0' was organised by the PLVs of TLSC Mahore at Village Maghai Jagir. The PLVs elaborated on the concept of mediation, highlighting it as a voluntary, confidential and cost-effective process for resolving disputes peacefully without prolonged litigation. Villagers were informed about the role of legal services institutions in facilitating mediation and providing free legal aid. The session emphasised resolving family, matrimonial, property and civil disputes through dialogue to maintain social harmony.

Additionally, a 'Bal Vivah Mukh Bharat' awareness programme was conducted by the PLVs of TLSC Mahore. They highlighted the objectives of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Bal Vivah Mukh Bharat schemes, emphasising gender equality, girls' education and the prevention of female foeticide. Participants were informed about legal provisions and government welfare schemes designed to safeguard the rights of women and children.

Furthermore, an awareness programme on the 'Rights of Senior Citizens' was conducted by Panel Lawyers and PLVs of DLSA Reasi at Reasi. The objective was to sensitise senior citizens and the general public about legal rights and protections available under the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007. The speakers highlighted provisions regarding maintenance, protection of life and property, establishment of old age homes and legal remedies for cases of neglect or abuse.

JMC Commissioner conducts sanitation and anti-encroachment drive in wards 49 and 74

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 18: Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC), Dr Devansh Yadav today conducted an extensive inspection of Ward Nos 49 and 74, covering Narwal, Bathindi, Sunjwan, Chowadi and adjoining areas to review sanitation standards and address illegal encroachments.

During the tour, the Commissioner assessed the cleanliness of main roads, inner lanes, drains and public spaces. He reviewed the progress of ongoing developmental works and examined the upkeep of civic amenities.

Emphasising the importance of hygiene, Dr Yadav directed officials to ensure regular garbage lifting, strict waste segregation at source and timely desilting of drains to prevent waterlogging. He stressed the urgent cleaning of deep drains and nallahs, particularly those subject to heavy flow during the rainy season and instructed that preventive measures be taken in advance.

As part of the enforcement drive, illegal encroachments on roads and footpaths were removed and unauthorised roadside stalls were cleared to restore public spaces. Encroachments on government land in the Sunjwan



area were dismantled on the spot. The Commissioner directed enforcement teams to maintain

vigilance and initiate action against repeat violators. Addressing officers, Dr Yadav emphasised improved

inter-departmental coordination and consistent implementation of sanitation measures. He stated that cleanliness drives must be treated as a continuous civic responsibility.

The Commissioner appealed to citizens to cooperate with the Corporation by adopting responsible waste disposal practices. Among those accompanying the Commissioner were Joint Commissioner (Health and Sanitation) Abdul Sattar, Deputy Commissioner (South) Chand Singh, Health Officer Dr Vinod Sharma, Executive Engineer Yasir Bashir Kichloo and Chief Transport Officer Balkar Angurana.

DC Kishtwar reviews performance of Kissan Khidmat Ghars, sets one-week deadline for 100% farm registration

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KISHTWAR, FEBRUARY 18: A comprehensive review meeting of Krishi Udhayis (KUs) associated with Kissan Khidmat Ghar (KKG) Kishtwar was held today under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar, Pankaj Kumar Sharma to assess the progress and performance of KKGs across the district.

During the meeting, CAO Kishtwar, Kushal Chandel informed that a total of 25,949 farmers have been registered under the KKG App.

However, only 2,789 farms approximately 10 percent of the registered farmers have been added to the KKG portal so far.

The progress of e-KYC was also reported to be significantly low, with only 315 cases completed to date.

It was further highlighted that daily reporting by Krishi Udhayis remains unsatisfactory, as merely 20 KUs are submitting daily reports regularly.

Taking serious note of the slow pace of progress, the Deputy Commissioner directed all Krishi



Udhayis to intensify their efforts and ensure 100 percent farm registration of already registered farmers under the KKG App within one week.

He stressed the need for expediting e-KYC completion and maintaining consistent daily reporting without fail.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the allied departments to issue notices to non-functional or defunct KKGs and initiate the recruitment process

for new Krishi Udhayis wherever necessary.

He further directed that weekly progress under allied sectors be closely monitored to ensure timely achievement of targets.

The meeting was attended by CHO Kishtwar Sajid Mustafa, Incharge KVK Kishtwar Barjesh Ajriwat, LDM Kishtwar Harsh Rawal, NO KKG Kishtwar and other concerned officers and staff from concerned departments.

DC Doda reviews progress of projects under SASCI, DAJ-GUA and Heritage initiatives

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

DODA, FEBRUARY 18: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Doda, Harvinder Singh today chaired a comprehensive review meeting at DC Office Complex Doda to assess the progress of various developmental projects being implemented under the SASCI, Dharti Aaba Janatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJ-GUA) and Heritage initiatives in the district.

During the meeting, the DC Doda undertook a detailed sector-wise review of ongoing works and evaluated both the physical and financial progress of the projects.



Emphasis was laid on timely execution, adherence to quality standards and optimal utilization of allocated resources to ensure that the intended benefits reach the public without delay. The DC Doda also emphasized the timely procurement of essential infrastructure for girls' hostels, including almirahs, furniture, racks and other requisite items, under these initiatives.

Officers from the concerned departments briefed the chair on the current status of projects, challenges faced during implementation and measures being adopted to overcome bottlenecks.

The DC Doda directed the concerned XENs and AEEs to ensure timely completion of all ongoing projects under the said initiatives and stressed the need for close monitoring and effective coordination among departments.

The meeting was attended by the Additional District Development Commissioner Doda Roshan Lal, Chief Planning Officer Doda Manesh Kumar, CMO Doda, Superintending Engineer PWD (R&B) Circle Doda, Sheep Husbandry Officer Doda, concerned XENs and AEEs.

Social Welfare Department organises Senior Sammaan Samaroh; DC Poonch felicitates senior citizens

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

POONCH, FEBRUARY 18: The Department of Social Welfare Poonch organised a 'Senior Sammaan Samaroh' (Senior Citizen Meet) today to honour the contribution of senior citizens to society. The event witnessed participation from elderly citizens, officers, health experts and civil society members.

The programme commenced with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp followed by the National Anthem. District Social Welfare Officer Poonch Khalil A Bandy delivered the welcome address, highlighting the event's objectives and reiterating the department's commitment to the welfare and empowerment of senior citizens.

Deputy Commissioner Poonch Ashok Kumar Sharma graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Senior Superintendent of Police Poonch



Shafket Hussain Bhat was also present and appreciated the department's initiative.

Dr Anu Bhardwaj from HIIMS delivered a guest lecture on age-related health issues. She gave a presentation on preventive healthcare, lifestyle management and early diagnosis of common ailments affecting the elderly. An interactive session followed, during which Dr Bhardwaj addressed queries from the participants.

Senior citizens were felicitated with shawls and warm bottles were distributed to ensure their comfort during the winter. Banks supported the initiative by providing warm bottles to marginalised senior citizens, while the Ayush Department distributed free medicines. Singer Master Kartar Chand performed during the event.

Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Commissioner noted that

this was the first Senior Citizen Meet organised by the Social Welfare Department in the district.

He congratulated the department and emphasised the need to continue efforts to safeguard the dignity and health of the elderly.

The Deputy Commissioner also handed over Senior Citizen Certificates to five beneficiaries.

Prominent attendees included ADC Tahir Mustafa Malik, ACR Muhammad Sayeed, CMO Dr Parvaiz, Principal GDC Poonch Dr Jasbir Singh, DTO Haneeff Tantray, District Officer Ayush, LDM and Tehsildar Haveli Azhar Majid. Several prominent citizens, including retired officials and civil society representatives were also present.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by District Social Welfare Officer Khalil A Bandy.



HT EDITORIAL

Improve work culture in banks

The people of Jammu & Kashmir associate themselves with the Jammu & Kashmir Bank Limited. As such it is the responsibility of the bank management to provide all kinds of support and relief to the residents of the union territory. In the recent past the bank has taken some steps that go against the public spirit and the people have somewhat been disillusioned by such steps of the bank management.

The bank management had some time back increased the short messaging service (SMS) charges for its customers and the same has not gone well with the common masses. Since the people of Jammu & Kashmir are up against many odds it would have been appropriate for the bank management to persist with the present SMS charges. In addition to this the Jammu & Kashmir Bank is a government bank and governments are supposed to be people friendly.

The people of Jammu & Kashmir usually prefer to open an account in the Jammu & Kashmir bank rather than other banks operating in the union territory. Keeping this in mind, the bank management should have been lenient towards its customers while charging them on account of SMSs. Since the salary account of the government employees of the union territory is with the Jammu & Kashmir Bank it is imperative that special privileges are given to such employees.

Complaints have come from certain quarters about the irresponsible behaviour of the staff of Jammu & Kashmir Bank at some branches. This needs to be looked into by the people at helm so that corrective measures are taken. This would ensure that people of the union territory identify themselves with the Jammu & Kashmir Bank in the real sense. Proper training needs to be given to the staff so that they act in a responsible manner and behave politely.

The bank management needs to take some innovative measures so that their performance is at par with the other banks operating in the market. There is an old saying that 'sky is the limit' and the same needs to be followed in principle by the staff and management of Jammu & Kashmir Bank. There is always a scope for improvement and one should not be complacent with respect to his or her working.

It is the wish of the people of Jammu & Kashmir that the Jammu & Kashmir Bank achieves many milestones and the same is possible when everyone associated with the bank chips in with his or her best. The bank employees as well as the management need to pull up their socks as and where required. This would give a new dimension to the banking services with the people being ultimate beneficiaries.

Doodhpathri the true pearl of District Budgam



■ SAHIL MANZOOR BHATTI

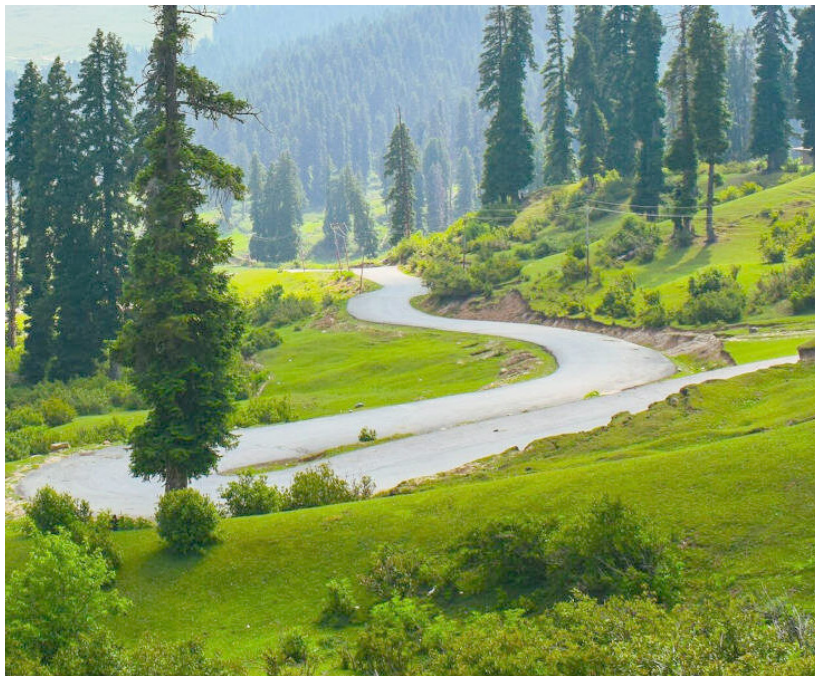
Hoteliers, ponywalas, ATV owners, tea stall owners, and all those associated with the business sector of Doodhpathri are filled with joy. Immense pleasure can be seen on their faces as the LG administration has reopened several tourist destinations, and Doodhpathri is one of them.

The Kashmir Valley is famous throughout the world for its lush, charming, and endowed beauty. There are many amazing facts about the valley. It truly looks like paradise on earth. It is rich in nature-blessed vegetation, springs, waterfalls, and crystal-clear rivers that flow from the lap of the majestic mountains of the Pir Panjal range, beautifying and reflecting the real face of Kashmir. The people of the valley are benevolent and are known for their great hospitality, as many tourists testify.

Another important fact is that the tourism sector is the backbone of Kashmir's economy. Lakhs of people from different age groups earn their livelihoods from this sector. The tourism department plays a vital role in generating employment for unemployed youth. At the same time, it discovers and develops new recreational places for local residents as well as for tourists who visit from different corners of the country and the world. The department also addresses the grievances faced by tourists on a priority basis. This is quite impressive. However, there are still miles to go in terms of better and secure accommodation. Facilities should be available throughout the year for visitors. There is also a need to identify and promote more attractive destinations in the future.

Doodhpathri is one of the emerging tourist spots in the valley. The name "Doodhpathri" consists of two words: "Doodh," which means milk, referring to the milky appearance of the crystal-clear water of the Shaliganga River, and "Pathri," which means meadows. Thus, it means "the milky meadow." Doodhpathri is located about 45 kilometers from the summer capital, Srinagar, and about 36 kilometers from the district headquarters of Budgam.

Doodhpathri enhances the beauty of Budgam district in many ways and generates livelihood opportunities for the locals of the adjoining vil-



lages. According to local belief, the name of this beautiful place was given by the great Sufi saint Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Wali (RA), popularly known as Nund Rishi and Alamdare-Kashmir among the people of the valley. Doodhpathri has been famous among the natives of District Budgam for centuries. Earlier, it was mainly used for grazing purposes, and even today, mud houses known as "Kothas" can be seen there, which were traditionally used by shepherds.

Doodhpathri is situated in central Kashmir in the district of Budgam. The district is blessed with several other tourist destinations such as Yousmarg and Charar-e-Sharief, which is the shrine of Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Wali (RA). Tosamaidan is another emerging tourist destination in the district and is rich in natural beauty and attractive landscapes. Villages such as Ichgam, Kremshora, Khansahib, and Yarikhah can be accessed through Doodhpathri. There are also alternative routes via Magam, Beerwah, Arizal, Raiyar, Raithan, and Mujhpathri.

Places to Visit Sotchal (Sochal) Pathri

Sotchal Pathri, located near Doodhpathri, serves as a resting place for visitors. The place is quite picturesque and showcases the natural beauty of the region. The green meadows, fresh air, and peaceful surroundings make it an ideal spot for relaxation. Tourists often spend hours enjoying the calm atmosphere and capturing memorable photographs.

Sukhnag

The Sukhnag River is located in the lap of the Pir Panjal Mountains, flowing through the beautiful landscapes of Parihas Doodhpathri and Sitaharan Khag. The name "Sukh Nag" consists

of two Kashmiri words: "Sukh," meaning peace or calm, and "Naag," meaning spring. Thus, it can be interpreted as the "spring of peace."

The Sukhnag River beautifies and quenches the thirst of several villages along its course, including Arizal, Zanigam, and Beerwah. Eventually, it merges with the Jhelum River. Sukhnag is one of the major tributaries of the Jhelum and plays an important role in supporting local agriculture and daily life.

The river originates from the upper mountain hills of Tosamaidan. Its sources include high-altitude springs and mountain streams that enhance the beauty of the lush green forests in the region. The Sukhnag River has immense tourism potential. With proper planning and attention from the administration, it can be developed as an important tourist attraction. It is located just about a 40-minute walk from the Tourist Reception Centre (TRC) at Raiyar-Ich, Tangnar.

If brought under the tourism development plan of the Kashmir Valley, the concerned departments would discover many hidden aspects of this beautiful place. The District Administration of Budgam has been making efforts for the upliftment of the district, yet several basic facilities required for tourism are still lacking. Budgam district is home to renowned tourist destinations such as Yousmarg and Doodhpathri, and more are being added to the list. Tosamaidan, a newly introduced tourist destination, has great tourism potential and requires assistance and focused development from the administration.

Dear readers, In Sha Allah, in the future I will bring more interesting information and facts about these

destinations and try to highlight the unmatched beauty of the Sukhnag River and other hidden gems of Budgam district.

Raiyar-Ich

Raiyar-Ich is a picturesque hamlet and a peaceful resting place for tourists who visit from different parts of the country and the world. There are interesting facts associated with the name "Raiyar." According to local tradition, "Raiyar" consists of two Kashmiri words: "Rai," meaning lost, and "Yaar," meaning friend.

It is believed that the name was given by the great mystic Sufi saint Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Wali (RA). According to a local legend narrated by Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Bhatti Sahib, when the saint arrived in the village from the forests of the Pir Panjal, he sent his companions to different parts of Kashmir to spread the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Thereafter, he continued his spiritual journey alone toward the Dreygam Cave.

Raiyar-Ich today stands as a symbol of natural beauty and spiritual heritage. The hamlet offers breathtaking views, fresh mountain air, and a calm environment that refreshes the mind and soul of every visitor. It serves as a gateway to many trekking routes and picnic spots around Doodhpathri.

Doodhpathri at its best

The reopening of Doodhpathri has brought new hope and happiness to thousands of families whose livelihoods depend on tourism. The smiling faces of hoteliers, pony handlers, shopkeepers, and transport operators clearly reflect the importance of this sector. Tourism not only strengthens the economy but also builds connections between cultures and communities.

Doodhpathri, with its green meadows, flowing rivers, snow-capped mountains, and peaceful environment, truly calls nature lovers after its temporary closure. It invites tourists to witness its unmatched charm and serenity once again. With better infrastructure, proper maintenance, and sustainable development, Doodhpathri and other destinations of Budgam district can shine even brighter on the tourism map of Kashmir.

The valley has always welcomed visitors with open arms, warm hospitality, and unforgettable experiences. Doodhpathri is not just a tourist spot; it is a feeling, a memory, and a natural treasure that continues to inspire and attract people from near and far.

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The Silent Crisis: How Digital Addiction is Reshaping Human Behaviour



■ SYED SAHRAAN HUSSAIN AL-BUKHARI
AL-NAQVI

In the modern world, addiction no longer looks the way it used to. It is no longer confined to substances, chemicals, or visible dependency. Instead, it lives quietly in our pockets, on our desks, and beside our beds – inside glowing screens. Digital addiction has emerged as one of the most powerful yet least recognised social crises of the 21st century, reshaping how humans think, communicate, and live.

A World Designed to Hook the Mind

Smartphones, social media platforms, and streaming services are not neutral tools – they are designed for attention capture. Algorithms reward engagement, notifications trigger dopamine responses, and endless scrolling removes natural stopping points. Over time, the brain adapts to constant stimulation, making silence, stillness, and offline life feel uncomfortable.

What once felt like convenience has become compulsion. People no longer check their phones – they reach for them automatically, without intention or awareness.

The Psychological Impact

Digital addiction is deeply linked to anxiety, depression, loneliness, and low self-esteem. Constant comparison on social media creates unrealistic standards of success, beauty, and happiness. The mind becomes overstimulated but emotionally undernourished.

Attention spans shrink. Deep thinking becomes harder. Reading long texts feels exhausting. The brain becomes trained for speed, not depth.

Social Disconnection in a Connected World

Ironically, a hyper-connected world has produced a generation that feels more isolated than ever. Conversations are interrupted by notifications. Relationships compete with screens. Physical presence loses value in the face of digital validation.

Human connection becomes filtered through likes, views, and metrics – replacing authenticity with performance.

Children and the Digital Trap

Children grow up in an environment where screens are caregivers, teachers, and entertainers. Early exposure affects brain development, emotional regulation, and social skills. The line between learning and dependency becomes dangerously thin. Without guidance, digital tools shape identity before identity has time to form.

Reclaiming Control

Digital addiction is not about rejecting technology – it's about regaining agency. Solutions lie in digital literacy, conscious usage, screen boundaries, and cultural change. Schools must teach digital responsibility. Families must model healthy behaviour. Platforms must be held accountable for ethical design.

Technology should serve human growth, not replace it.

Conclusion

Digital addiction is a silent transformation of human life. It does not destroy societies loudly – it reshapes them quietly. The greatest danger is not technology itself, but unconscious dependence on it.

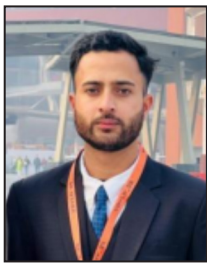
The future will not be decided by how advanced our machines become, but by how well humans learn to remain human in a digital world.

Author's Note

This article is written as a reflection on modern digital culture and its psychological and social consequences. It is not an attack on technology, but a call for balance, awareness, and responsibility. Technology has immense power to improve human life – but only when humans remain in control of it, not the other way around. The intention of this piece is to encourage readers to pause, reflect, and question their relationship with screens, not to reject modern life, but to reclaim it consciously.

Marriage and Morality in the Modern Age

A scholarly perspective



■ **MUDASIR AHMAD NAJAR**

Marriage has always been regarded as one of the most important institutions in human society. Across cultures, religions and civilizations, it has been seen as a bond that brings stability, responsibility and moral balance to individual life and to society as a whole. However, in the modern age the meaning and spirit of marriage appear to be facing serious challenges. Scholars, thinkers and social observers increasingly express concern about the weakening moral values within married life. One of the most troubling realities of today's generation is that many people enter marriage either by personal choice or family decision yet fail to remain morally committed to it. After marriage, instead of strengthening their bond with their spouse, some individuals continue personal relationships outside marriage or actively seek new emotional or romantic connections. This behavior raises deep moral and social questions that demand serious reflection.

From a scholarly point of view, marriage is not just a legal contract or a social custom; it is a moral responsibility. When a person agrees to marriage, he or she accepts a promise of loyalty, honesty and respect. Breaking this promise emotionally or physically is not a sign of modern thinking, but a sign of moral weakness and lack of self-discipline.

■ **Marriage: More Than a Social Agreement**

Scholars emphasize that marriage is meant to bring peace, companionship and

emotional security. It is designed to channel human emotions in a healthy and responsible way. However, in the modern age, marriage is often treated as a temporary arrangement rather than a lifelong commitment. Many people believe that marriage should not restrict their personal desires or freedom. This misunderstanding has created confusion between freedom and irresponsibility. True freedom, scholars explain, is not the ability to follow every desire, but the strength to control oneself for a greater good. Marriage requires patience, sacrifice and compromise qualities that are slowly disappearing in a fast-paced, self-centered world.

■ **Moral Preparation Is Often Ignored**

One of the main reasons behind the moral decline in marriage is the lack of moral and emotional preparation before marriage. People focus heavily on financial stability, social status and wedding ceremonies, but ignore character building. Scholars argue that without moral training, a person may be legally married but emotionally immature. In earlier generations, moral values such as loyalty, honesty and self-restraint were taught at home and reinforced by society. Today, these values are often replaced by messages that promote instant pleasure and personal satisfaction. As a result, commitment is seen as a burden rather than a virtue.

■ **The Role of Desire and Self-Control**

From a scholarly and ethical perspective, desire itself is not wrong. Human beings are naturally emotional and attracted to others. However, morality lies in controlling desire, not being controlled by it. Scholars clearly state that self-control is the foundation of moral life. A married person is expected to act with maturity and awareness. Seeking emotional comfort or excitement outside marriage may feel easy in the short term, but it destroys trust and damages families in the long run.



Scholars describe this behavior as a failure to understand the true purpose of marriage.

■ **Social Media and Moral Confusion**

Modern technology has added another layer to this problem. Social media platforms make communication easy, private and constant. Boundaries that once existed are now easily crossed. Scholars warn that what begins as casual conversation can slowly turn into emotional attachment, leading to moral failure. The digital world often promotes unrealistic expectations of love and relationships. Perfect images, filtered lives, and public displays of affection create dissatisfaction in real marriages. Instead of working on their marital relationship, some individuals look for excitement elsewhere.

■ **Forced Marriages and Emotional Distance**

Scholars also acknowledge that forced or unwilling marriages can contribute to this issue. When a person enters marriage

without emotional acceptance, inner conflict may arise. However, scholars firmly state that once marriage is accepted, responsibility cannot be ignored. Personal dissatisfaction does not justify betrayal. If a marriage is unhappy, the solution lies in communication, counseling, or ethical separation not in secret relationships that harm all involved.

■ **Impact on Family and Society**

The moral decline within marriage does not affect only two individuals; it affects the entire society. Families are the foundation of social stability. When trust breaks within families, children suffer emotionally, social harmony weakens, and moral confusion spreads.

Scholars warn that a society where loyalty is ignored will face increasing problems such as broken families, emotional loneliness, and loss of trust. No society can remain strong if its moral values collapse at the family level.

■ **Marriage as a Test of Character**

From a scholarly viewpoint, marriage

is a test of character. Love may rise and fall, attraction may change, but responsibility must remain firm. Scholars often say that real morality appears not when desires are absent, but when desires are controlled. A person's greatness is not shown by how many relationships he can create, but by how faithfully he can honor one commitment.

■ **Message for Building a Good Society**

For a healthy and peaceful society, scholars stress the need to restore moral education. Young people must be taught that marriage is not an obstacle to happiness, but a path to emotional stability when handled responsibly. Families, educational institutions and media must promote values of loyalty, respect and accountability.

Society should also stop normalizing immoral behavior in the name of modernity. True progress is not measured by freedom without limits, but by responsibility guided by conscience.

Men and women alike must understand that faithfulness is not weakness—it is strength. Honoring one relationship builds trust, peace and dignity.

Marriage and morality are deeply connected. In the modern age, the challenge is not marriage itself, but the loss of moral discipline and responsibility after marriage. Scholars agree that restoring morality within marriage is essential for saving families and strengthening society.

A morally strong marriage creates a morally strong society. If individuals learn to balance personal desires with ethical responsibility, marriage will once again become a source of peace rather than conflict.

In the end, a good society begins with good families and good families begin with moral commitment.

Author from Dandmoha kreeri
Baramulla

Skills and proficiency is the greatest miracle that a man needs



■ **M S NAZKI**

Life is like a tango; fortunate are the few who can master it

Forging Skills, Shaping Warriors for Tomorrow's Battlefields.

You only ever have three things: 1) your self, wellbeing and mindset 2) Your life network, resources and resourcefulness 3) Your reputation and goodwill. Treasure and tend the first. Value, support and build the second. And mindfully, wisely ensure that the third (your life current and savings account) is always in credit. 39 GTC teaches you that!

A profession that completely matches your talent, aspirations and skills is the best profession you can choose.!

Paper qualification is no longer enough in today's competitive society. You need skills that people will pay for.!

Based on the legacy of the 39 Gorkha Training Centre (39 GTC) in Varanasi, which transforms raw recruits into disciplined, courageous soldiers of the Indian Army, here is a motivational short story.

The Mountain's Promise

Raju came from a quiet village in the hills, his pockets empty but his heart heavy with the desire to make his family proud. He arrived at the gates of the 39 Gorkha Training Centre in Varanasi, a young, raw recruit looking at the massive, disciplined complex that would become his home for 42 weeks.

The first few weeks were brutal. The heat of the plains was different from the cool mountain air. The training was relentless—long marches, intense obstacle courses, and early morning runs. Several times, Raju felt his strength failing. He wanted to give up, thinking he wasn't strong enough.

One afternoon, broken and exhausted after a failed drill, he sat near the Motivational Hall and Museum inside the 39 GTC complex. He looked up at the names

inscribed in the memorial lawn—soldiers who had fought in World Wars, 1962, 1965, and 1971. He realized these were not just names; they were ordinary boys like him who refused to quit.

A seasoned Instructor (JCO) noticed him and walked over. He didn't offer sympathy; he offered perspective. "The Gurkha does not stop when he is tired, Raju. He stops when he is done. Look at the khukri—it is not sharp because it is made of special metal. It is sharp because it is constantly grinded."

Raju stood up. The fear was gone, replaced by a fierce resolve. He began to embrace the hardship. He treated every push-up, every firing practice, and every lesson in discipline as the "grinding" needed to make him sharp.

Months later, at the Passing Out Parade, a new soldier marched out. It was Raju. He was no longer the frail boy from the hills; he was a confident, resilient Gurkha soldier, ready to defend his country. He learned that the 39 GTC did not just train his body; it forged his spirit.

The Lesson: Success is not just talent; it is the result of continuous, disciplined effort, turning weakness into strength, just like the raw recruits who become the unbreakable backbone of the army. Based on the legacy of the 39 Gorkha Training Centre (39 GTC) in Varanasi, which transforms raw recruits into disciplined, courageous soldiers of the Indian Army, here is a motivational short story.

Lt Gen Anindya Sengupta, GOC-in-C #Central Command visited 39 Gorkha Training Centre to review its evolving training ecosystem and operational preparedness, reaffirming the #IndianArmy's steadfast focus on capability building in the Decade of Transformation.

Showcasing the Centre's technological integration, Agniveers demonstrated live drone flying and handling skills, reflecting their growing proficiency in niche and emerging domains. The Army Cdr commended their agility in absorbing modern technologies and highlighted the importance of such competencies in contemporary and future battlefields. Emphasising training as the bedrock of combat readiness, he noted that this progressive grooming prepares Agniveers not only for present respon-

sibilities but also for the complex operational challenges they will face upon induction into their respective units, particularly in forward and high-intensity operational areas.

During the visit, the Army Commander inaugurated the Multi Skill Training Centre, a forward-looking initiative designed to equip prospective retirees with industry-relevant expertise in electricals and electronics, enabling a seamless transition from uniform to nation-building roles in civil life.

The Gurkha Training center:

The 39 Gorkha Training Centre (39 GTC) in Varanasi is a premier military establishment responsible for training recruits for the 3rd and 9th Gorkha Rifles of the Indian Army. Established to train raw recruits from Nepal and India over 42 weeks, it is a historic centre that prepares soldiers for the Indian Army, often holding graduation ceremonies for Agniveers.

Key aspects of the 39 Gorkha Training Centre's history and function include:

Location and Role: Situated in the Varanasi Cantonment, the 39 GTC acts as the pivotal training ground for the 3rd and 9th Gorkha Rifles, focusing on intense, 42-week training programs.

Establishment: While Gorkha regiments date back to the 1814-16 Anglo-Nepal War, the 39 GTC serves as a permanent, modern training institution in India.

Significance: It serves as a custodian of the rich heritage of the 3rd and 9th Gorkha Rifles, featuring a Motivational Hall and Museum that houses artifacts, war memorabilia, and honours the bravery of Gurkha soldiers from the World Wars, the 1962 Sino-Indian War, and the 1965/1971 Indo-Pak Wars.

Modernization: In 2025, 39 GTC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with IIT (BHU) to collaborate on advanced technology, training methodologies, and the training of Agniveers.

Cultural Ties: The centre maintains strong ties with Nepal, with its military band representing the Indian Army at events like the 262nd Nepal Army Day in 2025.

Infrastructure: The facility includes amenities like the Army Public School and a memorial lawn, which was recently upgraded with a plantation drive honoring recip-

ients of the Shaurya Chakra.

The 39 GTC continues to be a cornerstone for forging elite soldiers, combining traditional Gurkha martial skills with modern military advancements.

Skills and proficiency is the greatest miracle that a man needs.

If you seek success, serve others. If you seek immortality give. Serve or give your time, skills, talent or gift. In the end, what you leave behind are trials of the lives you changed and the hearts you touched.!

Agniveers are personnel recruited into the Indian Armed Forces (Army, Navy, and Air Force) under the short-term Agnipath Scheme introduced in June 2022. Aged 17½ to 21 (sometimes extended to 23), they serve for a 4-year tenure, including training, aimed at creating a younger, tech-savvy military profile. After four years, 25% are retained, while others receive a "Seva Nidhi" package (approx. Rs. 11.7 lakh) to pursue other careers.

Key Details About Agniveers:

Recruitment and Role: They are hired through an all-India merit-based system, for a 4-year contractual service, performing duties similar to regular soldiers, including in combat units.

Compensation and Benefits: Salary: An annual package starting at Rs. 4.76 lakh in the first year, increasing to Rs. 6.92 lakh by the fourth year.

Seva Nidhi Package: A tax-free, lump-sum payout of approximately Rs. 11.71 lakh upon completion of 4 years, funded by their contributions and government matching.

Insurance: Non-contributory insurance cover of Rs. 48 lakh.

Post-Service: Upon release, 75% of Agniveers return to civilian life, with opportunities for assistance in further employment, education certificates, and entrepreneurship initiatives.

Key Distinctions: Unlike regular personnel, Agniveers do not receive pension benefits after their 4-year tenure, unless they are among the 25% permanently retained.

Aim: The scheme aims to reduce the average age of personnel and lower the rising pension bill of the defense services.

Drone-centric force:

The Indian Army is rapidly transforming into a drone-centric force, with a goal to

make every soldier "drone-ops ready" by 2027. The focus is on equipping infantry battalions with surveillance and First-Person View (FPV) kamikaze drones to enhance battlefield situational awareness and precision strike capabilities.

Here is an overview of drone flying and handling skills in the Indian Army based on recent developments:

Key Skill Sets Required

Manual FPV Flying Expertise: Pilots are trained to handle high-speed, agile FPV drones, requiring split-second decisions and precise control in complex, obstacle-heavy, or high-altitude environments.

Tactical Decision Making: Moving beyond mere operation, soldiers are trained to integrate drone intelligence into combat strategies, including border surveillance, anti-insurgency operations, and urban warfare.

Hardware Maintenance and Repair: Operators must understand drone mechanics, including battery management, motor repair, camera calibration, and fail-safe protocols to ensure operational capability in the field.

GNSS-Denied Navigation: Skills are being developed to operate drones in contested environments where GPS signals are jammed or unavailable.

Counter-Drone Operations: Training includes identifying and neutralising enemy UAVs.

Specialized Training Programs

Ashney Drone Platoons: 380 infantry battalions are being equipped with Ashney drone platoons, with each unit operating 4 surveillance and 6 armed (kamikaze) drones.

7-Day FPV Training: Specialized 7-day courses covering FPV, 3D printing, and drone assembly are being conducted to foster technical proficiency.

Simulator-Based Training: High-altitude and combat scenarios are practiced in simulators before live flights.

DGCA-Certified Training: Collaborations with institutions like NSTI Hyderabad and IGRUA provide DGCA-certified training for army personnel.

Specialized Units: The Army is raising 15-20 "Shaktibaan" regiments for swarm drones and long-range loitering munitions.

Views, Opinions, facts etc Expressed by the Authors are their Own and Headlines Today doesn't acknowledge the viewpoint in any manner. And the claims made by the advertisers, promoters through their write-ups need to be ascertained by the readers and Headlines Today Shall not be held responsible for any misleading information in any manner...

GMC Anantnag takes historic leap; becomes first newly established GMC of J&K to receive nod for Superspeciality course in Cardiology

Sakeena Itoo commends GMC Administration, reaffirms Government's commitment to expand access to specialised healthcare services

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEB 18: In a landmark development for the healthcare sector of Jammu and Kashmir, Government Medical College (GMC) Anantnag has achieved a significant milestone by becoming the first newly established GMC in J&K to receive approval to start a Superspeciality course in Cardiology.

The National Board of Examinations has accredited "Three Dr NB Cardiology seats" to the Department of Cardiology GMC Anantnag.

The approval marks a major step forward in the transformation of GMC Anantnag into a centre of advanced medical education and tertiary care, and reflects the sustained efforts of Omar Abdullah led Government to expand access to specialised healthcare services in the region.

Congratulating the administration, faculty, and staff of GMC Anantnag, Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo lauded the dedication and teamwork of GMC Anantnag in achieving this prestigious feat. She said that the sanctioning of a Superspeciality Cardiology course is a testament to the Government's unwavering resolve to upgrade healthcare infrastructure and medical education across Jammu and Kashmir.

"The Government is determined to ensure that people of Jammu and Kashmir have access to high-quality specialised healthcare. The approval of a Superspeciality Cardiology course at GMC Anantnag is a major stride in

that direction. It will not only strengthen tertiary care services in South Kashmir but also reduce the need for patients to seek advanced cardiac treatment outside the region," the Minister stated.

She further emphasised that the Government has adopted a comprehensive approach to strengthen medical institutions through infrastructure development, recruitment of specialist faculty, procurement of advanced equipment, and expansion of academic programmes.

"With the introduction of the Superspeciality Cardiology course, GMC Anantnag is poised to emerge as a key hub for advanced cardiac care, research, and training. The development is expected to greatly benefit cardiac patients by providing timely and specialised treatment closer to home, while also creating new opportunities for post-graduate medical aspirants", Minister Sakeena said.

She added that this unique achievement stands as a reflection of the Government's broader vision to build a robust, accessible, and patient-centric healthcare system across Jammu and Kashmir.

Pertinently, the accreditation from the National Board of Examinations (NBEMS) for Superspeciality course in Cardiology solidifies the stature of GMC Anantnag as a premier hub for both advanced cardiac treatment and specialist medical training and sets a benchmark for the peripheral medical colleges in the rest of the country.

Beauty Without Makeup



■ SHAHNAZ HUSAIN

Are you tired of applying a number of makeup products every morning to look pretty?

Do we really have to succumb and play slaves to the hottest trend in makeup and the cosmetic world? Or is there a way to make us feel better without having to apply layer upon layer of creams?

There are also instances wherein you have to go bare-faced. Who swims with full-on makeup, complete with winged-tip liners and contours?

Let's face it, you can't wear makeup all the time.

So instead of devising ways to sneak a hint of makeup on your skin, why not improve the quality of your skin and figure out other ways to make you look prettier sans the makeup?

When you go without make-up for a while, you give your skin a chance to breathe.

If you want to look good without spending hours in front of the mirror every day, Then it's time to give your skin a break.

So, here we bring you natural ways to enhance your looks without any makeup

You need to be mindful of essential aspects of your diet, your habits, your lifestyle, and your skincare routine.

Wash your face twice daily. Skincare is a key factor in looking good without makeup. Wash your skin twice a day preferably in the morning and at night bedtime with a herbal facial that's suited to your skin type to get rid of the dust and pollutants

Overwashing can make your skin dry and irritable, causing it to look worse rather than better. Develop a skin regimen for your face and stick to it. The CTM routine that is cleansing, toning, and moisturizing is imperative for healthy skin

A good facial massage every other day can reduce the appearance of fine lines, tighten your skin, and make it appear more radiant. Besides, it also makes you feel relieved from stress and rejuvenated.

Face packs play a vital role in skin care because they are rich in nutrients, moisturizers, vitamins, and minerals that are beneficial for the skin.

The regular use of packs lets your skin soak up the mask let you absorb all the goodness that is found in the ingredients and help you achieve a glowy and youthful look and delay aging signs.

Based on your skin type, prepare a mask that fits your needs, put it on and relax! You can use ingredients like honey, aloe vera, gram flour, yogurt, oatmeal, and fruits, as these are some very popular options for homemade masks.

Depending on the kind of mask you use, some masks are designed to pull out impurities, hydrate your skin, or infuse your skin with mega doses of feel-good nutrients.

Eat well ----- A healthy diet is exceptionally vital. Looking and feeling healthy has a lot to do with what you put into your body. Skin. A sufficient intake of protein and vitamins is absolutely essential for



the maintenance and repair of your skin. Include fresh fruits and vegetables in your diet and drink plenty of water throughout the day to keep your skin nourished and hydrated. When thirsty, opt for a cool and refreshing glass of water with fruits or try to consume more fruits and vegetables full of water content, such as watermelon and cucumber.

We lose water through breathing, sweating, urination, and digestion so it is important to rehydrate and replenish the water that we have used.

Our body uses water to help regulate our body's temperature and carry out other bodily functions

Most people prefer to drink carbonated drinks or sugar-packed artificial juices. Although it still contains water, it also contains other ingredients that may not be healthy for us.

Take a vitamin supplement if you feel you are not getting all of your daily requirements from your diet alone. Vitamins A, C, and E are all particularly beneficial for the skin. Try to cut out as many greasy, fatty, sugary foods as possible and load up on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean meats instead

The Do's and Don'ts of skin care should be kept in mind.

Nighttime cleansing is a must, in order to remove dirt, pollutants, stale sweat, oil, dead skin cells and make-up that are deposited on the skin during the day.

Do protect your skin with broad-spectrum sunscreen. Apply sunscreen 20 minutes before sun-exposure. If you are in the sun for more than an hour, re-apply the sunscreen. A sunscreen with SPF 20 is adequate for most skins. For sensitive skin that burns easily, use sunscreen with higher SPF.

The use of scrubs is an integral part of skin care. It helps to remove dead skin cells, unclog pores and brightens the skin.

Moisture helps to keep the skin soft,

smooth, supple and youthful. Moisturizers are available in both liquid and cream forms. For dry skin, use a creamy moisturizer. It should also be applied under make-up.

Nourishing is important for normal to dry skin. It helps to keep the skin lubricated and soft, so that it can hold moisture. After cleansing the skin at night, apply nourishing cream and massage it on the skin for 2 to 3 minutes. Wipe off with moist cotton wool.

Don'ts

Don't wash the face with soap and water more than 2 or 3 times a day. Alkaline soaps can disrupt the normal pH balance and leave the skin prone to acne.

Avoid heavy moisturizers on oily skin as the pores can get clogged, leading to blackheads and acne. For oily skin, mix 100 ml rose water with one teaspoon pure glycerin. Keep in an airtight bottle in the fridge. Apply this lotion to moisturize a normal to oily and combination skin.

Don't apply facial scrub on skin with pimples, acne or rash. Don't pick or pinch blackheads and pimples.

Don't stretch or pull the skin around eyes while removing make-up. Scrubs and masks should not be applied around eyes. Avoid leaving under-eye creams overnight. Remove them gently with moist cotton wool after 15 minutes. Leaving it on all night can lead to puffiness.

The concept of beauty has undergone a real change over the last few decades. The emphasis has shifted from superficial treatments to a more positive approach that aims at protecting and preserving the natural beauty of the skin. Skincare with natural ingredients, based on the tried and tested Ayurvedic system, has shown a complete lack of harmful side effects and irritative reactions. Indeed, Nature is not only an expert chemist but the best cosmetologist.

MS. JAASINDAH MIR

RCI-LICENSED PSYCHOLOGIST | EFT MASTER PRACTITIONER | FLOWER ESSENCE PRACTITIONER | AUTHOR

TRAUMA-FOCUSED PSYCHOLOGIST

MA Applied Psychology (Clinical)-Jamia Millia Islamia
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WITH Dr.SUMIT , Mr.TURAB, Former Sr. Audiologist at Max Hospital Saket ,Delhi)
@ Kifayatkifi
8:00PM On January 18th , Sunday



J&K Govt formulating comprehensive Cancer Control Strategy in collaboration with National Institutions

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEB 18: In a significant step towards strengthening the cancer prevention and care in Jammu and Kashmir, the Health & Medical Education (H&ME) Department is formulating a comprehensive “Cancer Control Strategy for J&K” in collaboration with NITI Aayog, ICMR and Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital and Research Centre, Punjab, a unit of Tata Memorial Centre.

The strategy aims to establish a structured and coordinated framework for cancer prevention, early diagnosis, treatment, palliative care and research across the UT. The focus will be on optimum utilization of the existing healthcare infrastructure, strengthening tertiary care services and capacity building of human resources through collaboration with reputed national institutions such as Tata Memorial Centre.

A key component of the initiative will be the rollout of a Population-Based Cancer Registry to enable evidence-based planning, improved surveillance and better management of cancer cases in the Union Territory.

In this regard, a high level meeting under the Chairpersonship of Secretary Health and Medical Education, Dr. Abid Rasheed Shah, was held today to deliberate upon the strategic framework for Cancer Prevention, Screening and Care in Jammu & Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by Dr. Ashish Gulia from Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital & Research Centre, Punjab, along with senior doctors and experts involved in cancer management in J&K.

During the meeting, Dr. Ashish Gulia emphasized the need for a well-defined roadmap to tackle the growing threat of cancer. He highlighted the need for strengthening tertiary care facilities, identifying and addressing human resource gaps, promoting research projects and outcome indicators, enhancing public health camps and scaling up palliative care services.

Secretary, H&ME Department, emphasised that a detailed gap analysis be undertaken across the institutions to strategically devise actionable plan with the timelines particularly in Government Medical Colleges & District Hospitals. He stressed focused training and capacity building of existing human resources and enhanced research initiatives at Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences, Government Medical College Jammu and Government Medical College Srinagar in close consultation with Tata Memorial Centre for which a Project Monitoring unit (PMU) has been tasked.

Emphasizing the critical role of public health in cancer prevention, the Secretary called for strengthening the Department of Preventive and Community Medicine as the nodal pillar for effective strategies and screening programmes. He also emphasised the need for scaling up of the existing MoU between Tata Memorial Hospital and Government Medical College Jammu and exploring its replication across other medical institutions in J&K in larger public interest.

The proposed Cancer Control Strategy is expected to significantly strengthen cancer care delivery in Jammu and Kashmir through a coordinated, evidence-based and patient-centric approach.

Public Notice

This is certificate that Showkat Ahmad Sheikh 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.

**Showkat Ahmad Sheikh
S/o Bashir Ahmad Sheikh
R/o Buchwara Ram Munshi Bagh srinagar
number plat no : JK01A K9263**

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir

Office of the Naib Tehsildar, Pahalgam

PUBLIC NOTICE

Subject: Application of Mohammad Imad Lone and Fawad Mushtaq Lone, S/o Mushtaq Ahmad Lone, R/o Pahalgam for issuance of RBA Certificate.

Whereas the above named applicants have applied in this office for issuance of RBA Certificate in their favour. In this connection, report from the concerned Patwari Halqa has been sought, which reveals that the applicants are residents of village Pahalgam and their family particulars stand verified as per records.

Now, therefore, any person having any objection with regard to the issuance of the said certificate in favour of the applicants may present his/her objection along with documentary proof in this office within 07 (seven) days from the date of publication of this notice. After the expiry of the stipulated period, no objection shall be entertained.

Issued under my hand and seal of this office.

Naib Tehsildar, Pahalgam

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir

Office of the Naib Tehsildar, Pahalgam

PUBLIC NOTICE

Subject: Application of Zahoor Ahmad Lone, S/o Gull Mohammad Lone, R/o Pahalgam for issuance of RBA Certificate.

Whereas the above named applicant has applied in this office for issuance of RBA Certificate in his favour. In this connection, report from the concerned Patwari Halqa has been sought, which reveals that the applicant is a resident of village Pahalgam and his family particulars stand verified as per records.

Now, therefore, any person having any objection with regard to the issuance of the said certificate in favour of the applicant may present his/her objection along with documentary proof in this office within 07 (seven) days from the date of publication of this notice. After the expiry of the stipulated period, no objection shall be entertained.

Issued under my hand and seal of this office.

Naib Tehsildar, Pahalgam

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir

Office of the Naib Tehsildar, Pahalgam

PUBLIC NOTICE

Subject: Application of Mohammad Imad Lone and Fawad Mushtaq Lone, S/o Mushtaq Ahmad Lone, R/o Pahalgam for issuance of RBA Certificate.

Whereas the above named applicants have applied in this office for issuance of RBA Certificate in their favour. In this connection, report from the concerned Patwari Halqa has been sought, which reveals that the applicants are residents of village Pahalgam and their family particulars stand verified as per records.

Now, therefore, any person having any objection with regard to the issuance of the said certificate in favour of the applicants may present his/her objection along with documentary proof in this office within 07 (seven) days from the date of publication of this notice. After the expiry of the stipulated period, no objection shall be entertained.

Issued under my hand and seal of this office.

Naib Tehsildar, Pahalgam

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir

Office of the Naib Tehsildar, Pahalgam

PUBLIC NOTICE

Subject: Application of Mushtaq Ahmad Lone, S/o Gul Mohammad Lone, R/o Pahalgam for issuance of RBA Certificate.

Whereas the above named applicant has applied in this office for issuance of RBA Certificate in his favour. In this connection, report from the concerned Patwari Halqa has been sought, which reveals that the applicant is a resident of village Pahalgam and his family particulars stand verified as per records.

Now, therefore, any person having any objection with regard to the issuance of the said certificate in favour of the applicant may present his/her objection along with documentary proof in this office within 07 (seven) days from the date of publication of this notice. After the expiry of the stipulated period, no objection shall be entertained.

Issued under my hand and seal of this office.

Naib Tehsildar, Pahalgam

Public Notice

This is to notify the general public that the name recorded in the Aadhaar database is incorrect. Name shown in Aadhaar: Bilkees Yousuf Correct name: Bilkeasa Akhter ,Father's Mohammad Yousuf Gazi Address: Naribal Gundchubutre Kralgund Handwara Kupwara Jammu and Kashmir 193302. The above mentioned person (Bilkees Yousuf) hereby declares that the name printed on the Aadhaar is incorrect and that her correct and legal name is Bilkeasa Akhter .Any objection to this correction should be brought to the attention of the UIDAI Aadhaar Seva Kendra, Office Srinagar within 7 (seven) days from the date of publication of this notice. If no objection is received within the stipulated period, the necessary correction procedures may be undertaken.

Public Notice

It is noticed for the general public that my name has been wrongly mentioned as Feroz Ahmad Jan instead of Feroze Ahmad Jan S/o Gh Ahmad Dar R/O Panzan Chadoora District Budgam wara in my Police service regards now correction in this is required any body having any objection in this regard may report to concerned office with in a period of one week from the date of publication of this notice After that no any objection may be entertained.

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir

Office Of The Tehsildar Kreeeri

Subject: Application of FAHMEEDA BANO S/O BILAL AHMAD WANI R/O WARIPORA BALA for the issuance of Dependent certificate

PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the subject cited above in this context a report sought from patwari halqa concerned .The report of patwari halqa concerned and the death certificate issued by competent Authority reveals that BILAL AHMAD WANI S/O AB AHAD WANI R/O WARIPORE Bala Tehsil kreeeri has passed away on 04/12/2025

Moreover family structure of the applicant is as under
1... FAHMEEDA BANO wife 38 years H/W widow
2..ABRAR BILAL WANI son 15 years student unmarried
3...MUZZAFAR BILAL son 09 years student minor
4...KATIFA SHOWKAT daughter 08 years student. //

The applicant has applied for Issuance of Dependent certificate in favour of FAHMEEDA BANO if anyone have any objection to the issuance of delay order of said certificate certificate shall present his/her claim this office within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained.

Naib Tehsild Kreeeri

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 RAFEEQA 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....RAFEEQA BEGUM.
W/OBASHIR AHMAD POSWAL
R/O....BANDI BALA
DISTT....BARAMULLA**

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir

Office Of The Tehsildar Kreeeri

Subject: Application SHIJA UL BASHIR HAJAM & KHALID BASHIR HAJAM S/O BASHIR AHMAD HAJAM R/O KREEERI Tehsil KREEERI for the issuance of OBC (Other Backward classes in favor of applications

PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the subject cited above the file in the office of the undersigned for the issuance of OBC in this connection a report of patwari halqa concerned has been sought which reveals that the applicant is currently residing in the village of KREEERI of Tehsil KREEERI and belongs to the HAJAM community having annual income 514848 // (Five lack fourteen thousand eight hundred forty eight) the details of family of the applicant are as follows
1...BASHIR AHMAD HAJAM Father 65 years Retired govt employee
2.SHAMEEMA BEGAM Mother 60 years Housewife
3... KHALID BASHIR applicant 32 years student
4. SOBIYA BINT MAJID w/o KHALID 32 years H/W
5...MOHAMMAD IBIN KHALID S/O KHALID 04 years infant
6...ABIHA KHALID D/O KHALID 02 years infant
7...SHIJA UL BASHIR applicant 30 years private job

If anyone have any objection to the issuance of delay order of said certificate certificate shall present his/her claim this office within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained.

Naib Tehsild Kreeeri

Public Notice

My name has been wrongly written as KAMRAN S/O UMAR ASADULLAH GANAIE in my Date of Birth certificate while my correct name is AHMAD BIN UMAR S/O UMAR ASSADULLAH GANAIE which needs to be corrected if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of concerned authorities within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained.

**Name....AHMAD BIN UMAR
S/O ...UMAR ASSADULLA GANAE
R/O...SHRAKWARA WAGOORA**

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE TEHSILDAR KALANTRA / KREERI

Subject: Application of GHULAM HASSAN DEADER S/O SARDAR MOHD DEADER for the issuance of R/O..BANDI BALA (SCHEDULE TRIBE Gujjar and Bakerwal)in favour of TAHIR HASSAN DEADER, YASMEENA HASSAN , GHULAM HASSAN DEADER R/O BANDI BALA

PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the subject cited above, the applicant has submitted the file in the office of the undersigned for the issuance of ST . in this connection a report of patwari halqa concerned has been sought which reveals that the applicant is currently residing in village BANDI BALLA and belongs to the ST caste and GOJJER DEADER community, having annual income is 350000 the details of the family of the applicant are as follows

1...GHULAM HASSAN DEADER Head of family 53 years Labour

2.... SHAMSHADA BEGUM wife 45 years H/W

3...ZAHID HASSAN Son 21 years Labour

4...TAHIR HASSAN son 19 years student

5..YASMEENA HASSAN daughter 12 years student

The applicant has applied for Issuance of ST (SCHEDULE TRIBE Gujjar & Bakerwal) certificate in favour of Self.

If anyone have any objection to the issuance of delay order of said certificate certificate shall present his/her claim this office within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained.

NAIB TEHSILDAR KALANTRA

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir

Office Of The Tehsildar Kreeeri

Subject: Application MUSHTAQ AHMAD SOFI S/O ABDUL GANI SOFI R/O SHEIKHPORA for issuance of RBA certificate in favour of SEERAT MUSHTAQ for the issuance of RBA in his /her / their favor

PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the subject cited above the file in the office of the undersigned for the issuance of RBA in this connection a report of patwari halqa concerned has been sought which reveals that the applicant is currently residing in the village of SHEIKHPORA of Tehsil KREEERI and belongs to the SOFI community having annual income 560000// the details of family of the applicant are as follows

1..MUSHTAQ AHMAD SOFI self 49 years Farmar

2..GULSHANA BEGUM wife 46 years H/W

3... SEERAT MUSHTAQ applicant 16 years student

4...MOHSIN MUSHTAQ son 12 years student

5...MASROOR MUSHTAQ son 07 years student

If anyone have any objection to the issuance of delay order of said certificate certificate shall present his/her claim this office within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained.

Naib Tehsild Kreeeri

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

Office Of The Executive Engineer Mechanical & Hospital Division Srinagar

(Erstwhile Mechanical Hospital & Central Heating Division Srinagar)

Contact No: 0194-2496089, Email Id: exen-mechospssgr@jk.gov.in

GIST of e-tender I (SHORT TERM)

e-NIT No: M&HDS/TS /2025-26/143/e-tendering I Dated: 18-02-2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K UT e-tenders are invited in two cover system on percentage basis from registered/ reputed/experienced firms with J&K State Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the below mentioned work:

Name of Work	Est. Cost (In rupees)	Cost of T/Doc. (In rupees)	Time of completion	AA Accorded Vide No:
1. Repairing of Damaged Hot Water Radiators and Arresting Leakages in Hot Water piping of Central Heating System at Various Locations in Govt. SMHS, Hospital, Srinagar.	1,48,800/-	200	10 days	04-MCS of 2025 Dated:- 08.05.2025
2. Providing and fixing of Sign Board to the Divisional office building of Mechanical and Hospital Division building and Departmental Logo etc for at Mechanical and Hospital Division	80,000/-	100	10 days	Order No:- M&HED/K/ Acctt/35 of 2025-26 Dated:- 08.05.2025

TS No: M&HDS/ TS/110 of 02/2026

Earnest Money: 5% of the estimated cost

Position of Funds: Available with intending Department

The bidding document consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q.), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the Govt. website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule given below:-

1.	Publish date	18-02-2026 (17:00 hrs)
2.	Period of downloading of bidding document	18-02-2026 (17:00 hrs)
3.	Bid submission start date	18-02-2026 (18:00 hrs)
4.	Bid submission end date	25-02-2026 (13:00 hrs)
5.	Date and time of opening of bids	25-02-2026 (15:00 hrs)

No: M&HDS/TS/8767-72 | Dated: 18-02-2026

DIPK: 11091/25 | Dated: 18-02-2026

Sd/- Executive Engineer, M&HD, Srinagar



Rs 242.46 cr WSSs to strengthen water supply in rural Basohli; ₹12.60 cr AMRUT 2.0 project sanctioned for Basohli Town: Javed Rana

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 18 Minister for Jal Shakti Javed Ahmed Rana today said that the government has undertaken a slew of measures to strengthen the drinking water infrastructure by implementing multiple Water Supply Schemes (WSSs) across both rural and urban areas of the Basohli constituency.

This was stated by the Minister, while replying to a question on water supply schemes raised by MLA Darshan Kumar in the Legislative Assembly.

The Minister said that for the rural population, drinking water supply is being strengthened through 43 water supply schemes, including 42 under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) worth ₹ 242.46 crore and one under NABARD. "Of these,



six schemes have been completed while the remaining are at advanced stages of completion," he said.

The Minister informed the House that for urban areas, water supply is being managed through the existing schemes, which are being further augmented under AMRUT 2.0. He said that under AMRUT 2.0, a project titled "Augmentation and Improvement of Water Supply System in Basohli Town under AMRUT 2.0" has been sanctioned at an estimated cost of ₹12.60 crore to enhance the overall water supply infrastructure.

To ensure uninterrupted access to potable drinking water during the execution phase of these schemes, water is being supplied through the existing systems. Besides, water tankers are being deployed wherever required, he

added.

Jal Shakti Minister also provided details about the progress of completed, ongoing and commissioned water supply schemes under the Jal Jeevan Mission in the constituency.

He further informed that the government of India has extended the Jal Jeevan Mission timeline up to December 2028. He said that all the pending schemes will be completed within the extended period, adding that strenuous efforts are underway for their completion.

Regarding payments to the contractors, the Minister stated that Call Deposit Receipts (CDRs), Security Deposits and Performance Security amounts are being released strictly in accordance with the terms and conditions of the respective contracts.

Govt focuses on faculty, infra augmentation in operational offsite campuses of JU: Sakeena Itoo

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 18 Minister for Education, Sakeena Itoo today said that the government is focusing on augmentation of infrastructure and faculty in operational offsite campuses of Jammu University (JU) at Bhaderwah, Kishtwar, Udhampur, Reasi, Ramnagar, Kathua and Poonch.

The Minister said this while replying to a question of Legislator Dr. Sunil Bhardwaj in the Legislative Assembly.

The Education Minister said that the Higher Education Department is committed to adopt innovative pedagogical practices and strengthening of culture of research and innovation within the universities, while placing emphasis on strict adherence by the University of Jammu to the approved Academic Calendar.

She added that measures like periodic monitoring of teaching-learning process; promotion of faculty development and student-centric academic activities; phased adoption of Smart Classrooms and effective and timely utilization of e-resources; streamlining of office procedures through digitization of records; prudent financial planning in conformity with prescribed financial norms along with time-bound maintenance and up-gradation of classrooms, laboratories, libraries and other facilities are being implemented for the benefit of students.

The Minister further said that the University of Jammu presently has eleven off-site campuses approved by the University Council, of which, currently seven campuses are operational at Bhaderwah, Kishtwar, Udhampur, Reasi, Ramnagar, Kathua, and Poonch.

She informed that for the Financial Year 2025-2026, the Higher Education Department has allocated consolidated Grant-in-Aid amounting Rs. 260 crore to the University of Jammu for meeting its duly approved expenditure requirements. She added that the Grant-in-Aid is released in lump sum and is not earmarked campus-wise or academic programmes-wise at the level of Higher Education Department.

She said that the internal apportionment and utilization of funds, including allocation towards academic programmes at functional off-site campuses, is undertaken by the University of Jammu.

The Education Minister further said that measures are being undertaken in coordination with the University of Jammu to strengthen and consolidate the academic, administrative and infrastructural functioning of the functional off-site campuses including Ramnagar Campus. The objective behind the initiatives is to ensure a balanced academic growth, optimal utilization of resources and equitable expansion of higher education infrastructure across Jammu & Kashmir.

She said that the proposal concerning creation of the posts of Rector/Director and other Teaching Faculty positions in respect of the functional Off-site Campuses is under examination in Higher Education Department.

Legislators, Daleep Singh Parihar, R.S Pathania, Balwant Singh Mankotia and Shakti Raj Parihar raised various supplementary questions, which were satisfactorily replied by the Minister.

1200 posts referred to recruitment agencies; no proposal for new Veterinary Centres in Gulabgarh: Javid Dar

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 18 Minister for Agriculture Production department, Javid Ahmad Dar, today informed the House that around 1200 gazetted and non-gazetted posts in the department have been referred to Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission (JKPSC) and Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) for timely filling up of vacancies.

Replying to a question raised by MLA Gulabgarh Khurshid Ahmed, the Minister stated that 17 Veterinary Centres and 21 Sheep Extension Centres are presently functional in the Gulabgarh Constituency.

He added that among these, two centres are being managed through internal arrangements to ensure uninterrupted veterinary services to the livestock breeders. He said that these centres collectively cater to the healthcare needs of the livestock population in the constituency.

The Minister further informed the House that there is presently no proposal to establish new Veterinary or Sheep Extension Centres in Gulabgarh Constituency or elsewhere in the Union Territory. He explained that establishment of new centres is considered based on several parameters like livestock population, geographical conditions (hilly, plain, or isolated areas), distance from existing centres and techno-feasibility reports submitted.

He added that the proposals are processed further only if they meet feasibility criteria and availability of resources.

Highlighting measures to support migratory livestock breeders, the Minister said that the department regularly organizes Summer Camps at highland pastures including Dudhwan (Warwan), Kousarnag (Kulgam), Thatbal (Gulabgarh), Chandrani (Ramban) and Nikan (Mangnar, Gulabgarh). He added that these camps provide essential veterinary healthcare services to the sheep and goat breeders during the grazing season.

Responding to the supplementary questions regarding vacant posts, establishment of additional centres and deployment of veterinary doctors and staff during migration periods, the Minister assured the House that adequate staff arrangements are made during the migration season and all genuine demands and issues raised by the Member will be addressed in a timely manner.

India AI Summit showcases Nation's Leadership in Ethical & Human-Centric AI: LG Ladakh

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

LEH, FEB 18: As India advances decisively on the path of becoming a global technology leader, Artificial Intelligence is emerging as a key enabler of inclusive growth, good governance and sustainable development. The hosting of the India AI Summit, with participation from over 20 countries, stands as a testament to India's growing stature as a trusted global partner in shaping the future of responsible, ethical and human-centric artificial intelligence.

This was stated by the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Shri Kavinder Gupta, during his visit to the India AI Summit being held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. Commissioner Secretary IT, Ladakh, Shashanka Ala, also accompanied the Lt Governor.

During his visit, the Lt Governor visited several technology pavilions and interacted with representatives of leading global and Indian companies, including Google, Meta, Amazon, Airtel, CoRover and other IT firms actively working in the field of artificial intelligence. He appreciated the innovative AI-based solutions showcased at the summit, particularly those aimed at improving governance efficiency, public service delivery, healthcare, education and digital inclusion.

The Lt Governor said that under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has emerged as a global voice for innovation with responsibility. He noted that the Prime Minister's vision of Digital India, AI for All and technology-led governance has laid a strong foundation for leveraging emerging technologies to empower citizens, strengthen institutions and ensure development reaches the last mile.

He stated that the India AI Summit has brought together heads of state, ministers, policymakers, industry leaders and technology experts from across the globe, reinforcing India's leadership role in framing global AI discourse. The summit reflects international confidence in India's technological capabilities and its commitment to developing AI systems that are transparent, ethical and aligned with democratic values. Highlighting the relevance of artificial intelligence for frontier regions, the Lt Governor said that Ladakh, with its unique geography, strategic importance and developmental challenges, stands to benefit significantly from AI-driven interventions. He said the Union Territory aims to harness artificial intelligence for smart administration, predictive governance, environmental monitoring, disaster

management, climate resilience, tourism management and youth empowerment.

The Lt Governor also highlighted Ladakh's strong potential as a suitable destination for Data Centres, citing its naturally cold climate, clean energy prospects and low humidity, which significantly reduce cooling requirements and enhance energy efficiency. He said Ladakh offers long-term advantages for sustainable and green data infrastructure, aligned with India's data sovereignty and digital security objectives. The Union Territory, he added, is well placed to emerge as a strategic hub for next-generation data centres supporting artificial intelligence, cloud computing and digital governance, while ensuring minimal environmental impact. The Lt Governor further stated that Ladakh is working towards becoming the country's first AI-enabled city, leveraging technology to enhance urban governance, improve quality of life and promote sustainable and inclusive development. He emphasised that with strong institutional support, innovation partnerships and the guidance of the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Ladakh can emerge as a national model for AI-led, future-ready development, particularly in remote and high-altitude regions.

Construction of 50 bedded Additional Block at SDH Sunderbani in progress: Sakeena Itoo Says Rs 424 lakh earmarked for three vital projects in Sunderbani

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 18 Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, today said that the ongoing works on the vital projects like construction of 50 bedded additional Block and setting up of Dialysis Unit at SDH Sunderbani are being regularly monitored to ensure their completion within prescribed timelines.

The Minister stated this while replying to a question of Legislator Randhir Singh in the House.

The Minister informed the House that an amount of Rs. 424 lakh has been earmarked for utilization against three projects like construction of 50 bedded additional Block at SDH Sunderbani, setting up of Dialysis Unit at SDH Sunderbani and Design, Supply, Installation,



Commissioning and Trial-run (DSICT) of Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) of 05 KLD capacity at Government CHC Kalakote Rajouri during the current Financial Year. She added that Rs. 361.90 lakh have been released by the Finance Department, against which an expenditure of ₹300.00 lakh has been incurred, so far.

The Minister stated that the ongoing projects are being

closely monitored, with delays reported to executing agencies for swift action, ensuring timely completion and fund utilization. She also informed that the Tile/Electrical work is in progress on the second floor while Mechanical work at SDH Sunderbani is also being done on war footing. She added that allotment of DSICT of ETP of 05 KLD capacity at Government CHC Kalakote Rajouri is under process.

Govt to establish two Industrial Estates in Pattan: Deputy Chief Minister

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 18 Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, today said that two industrial estates are being established in Pattan Constituency of Baramulla district.

The Deputy Chief Minister was replying to a question raised by MLA Pirzada Farooq Ahmad Shah on behalf of Legislator Javaid Riyaz (Bedar) in the Legislative Assembly.

The Deputy Chief Minister informed that the two patches of land, measuring 240 Kanal have been transferred in favor of Industries & Commerce Department, during 2024-25 for establishment of Industrial Estates at Wussan Khoie on 150 kanal of land and at Pattan on 90 kanal of land.

He said that a total of 42 applications for allotment of land in the above two Industrial Estates have been received on the J&K Single Window Portal up to January 18, 2026.

These applications have been appraised



by the Divisional Level Appraisal Committee for further placement before the High Level Land Allotment Committee, for accord of consideration and allotment of land as per the Merit-Cum-Preference, he added.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that various steps are being taken to ensure robust operations of the Industrial Estates.

District Administration holds participatory planning camps in identified border villages

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KATHUA, FEBRUARY 18: Deputy Commissioner Kathua Rajesh Sharma today conducted a tour of border villages and presided over a series of Special Gram Sabhas and awareness programmes for the formulation of plans under the Government of India's Vibrant Village Programme.

The Gram Sabhas were organised in identified border villages including Rathua, Ganjal, Kadyala and Gujjar Chack to ensure participatory planning and the preparation of robust, need-based development plans aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of the inhabitants.

The programme witnessed significant participation from local residents who actively shared their issues, aspirations and suggestions for incorporation into the village

development plans.

The Deputy Commissioner was accompanied by ADDC Surinder Mohan Sharma, GM DIC Mushtaq Chaudhary, PO ICDS Mohammed Syed, SDM Hiranagar Phulail Singh, CPO Ranjeet Thakur and other district and sectoral officers.

During the Gram Sabhas, the concerned Nodal Officers of Rathua, Ganjal, Kadyala and Gujjar Chack read out the draft plans prepared with inputs from the inhabitants of their respective villages. The Deputy Commissioner urged participants to highlight issues not covered in the draft so they could be duly incorporated into the final plan document.

Several locals, including former Panchayati Raj Institution members, raised issues related to civic amenities, infrastructure gaps and border-specific concerns. The concerned Nodal Officers took note

of the demands for inclusion in the final draft plan.

While interacting with residents at Rathua, the Deputy Commissioner stated that the purpose of organising awareness-cum-Gram Sabhas was to involve every stakeholder and ensure holistic planning with a particular focus on youth and women. He emphasised the need to ensure the saturation of eligible beneficiaries under various government schemes and the augmentation of development infrastructure in border villages in a phased and sustainable manner.

He further assured that more awareness camps would be organised in border areas to educate the public about government schemes and services, aiming to transform these villages into model habitations under the Vibrant Village Programme.

Later, a similar awareness camp-

cum-Gram Sabha was held at Government High School Kadyala, presided over by ADDC Surinder Mohan Sharma. The district administration team patiently heard the aspirations and feedback of the locals and issued necessary directions on the spot to the concerned officers.

On both occasions, district and sectoral officers briefed the Gram Sabhas about the schemes and services implemented by their respective departments and encouraged the public to avail the benefits in a timely manner.

Pertinently, border villages Bobiya, Kadyala, Ganjal, Karol Krishna, Rathua and Gujjar Chack have been identified under the Vibrant Village Programme of the Government of India to ensure saturation of welfare schemes for inhabitants and to augment development infrastructure in these villages.



Deployment of AI represents ‘fifth industrial revolution’: Ashwini Vaishnaw

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, FEB 17 : The deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) represents the “fifth industrial revolution”, with the potential to impact every aspect of the economy and society, said union Minister for Information & Broadcasting and Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), Ashwini Vaishnaw, on Tuesday. While addressing the media on the sidelines of the India AI Impact Summit 2026, Vaishnaw said, “AI deployment is expanding across virtually every sector, and it represents the fifth industrial revolution, with the potential to impact every aspect of the economy and society.”

“We have seen transformative solutions, particularly in healthcare, where AI can make services more affordable, and in education, where learning can be tailored to the needs of each student. These examples



demonstrate the vast possibilities that AI offers across sectors,” he said.

Commenting on the packed schedule of the India AI Impact Summit, the minister said, “All the top executives are present and participating in nearly twenty sessions, reflecting the strong commitment of global AI leaders.”

The minister said that human creativity is something to be valued and protected. The systems that we create for protect the human creativity shouldn’t be dilutive but complementary, the minister said.

“We have to have techno-legal solutions, solutions which look at laws while they simultaneously also look at technical guardrails and

technical balancing features in the AI models, as well as in the way AI is deployed. This is something which will have to be taken up at a global level. This will require a consensus-building across different countries,” the Minister added.

Earlier, while speaking at a panel discussion, Vaishnaw had said the AI-led upskilling is building a future-ready talent pipeline for the global media industry.

‘Create in India’ Mission will strengthen the Orange Economy, position India as the world’s preferred creative hub, and power the next 25 years of growth, he stated.

Over 20 Heads of State, 60 Ministers, and 500 Global AI leaders are in the national capital Delhi for the maiden India AI Impact Summit 2026. The India AI Impact Expo have over 300 exhibitors drawn from 30 countries showcasing products and solutions in 10 thematic pavilions. UNI

AIM unveils ‘AI-Preneurs of India’ at IndiaAI Impact Summit 2026

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, FEB 17 : Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) under NITI Aayog on Tuesday launched a book ‘AI-Preneurs of India’ at India AI Impact Summit 2026 here.

The book chronicling the journeys of 45 pioneering AI start-ups shaping solutions for real-world challenges, reflects the geographic and thematic diversity of India’s AI innovation landscape, extending far beyond traditional technology hubs.

While launching the book Deepak Bagla, NITI Director, Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog, said, “The Prime Minister has consistently articulated a clear vision for Artificial Intelligence, one that is rooted in inclusive growth, ethical deployment, and AI for social good. AI-Preneurs of India is a reflection of that vision in action.”

He said the start-up founders featured in this book are not merely building cutting-edge technologies, “they are developing AI solutions that are grounded in India’s realities and aligned with national priorities.”



He added the book showcases India’s path toward leading the global AI discourse through purpose-led innovation and “celebrates these unsung heroes of innovation.”

This book features startups working across more than thirty sector domains, including healthcare, education, sustainability, mobility, sports analytics, deep tech and social impact.

AIM was introduced in 2016 as a flagship government initiative under NITI Aayog aims to promote a culture of innovation nationwide. UNI

Goa showcases its IT-first approach at IndiaAI Impact Summit 2026

■ BY SOURAV SHEKHAR

NEW DELHI, FEB 17 : Goa, which is prominently known for its classic tourism touch, has also leveraged tech in governance to facilitate the development of the state. The state’s IT policy is specially designed to promote investment in IT and ITeS sectors promising capital subsidies, rental disbursement, power incentives, and simplified land approvals.

Presenting the achievements of the sector in IT and ITeS at the India AI Impact Summit 2026 in Delhi, senior officials of the state told UNI that the state was the recipient of ‘The Best Performer’ under the 5th state startup ecosystem ranking (Category B) of DPIIT, Government of India.

“We are facilitating good internet connectivity across the state, even village panchayats are establishing Centres of Excellence in Goa by leveraging advanced technologies,” an official said. Goa has also made rapid strides in ‘e-governance’ facilitating smooth access to government services to the common man. “We have an AI-based web chatbot which is also integrated with the government’s portal,” an official said. The state has also taken strong steps in the realm of internet connectivity and is trying to leverage the Goa Broadband Network scheme to its full potential.

The Goa Broadband Network (GBBN) scheme is a high-speed, state-wide, end-to-end IP-based, fibre optic network infrastructure started by the Government of Goa. “Under the GBBN scheme, approximately 414 pop locations, 225 govt buildings, and 189 village gram panchayats are covered, which showcases the state’s IT resilience,” they told.

Officials also briefed about the ‘Har Ghar Fibre’ scheme, which is an initiative announced in 2025 to provide high-speed internet to every household, starting with pilots in Porvorim, Sankhalim, and Biocholim. Goa also has a Electronics Manufacturing Cluster (EMC) at Tuem which is the first dedicated ecosystem for electronics, clean technology and advanced manufacturing industries. It offers world-class industrial infrastructure, integrated utilities and cost-efficient environment which makes it India’s most promising destinations for high-valued and high-innovation manufacturing.

The Department of Information and Technology, Electronics and Communication (DITE&C) is also planning to host the ‘Goa AI Hackathon’ to foster the use of artificial intelligence in the government delivery system. “We will collect problem statements from different departments of the state government,” a senior official said. He also listed key initiatives taken by the state government: (i) AI for Governance Program, which is related to sensitising the government departments on AI adoption; (ii) AI Labs in Academic Institution which aims to build a skilled and future-ready workforce; (iii) AI-powered Whatsapp Chatbot which is providing citizens access to over 240 government services across more than 60 departments. UNI

Adani group to invest USD 100 bn for sovereign AI- infra

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, FEB 17 : The Adani Group on Tuesday announced one of the world’s largest integrated energy-compute commitments, which is a direct investment of USD 100 billion for developing a renewable-energy-powered, hyperscale Artificial Intelligence (AI)- ready data centres by 2035.

The initiative is aimed at establishing a long-term sovereign energy and computing platform designed to position India as a global leader in the emerging Intelligence Revolution.

This is expected to catalyse by 2035 an additional USD 150 billion across server manufacturing, advanced electrical infrastructure, sovereign cloud platforms and supporting industries.

Altogether, the projection is that the move is going to create a USD 250 billion AI infra ecosystem in the country over a decade.

Speaking on the development, Chairman of the Adani Group,

Gautam Adani, has said, “The world is entering an Intelligence Revolution more profound than any previous Industrial Revolution,” adding that, “Nations that master the symmetry between energy and compute will shape the next decade. India is uniquely positioned to lead.”

“At Adani, we are building on our foundation in data centres and green energy to expand into the complete five-layer AI stack focused on India’s technological sovereignty. India will not be a mere consumer in the AI age. We will be the creators, the builders and the exporters of intelligence, and we are proud to be able to participate in that future,” he added.

Notably, the roadmap builds on Adani Connex’s existing 2 GW national data centre, expanding toward a 5 GW target that positions India at the epicentre of the global AI economy.

This is anchored by partnerships with Google to establish the nation’s largest gigawatt-scale AI data centre



campus in Visakhapatnam, alongside additional campuses in Noida, and with Microsoft spanning Hyderabad and Pune.

The group is also in talks with major players seeking to establish large-scale campuses across the country, cementing its position as the premier AI infrastructure partner of the country.

Going with the vision, the group will also deepen its data centre partnership with Flipkart, advancing the collaboration toward

the development of a second AI data centre purpose-built to support next-generation digital commerce, high-performance computing and large-scale AI workloads.

Deployment of the five GW will create the world’s largest integrated data centre platform, combining renewable power generation, transmission infrastructure and hyperscale AI compute within a single coordinated architecture, officials said.

Meanwhile, Adani Green Energy’s 30 GW Khavda project, of which over 10 GW is already operational, and in addition, the group is committed to investing another USD 55 billion to expand its renewable energy portfolio, which is going to have one of the world’s largest battery energy storage systems (BESS).

The group will also co-invest in domestic manufacturing partnerships with regard to the making of critical components like high-capacity transformers, advanced power electronics, grid systems and thermal management solutions for industries, all this aimed to reduce exposure to global supply-chain volatility.

The Adani group will establish specialised AI infrastructure engineering curricula, applied AI research labs focused on energy and logistics and a national fellowship programme to address the growing skills gap, and this will be done while working with leading academic institutions. UNI

AI in governance: Experts stress caution, evaluation and ethics

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, FEB 17 : The role of artificial intelligence in improving government efficiency and public service delivery came under discussion at the India AI Impact Summit 2026 on Tuesday, with experts calling for rigorous evaluation and stronger governance frameworks before large-scale deployment.

The session titled ‘AI in Governance: Revolutionising Government Efficiency’ brought together researchers and policymakers to assess how AI tools can move beyond pilot projects to deliver measurable impact across public systems.

Dean Karlan presented findings from a study conducted in Togo that examined the use of machine learning to improve targeting of public services. According to the research, AI-supported targeting led to measurable improvements in food security, mental health and socio-economic indicators.

However, the study also highlighted limitations, noting that reliance on phone metadata alone failed to accurately capture treatment effects



and revealed risks such as model drift and short-term vulnerability misclassification.

Participants said the findings underline the need for experimentation, iterative testing and evidence-based procurement, especially when AI systems are used to identify beneficiaries, allocate public resources or inform policy decisions.

The discussion later turned to India’s preparedness for implementing AI in governance. While progress has been reported in building computing capacity, breaking data silos and training

public officials, panellists noted that significant challenges remain.

Issues such as data heterogeneity, scalability and ethical clarity were flagged as key hurdles. It was also observed that only a limited number of AI implementers fully understand the ethical frameworks guiding their systems.

Mohammed Y. Safirulla, Director of the India AI Mission under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, pointed to sectors such as banking and tax analytics where structured data has enabled faster AI adoption. In contrast, sectors like education and other citizen-centric services face complexities due to diverse datasets and ambiguous decision-making parameters.

Speakers emphasised that carefully designed pilots, third-party audits and strong validation mechanisms are essential before scaling AI systems across departments. A recurring theme during the session was the need to focus first on solving clearly defined operational problems rather than attempting sweeping transformations without adequate safeguards.

SATTE 2026 to feature 2,000 exhibitors representing more than 3,200 brands from across 60 countries

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, FEB 17 : The 33rd edition of South Asia Travel & Tourism Exchange (SATTE) will take place from February 25 to 27, 2026 at Yashobhoomi, New Delhi, under the theme ‘An Opportunity Called India.’ The exhibition is hosting 2,000 exhibitors representing more than 3,200 brands across 60 countries.

The event will bring together policymakers, destinations, travel buyers, and solution providers from across India and around the world.

SATTE 2026 will feature strong participation from central and state governments, with the Ministry of Tourism leading discussions around ‘Tourism Vision

2047’.

State tourism boards, including Rajasthan, Kerala, Assam, Telangana, and Punjab will participate at the event showcasing regional tourism offerings and investment priorities.

Conference highlights will feature diverse topics, including Travel Titans: Inside the Winners’ Mind; Reimagining Incredible India; India: The Next Travel Goldmine, along with panel discussions and fireside chats.

The three-day tourism festival is a platform where all of India’s travel ecosystem connects with global tourism supply across metros, emerging Tier-2 and Tier-3 markets, and all major segments, including leisure, corporate, MICE, weddings, cruise, luxury, and



experiential travel.

By bringing together buyers and sellers across inbound, outbound, and domestic travel, SATTE reflects the reality of how India travels today.

International participation at SATTE 2026 highlights India’s growing importance as a global source market, with strong representation from the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and APAC destinations actively engaging Indian travel buyers.

Participating destinations

include Thailand, Malaysia, Maldives, Jordan, Egypt, Hong Kong, Nepal, Jamaica, and Vietnam, among others, recognising India’s expanding role in shaping global travel demand.

Leading travel platforms, including EaseMyTrip, Cleartrip, TBO, and TRIPJACK will showcase innovations in AI-enabled travel planning, mobile-first booking, and data-driven decision-making.

High-growth segments such as MICE, destination weddings, cruise tourism and experiential travel will feature prominently. India’s wedding tourism market alone generates over USD 72 billion annually, with destination weddings accounting for nearly 25 per cent of the segment.

Moreover, this edition will also

feature a special address by Anita Mendiratta, a globally respected executive advisor, author, diplomat, and on-air personality in Tourism, Aviation and Development and who also serves as a Special Advisor to the Secretary General of UN Tourism.

Commenting on the the 2026 edition of the travel showcase, Yogesh Mudras, Managing Director, Informa Markets in India, said, “India is today one of the most compelling travel stories globally, with tourism emerging as a powerful driver of economic growth and employment. As infrastructure investments continue and policy support strengthens, the sector is projected to contribute nearly USD 3 trillion to India’s GDP by 2047.” UNI

India’s labour force participation holds steady in Jan: MoSPI

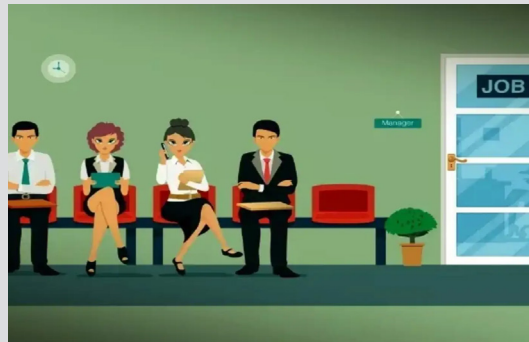
■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, FEB 17 : India’s labour market showed a mixed but resilient performance in January, with labour force participation remaining largely stable even as unemployment increased marginally.

The latest monthly labour figures released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation stated that the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR), which measures the share of people either working or actively seeking work, remained at around 55.9 per cent in January.

This stability indicates continued engagement in the workforce nationwide.

In urban areas, participation levels for both men and women remained broadly unchanged, while rural regions saw a slight decrease, largely due to a seasonal slowdown in employment following the peak agricultural season.



Significantly, female participation held firm, signalling that efforts to enhance women’s engagement in the workforce are gradually taking effect.

Despite this steady participation, the Unemployment Rate rose slightly, reaching about 5.0 per cent in January, compared with just under 5 per cent in December. The increase was more noticeable in urban areas, where unemployment climbed modestly, as well as in rural parts of the country.

These figures are part of monthly labour market estimates that help track India’s employment dynamics and provide insights into shifting trends in workforce participation and job availability.

Overall, while unemployment saw a mild uptick, the sustained level of workforce participation suggests that India’s labour market continues to adapt and absorb changes in the economy.

UNI



Div Com Kashmir reviews arrangements for 6th Khelo India Winter Games at Gulmarg

Emphasis on close coordination for successful conduct of event

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 18: Following the announcement of dates for the commencement of 2nd leg of the 6th Edition of the Khelo India Winter Games at Gulmarg, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg chaired a comprehensive meeting to review preparations for the smooth and successful conduct of the national sporting event.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Commissioner SMC, SSP Traffic Srinagar, SSP Security, SSP Traffic Rural, Secretary, J&K Sports Council, CEO GDA, RTO, and officers from various departments including Information, Health, PHE, KPDC, Transport, Hospitality & Proto-



col, Tourism, Cable Car Corporation, IMD, ULB, RDD, Rural Sanitation, Doordarshan, and other concerned agencies.

At the outset, Secretary, J&K Sports Council gave a detailed presentation covering the number of participants, expected



VIP attendance, scheduled events, accommodation availability, transportation plans, cultural programmes, and pro-

motional activities.

While chairing the meeting, the Divisional Commissioner reviewed a wide range of arrange-

ments, including the arrival of participants at Srinagar Airport, transportation logistics to Gulmarg, accommodation facilities, and essential services such as electricity, drinking water, sanitation, mobile network connectivity, and critical healthcare services. He stressed the need for seamless coordination among all departments.

Emphasizing synergy and accountability, he directed the appointment of nodal officers for specific roles and assignments. He also ordered the activation of a joint control room to facilitate effective communication among stakeholder departments and ensure timely dissemination of information, further strengthening interdepartmental coordination.

The Divisional Commissioner

instructed the Chief Medical Officer to ensure the availability of an ECG machine at Gandola, deployment of medical teams, and placement of a critical care ambulance at the venue. He also called for maintaining cleanliness and sanitation at the venues and along the route from Srinagar Airport to Gulmarg.

Highlighting safety measures, he directed an increase in the number of Avalanche Rescue Team members for immediate response to any hazard and emphasized the mandatory use of anti-skid chains by vehicles operating on Gulmarg-Tangmarg road.

Also, he instructed the Director Tourism to leverage the event to promote tourism activities and boost tourist footfall in the region.

Affarwat-XI Congratulates JKCA on Historic Qualification to the Ranji Trophy Final After 66 Years

HT SPORT DESK

SRINAGAR: The Affarwat-XI management and its President Zeeshan Pervaiz extends its heartiest congratulations to the entire Jammu & Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA) family for scripting history by qualifying for the Ranji Trophy Final after a long and memorable wait of 66 years.

This historic achievement is not just a cricketing milestone—it is a powerful symbol of perseverance, discipline, and belief. It reflects years of hard work, structured planning, and the collective effort of administrators, coaches, support staff, players, and passionate fans who never stopped believing in the rise of J&K cricket.

Administration

The visionary leadership, thoughtful planning, and continuous support provided by the JKCA administration laid the strongest foundation for this success. Their commitment to nurturing tal-



ent and creating opportunities has finally translated into history on the biggest domestic stage.

Coaches & Support Staff

The coaching unit and support staff deserve immense credit for their tactical brilliance, tireless efforts, and unshakeable faith in the squad. Their guidance and preparation turned potential into performance when it mattered the most.

Players

The players showed exceptional grit, character, and fighting spirit. Under pressure, they stood tall, played fearless cricket, and carried the dreams of millions of people from Jammu & Kashmir on their shoulders—turning those dreams into reality with pride and honor.

Fans of Jammu & Kashmir

This achievement equally belongs to the people of Jammu & Kashmir. Your unwavering support, patience, and belief have been the team's biggest strength. Through highs and lows, you stood firmly behind your team, and today, your faith has been rewarded.

After 66 long years, this qualification is not merely about reaching a final—it is a bold statement that J&K cricket has arrived, stronger, united, and more determined than ever before. It marks the beginning of a new era filled with hope, confidence, and greater ambitions.

The Affarwat-XI family takes immense pride in this historic moment and wishes the JKCA team the very best for the final. May this achievement inspire future generations and open many more glorious chapters in the journey of J&K cricket.

'Don't take us lightly' - UAE coach Rajput not surprised by Associates' improved show

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI: Lalchand Rajput's UAE team will be going home after their group-stage match against South Africa in Delhi irrespective of the result, but they are not returning empty-handed. They'll have at least one win to their name, having beaten Canada and have done their bit for the cause of Associate cricket.

"I'm not surprised with [how the] Associate teams [have performed] because we play among the associates. It's a big platform for the Associates to show off their talent. And I think they have done that," Rajput said at UAE's pre-match press conference on Tuesday. "If you look at overall cricket all over the world, the smaller teams are really coming up. It's a good thing that cricket is growing and that Associate countries have put their hands up and said: 'don't take us lightly'."

Arguably, others have said that slightly louder than the UAE. Nepal ran England close in their tournament opener and Netherlands, who were the only As-



sociates at the last ODI World Cup, came within a dropped catch of beating Pakistan. USA had both India and Pakistan in precarious positions; Scotland had their moments against West Indies and, to a lesser extent, England; Italy registered their first win (albeit over another Associate, Nepal) and were competitive against England. But Canada,

Namibia and Oman have not managed any wins between them.

As for UAE, they were completely outplayed by New Zealand in their first match, then had a closer than comfortable match against Canada, and a properly competitive fixture against Afghanistan. Their improvement over the course of the tournament is proof that the more frequent-

ly they play, the better they get at assessing game situations.

"The last two games, we really proved that we are a better team than what was expected after the first game," Rajput said. "Associate countries should play more matches. Until you play more matches, you will not know how to deal with those [close] situations. You can do a net-

match-up but how do you come out of a tight situation like 80 for 5? Or how do you win in the last two overs? You don't get that until you're on the ground, until you feel it, that's why you want to play more matches."

Still, he could identify plenty of positives for UAE with the form of the new(ish) middle-order batter Sohaib Khan at the top of the list. With just five T20 caps and back-to-back fifties at the event, Sohaib has announced himself after being spotted on the UAE's domestic scene.

"We saw him in the local cricket and we called him for the camp. And then in the national camp, we played matches among ourselves, so he showed a lot of positive intent and really batted well. Before this, we took him to the [Asia Cup Rising Stars] where he got a 60-odd against India," Rajput said. "He is mentally strong and he plays fearless cricket. He backs his skill and the way he is battling is fantastic. It's a good platform for him to show what he can do. He just has to go higher now. He can't go down now."

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