

Srinagar
Friday
February 27 | 2026
09 Ramadan 1447 AH
Issue No: 51
Volume: 16
Pages: 12
Price: Rs 02/-

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Shed Colonial Mindset to Make India a Global Innovation Leader: Vice President in Srinagar

At 21st Convocation of University of Kashmir, C. P. Radhakrishnan calls for Swadeshi solutions, warns youth against drugs and excess social media use

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 26: Vice President C. P. Radhakrishnan on Thursday said India must free itself from the remnants of a colonial mindset to emerge as a global leader in innovation and sustainable development, urging young graduates to take pride in indigenous knowledge and capabilities.

Addressing the 21st convocation of the University of Kashmir, the Vice President exhorted students to focus on "Swadeshi innovation" rooted in Indian resources, needs and tradition-



al wisdom. "We need not feel inferior. The first step towards global leadership is to throw out our colonial mindset," he said.

He credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi with strengthening the country's entrepreneurial ecosystem and fostering a culture of innovation. Expressing confidence in the graduating class, he said the next major breakthrough in sustainable development and global leadership could come from among them.

Referring to India's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Radhakrishnan

said the Prime Minister's call to scientists to develop a vaccine was initially met with skepticism. "Yet India delivered one of the most effective vaccines, serving humanity at large," he said, adding that while several developed Western economies focused on patenting and pricing, India prioritised accessibility and affordability.

Highlighting ongoing infrastructure development in Jammu and Kashmir, the Vice President mentioned the recently approved expansion of Srinagar International Airport at a cost of

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Country First, Innovation Always: LG Sinha Urges Universities to Power Viksit Bharat

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 26: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday called upon universities to move beyond their traditional role as custodians of knowledge and emerge as dynamic centres of innovation, human development and social transformation, asserting that "ideas in the classroom must impact the world."

Addressing the 21st Convocation of the University of



Kashmir, the Lieutenant Governor urged graduating students to adopt a clear life mantra: "One purpose. One priority—Country first."

"Always remember when you build the country, the country builds you back. Nations don't rise only from resources. They rise from educated people and when the nation rises, so do you," he said.

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J&K No Longer 'Just Tourism', Now an Innovation Powerhouse: Omar Abdullah

At 21st Convocation of University of Kashmir, CM calls for women-led growth, agri-tech transformation and IT-driven future

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 26: Asserting that Jammu & Kashmir is shedding its limited economic identity, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday declared that the Union Territory is fast emerging as a hub of innovation, participatory governance and digital transformation.

Addressing the 21st Convocation of the University of Kashmir as Pro-Chancellor, the Chief Minister said that for decades J&K's economy had been perceived narrowly as being dependent on tourism and agriculture. "The J&K of 2026 is no longer 'just' tourism or 'just' agriculture. It is becoming a centre of innovation and participatory governance," he said.



The ceremony was attended by Vice President of India C. P. Radhakrishnan as Chief Guest, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Education Minister Sakina Itoo, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Vice Chancellor Nilofar Khan, faculty members and graduating students.

Recalling the presentation
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India, Israel Seal Special Strategic Partnership ; FTA Talks to Be Fast-Tracked

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

JERUSALEM, FEB 26: India and Israel on Thursday elevated their bilateral relationship to a "Special Strategic Partnership" and agreed to expedite negotiations on a long-pending Free Trade Agreement (FTA), signalling a major leap in strategic and economic cooperation between the two nations.

The announcement came after wide-ranging talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu, during which the two sides signed a series of agreements spanning trade, agriculture, energy, cyberspace and digital payments.

Addressing the media, Modi strongly endorsed ongoing peace efforts in Gaza, asserting that "humanity must never become a victim of conflict." He said India's security interests are closely linked to peace and stability in the Middle East and reiterated

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India Slams Pakistan at United Nations Human Rights Council, Flags J&K's Budget Edge Over IMF Bailout

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

UNITED NATIONS/GENEVA, FEB 26: India on Wednesday mounted a strong rebuttal to Pakistan at the 61st Regular Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, asserting that Jammu and Kashmir's developmental momentum stands in sharp contrast to Islamabad's recent financial bailout from the International Monetary Fund.

Exercising the Right of Reply after Pakistan raised the Kashmir issue during the high-level segment, Anupama Singh, First Secretary at India's Permanent Mission in Geneva, categorically rejected what she termed as "baseless

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Shah Raises Bengal Pitch, Promises to 'Drive Out Infiltrators' After BJP Victory

Home Minister announces panel to study 'demographic change', says crackdown will begin from Bihar's Seemanchal

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

ARARIA, FEB 26: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday struck an assertive electoral note for the upcoming Assembly polls in West Bengal, expressing confidence that the BJP would form the next government in the state and "drive out every single infiltrator."

Addressing a gathering in Bihar's Araria district after



launching Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) projects worth Rs 175

crore and dedicating new border outposts to the nation, Shah said infiltration posed a grave threat to national security and strained welfare systems meant for citizens.

"It is the top priority of the BJP government to drive out every single infiltrator from the country. They are not just a threat to national security but also feed on welfare benefits meant for our people," he said.

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Militancy in Retreat, J&K 'Very Normal' : Western Army Commander

Lt Gen Manoj Kumar Katiyar warns of tougher response to any Pakistan-backed provocation, says Army closely monitoring terror infrastructure

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

PATHANKOT (PUNJAB), FEB 26: Western Army Commander Lieutenant General Manoj Kumar Katiyar on Thursday asserted that militancy indicators in Jammu and Kashmir have registered a steady decline, describing the overall security situ-

ation in the Union Territory as "very normal" while cautioning against continued cross-border attempts to disturb peace.

Interacting with reporters in Pathankot, Lt Gen Katiyar said all parameters linked to militancy have consistently come down in recent years. He, however, alleged that

Pakistan continues to sponsor attempts to push terrorists into the region to disrupt normalcy.

"This is a well-planned conspiracy by Pakistan to send a few terrorists to disturb the atmosphere. Our Army, along with all civil administration departments, is fully prepared to deal with any such attempt," he said.

Referring to recent encounters in the Kathua-Kishtwar belt, the Army commander said security forces have acted promptly on intelligence inputs. He noted that several successful operations this year led to the neutralisation of terrorists who had infiltrated with the intent to create

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Massive Blaze Guts Cotton Unit at HMT Industrial Estate

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 26: A massive fire erupted during pre-dawn hours at the HMT Industrial Area on the outskirts of Srinagar.

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Massive Blaze Guts Around 14 Shops in Bandipora Main Market

HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, FEB 26: A massive fire broke out in the main market of Bandipora early Thursday morning, gutting around 15 shops

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Shed Colonial.....

over Rs 1,600 crore. He referred to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's emphasis on ensuring tourism growth without harming the region's fragile ecosystem.

Describing the Chenab Rail Bridge as a marvel of engineering and the world's highest railway bridge, he said such projects go beyond physical connectivity. "When places are connected, people are connected. And when people are connected, hearts are closely connected," he said, terming infrastructure as an instrument of social harmony.

The Vice President also highlighted the Prime Minister's special scholarship schemes for students from Jammu and Kashmir, saying they promote aspiration and national integration by enabling youth to pursue education across the country.

In his address, Radhakrishnan cautioned students against drug abuse and excessive use of social media. "Your parents depend on you for their future. Stay away from narcotics and guide others to do the same," he said, adding that success requires discipline and balance in the digital age.

Concluding with a call for unity, he told the gathering: "Mera Kashmir nahi, tumhara Kashmir nahi, Hamara Kashmir," urging the youth to embrace a shared vision for the region and the nation.

Country First.....

The convocation ceremony was graced by Vice President of India C. P. Radhakrishnan and attended by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Higher Education Minister Sakina Itoo, Vice Chancellor Prof. Nilofer Khan, senior officials, faculty members, students and parents.

Describing the ceremony as a reflection of generational transformation and fulfilled aspirations, LG Sinha said that education at the University of Kashmir signifies holistic personality development, not merely the acquisition of skills.

"Education builds self-confidence, equips individuals for meaningful lives and molds responsible citizens, linking personal success with collective good," he observed.

Emphasising the need for closer collaboration between academia and industry, he said, "My mantra is that Industry and Intellect should grow together. Universities must collaborate with industry, innovators and research and development organisations to build Viksit Bharat and ensure campuses and companies co-create the future."

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted the rapid pace of technological change, noting that the digital revolution, artificial intelligence and shifting global dynamics are redefining higher education. "Careers being prepared for today may morph tomorrow. Industries are reshaping. The real question isn't whether change will come, but whether we can sync with it. Youth with critical thinking, core knowledge and a resolve to lifelong learning will surge ahead," he said.

Pointing out that Artificial Intelligence now permeates sectors ranging from healthcare and agriculture to finance and governance, he stressed that universities must ensure technology serves human welfare. "The question is whether technology will serve humanity or just profit. Campuses must craft that answer by blending knowledge with values," he added.

For faculty members, he outlined three priorities: embedding adaptability as a core curriculum skill, seamlessly integrating AI and emerging technologies with human intelligence, and fostering global and interdisciplinary collaboration. "Modern challenges are interconnected. Universities must shatter subject silos and mandate cross-disciplinary teamwork," he said.

Reaffirming the national goal of becoming a fully developed nation by 2047, LG Sinha said Viksit Bharat is a collective resolve powered by diligence, innovation and moral strength, with the youth playing a central role.

He also lauded the exceptional performance of girl students, noting that of the 239 gold medals awarded, 186 were won by women, while 108 of the 164 PhDs conferred went to female scholars. "This defines the New India. Give daughters equal opportunity and they lead, excel and set new standards," he said.

The dignitaries also released the University's profile on the occasion.

J&K No Longer.....

of the 2026-27 Budget in the Legislative Assembly, which he described as a "Fiscal Compass," Abdullah said the document was a declaration of intent aimed at transforming J&K into a modern, progressive and economically vibrant region. He underlined that his government's approach rests on three pillars — meritocracy, sustainability and digital sovereignty.

Reflecting on the challenges faced in recent years, including the trauma and economic disruptions of 2025, the Chief Minister said resilience had defined the people of J&K. He urged students to

recognise the sacrifices of their parents and teachers, calling the convocation a moment of "succession" where a new generation takes forward the legacy of knowledge preserved through difficult times.

Highlighting a major milestone, he said nearly 60 per cent of degrees and medals awarded this year were earned by women. Terming this shift a transition from "Women's Welfare" to "Women-led Development," he noted that under the UMEED scheme, seven lakh women have been organised into 80,000 Self-Help Groups, creating thousands of "Lakshpati Didis." He also announced continued support through interest-free loans for women-led startups in manufacturing and IT, urging women graduates to aspire for leadership roles in civil services and biotechnology and to represent J&K globally.

On tourism, Abdullah said while it remains the lifeline of the economy, it must evolve beyond established destinations such as Gulmarg and Pahalgam. He highlighted the promotion of border tourism in areas like Keran, Gurez and Teetwal, adding that new destinations are being developed in coordination with the Union Government to ensure inclusive growth.

Emphasising sustainability, he spoke of investments in eco-friendly infrastructure, including artificial snow technology in Gulmarg, and called upon Environmental Science graduates to help set green standards for hospitality.

Turning to agriculture, he described it as the cultural soul of the region but stressed the need for a High-Density Revolution driven by technology, quality saplings and export-oriented production. He encouraged Science and IT graduates to develop solutions such as real-time pest detection apps and blockchain-based systems to authenticate products like Pampore saffron in global markets.

Articulating a "Saffron & Silicon" vision, the Chief Minister said J&K is being positioned as a data-friendly zone and a destination for green data centres, with a focus on creating job providers rather than job seekers. He added that industrial policy is being restructured to promote knowledge-based industries and R&D centres within the Union Territory.

Addressing mental health concerns, he said the government is expanding district-level counselling through Mission Youth and urged graduates in Psychology and Social Work to help destigmatise conversations around well-being.

Reaffirming his commitment to transparent governance, Abdullah said recruitment reforms are aimed at replacing "recommendation" with "qualification," ensuring merit remains the sole criterion.

Quoting Mahatma Gandhi, he urged students to "be the change" and carry forward the spirit of Kashmiriyat as they step into the world, expressing confidence that they would lead Jammu & Kashmir towards a brighter future.

India, Israel.....

New Delhi's full support for the Gaza peace initiative.

"India's stance is clear. There is no place for terrorism in the world — in any form or manifestation," Modi said, adding that both countries have consistently stood shoulder-to-shoulder in combating terror and its supporters.

The two leaders agreed to further strengthen defence cooperation through joint development and joint production of military hardware under technology transfer arrangements, deepening an already robust security partnership.

In a significant move to boost innovation-driven growth, the countries also launched a new collaboration in critical and emerging technologies, focusing on artificial intelligence, quantum research and critical minerals. Modi welcomed progress on enabling the use of India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in Israel, describing it as a step towards greater digital and financial integration.

The leaders also reviewed progress on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and discussed cooperation under the I2U2 grouping comprising India, Israel, the UAE and the United States.

Modi, who arrived in Israel on a two-day visit — his second in nine years — described the relationship as rooted in deep trust, shared democratic values and enduring people-to-people ties. The elevation of ties to a Special Strategic Partnership marks a new chapter in India-Israel relations amid shifting regional and global dynamics.

India Slams.....

allegations" made by Pakistan and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

"It is hard to take lectures on democracy from a country where civilian governments rarely complete their terms," Singh said, adding that record voter turnout in recent parliamentary and Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir reflected people's faith in democratic processes and their

rejection of violence.

In a sharp retort, she said that if landmark infrastructure projects such as the Chenab Rail Bridge — touted as the world's highest railway bridge — were being dismissed, then Pakistan was either "hallucinating or living in la-la land."

Singh further pointed out that the developmental budget of Jammu and Kashmir is more than double the recent bailout package sought by Pakistan from the IMF. Last year, the IMF approved a disbursement of about USD 1 billion to Pakistan under its Extended Fund Facility, taking the total disbursement under the programme to around USD 2.1 billion.

Despite what she described as Pakistan's attempts to destabilise the region through "relentless state-sponsored terrorism," Singh said Jammu and Kashmir continues to make political, economic and social strides.

She also criticised the OIC for "parroting" Pakistan's narrative, stating that such positions only expose how deeply the grouping has allowed itself to be influenced by one member state.

Reaffirming India's long-standing stance, Singh asserted that Jammu and Kashmir "was, is and will always remain an integral and inalienable part of India," maintaining that its accession was legal, irrevocable and in accordance with international law.

Calling out Pakistan over territories under its control, she said the only outstanding issue remains the "illegal occupation of Indian territories," urging Islamabad to vacate areas under its forcible occupation.

The exchange marked yet another diplomatic confrontation between the two neighbours on an international platform, with India firmly pushing back against what it described as Pakistan's continued efforts to internationalise the Kashmir issue.

Shah Raises.....

The Home Minister asserted that large-scale infiltration leads to encroachments in border areas and triggers demographic changes that can disrupt the cultural and geographical character of regions. He announced that the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi would constitute a high-powered committee to identify vulnerable areas and examine measures to "undo demographic change."

Shah named Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal among the states most affected, adding that with West Bengal going to polls soon, the BJP was poised to emerge victorious. The party has in recent years expanded its presence in the state and positioned itself as the principal challenger to the ruling All India Trinamool Congress headed by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who is seeking a fourth consecutive term.

Indicating that action would begin in Bihar, Shah said the Seemanchal region would see the start of a crackdown on infiltrators. Thanking voters for their support to the NDA in the recent Assembly elections, he said the BJP had fought the polls on the issue of infiltration despite criticism from opponents.

"Flushing out infiltrators is as much a part of our agenda in Bihar as ensuring welfare. I promise that before we seek a fresh mandate, every single infiltrator will be driven out," he said.

Highlighting the role of the SSB in safeguarding the country's frontiers, Shah called for a specialised standard operating procedure for porous borders and stressed the importance of coordination with local border residents to curb smuggling and narcotics trade.

He also reiterated the Centre's commitment to the welfare of security personnel, citing initiatives such as housing schemes, health insurance cover and enhanced gratia compensation for personnel disabled in the line of duty.

Shah began his address by paying tributes to freedom fighter Vinayak Damodar Savarkar on his death anniversary, describing him as a fearless patriot and influential thinker who shaped nationalist discourse.

Militancy in.....

disturbances. On reports of revival of terror launch pads and camps across the border, Lt Gen Katiyar said the Army is maintaining constant surveillance. "We are fully aware of the activities taking place there. If there is any effort to regenerate terrorist bases, we have the necessary information and will formulate our plans accordingly," he added.

Speaking about Operation Sindoor, he said Pakistan had been taught a "very strong lesson" and warned that any future misadventure would invite a stronger response. "Our preparations are ongoing. If conflict conditions are created again, our response will be harsher than last time," he said.

Lt Gen Katiyar dismissed nuclear threats as a pressure tactic, stating that India

would not be deterred from taking firm action if required. He also clarified that during Operation Sindoor, Indian forces targeted only terrorist bases initially and later responded to attacks on military stations by striking Pakistani military installations and air bases, without targeting civilians.

Detailing the ceasefire sequence, he said that after sustained military engagement lasting 88 hours, Pakistan's DGMO approached India's DGMO following significant damage to its military infrastructure, leading to the drafting of a ceasefire proposal that was later accepted by the Indian government.

Reiterating that infiltration attempts continue with alleged backing from across the border, the Army commander said the security grid remains vigilant and prepared to counter any emerging threat. (Agencies)

Massive Blaze.....

completely gutting a cotton processing factory and triggering a large-scale firefighting operation.

Officials said the State Fire Control Room in Srinagar received an emergency call, following which fire tenders from Fire Station Mujkund were rushed to the spot. Upon arrival, firefighters found the cotton factory engulfed in flames, with thick plumes of smoke rising from the industrial premises.

Considering the intensity of the blaze and the highly combustible material stored inside the unit, additional reinforcements were mobilized from Fire Station JVC Veer. Water bowlers and foam tenders were also deployed from the Fire and Emergency Headquarters to strengthen the containment effort and prevent the fire from spreading to adjoining industrial establishments.

Fire and Emergency Services personnel were seen battling the flames amid challenging conditions as cotton stocks and machinery fueled the blaze. Authorities said due to coordinated efforts the fire was contained.

There were no immediate reports of casualties at the time of filing this report. The cause of the fire and the exact extent of property loss were yet to be ascertained. Officials said a detailed assessment would be conducted once the flames are fully brought under control.

Massive Blaze.....

housed in a three-storey commercial complex and causing heavy losses to traders.

An official said the Fire and Emer-

gency Services received a distress call reporting a major blaze in the market area. Fire tenders from the Bandipora headquarters, along with a vehicle from Ajas station, were rushed to the spot. Personnel from Bandipora Police also reached the site and assisted in the operation.

Four fire tenders were pressed into service as firefighters launched intensive efforts to contain the flames and prevent the blaze from spreading to adjoining structures. Thick smoke engulfed the market as teams battled the fire for several hours before bringing it under control.

Officials said a detailed assessment was being carried out to determine the total loss and the exact cause of the fire. "The preliminary reports suggest that around 14 shops have been completely gutted. The cause of the fire is under investigation," an official said.

Shopkeepers appreciated the prompt response of the Fire and Emergency Services, stating that teams reached the site quickly and immediately began firefighting with support from local volunteers.

Some locals, however, expressed concern over the limited infrastructure at the Bandipora fire station, saying it lacked adequate vehicles and modern equipment to handle large-scale incidents efficiently. They stressed the need for additional fire tenders and upgraded firefighting tools.

Traders said the losses could run into crores of rupees and urged the district administration to conduct a proper assessment and provide financial assistance to the affected shopkeepers.

MLA Bandipora Nizamuddin Bhat, who visited the affected market, termed the incident deeply unfortunate and said the financial burden would weigh heavily on the affected traders for a long time. He said Bandipora has limited commercial activity, with no major industries or large investors, and most businesses survive on bank loans and small-scale trade that sustains local employment.

Bhat said three-storey and two-storey structures, along with belongings of several families, were reduced to ashes and called for urgent compensation. He appealed to the Chief Minister and the Lieutenant Governor's administration to personally assess the losses and extend substantial financial assistance through government and banking channels.

He also demanded immediate settlement of insurance claims and urged the Red Cross to intervene without delay to support the affected traders.

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MD, Mission Yuva, Deputy Commissioner review progress of Mission YUVA in Ganderbal

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

GANDERBAL, FEB 26: Mission Director, Mission Yuva, Harvinder Singh and Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore today took a joint review of the status of implementation of Mission Yuva in District Ganderbal.

At the outset, the meeting was informed about the status of achievements and progress under Mission YUVA in the district.

Assistant Director Employment apprised the meeting about the status of Mission YUVA scheme including number of applications received, verified and approved by DLICs, besides the cases sanctioned and disbursed. She also informed the meeting about the total number of units that have



been completed till date.

MD Mission Yuva emphasized the importance of the training for entrepreneurs and also sought the details of the training programs conducted in the past few months. He emphasised on

encouraging potential entrepreneurs to take up units involved in the ODOP product of the district.

MD also reviewed the progress under Udyam Jagriti, directing the Assistant Director for the 100 percent coverage of students in

degree colleges and polytechnic.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC said that Mission YUVA has opened new avenues of self-employment for the youth of the district. He stressed upon all stakeholders to ensure timely

processing of applications and proper guidance to beneficiaries so that units are established smoothly and sustain in the long run.

He also emphasized close coordination among departments and banks for effective implementation of the scheme.

Later, MD, Mission Yuva interacted with the SBDU and BHD members and asked them to work with zeal and dedication so that the goals of entrepreneurship and self-employment under the scheme are fully achieved.

ADDC Ganderbal, Assistant Director Employment, Chief Agricultural Officer, Ganderbal, NABARD officials, LDM and Cluster Head, J&K Bank were also present in the meeting.

J&K people stood united against terrorism always, Minister Satish Sharma

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEB 26: Jammu and Kashmir Cabinet Minister Satish Sharma on Thursday said attempts to destabilise the Union Territory through violence would not succeed, asserting that people across the region have stood united against terrorism.

Addressing a gathering, Sharma referred to Pakistan's actions in 1947 and said residents of Jammu and Kashmir had resisted attempts to derail the region's future. He said the people of Baramulla, under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, had opposed the tribal invasion and supported the accession of the erstwhile state to India.



Referring to the terror attack in Pahalgam, the minister said there were expectations that such events would disrupt normal life and economic activity in Jammu and Kashmir. However, he said traders, businesspersons and residents responded by maintaining unity and rejecting violence.

"After that incident, every person of Jammu and Kashmir stood against terrorism," Sharma said, adding that people in the region have shown resilience in the face of repeated challenges.

He said Jammu and Kashmir continues to face security threats but maintained that the resolve of its people remains unchanged.

The minister congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Home Minister Amit Shah, as well as the armed forces, paramilitary forces and Jammu and Kashmir Police for their role in maintaining security.

Sharma said while adversaries may continue to use terrorism as a strategy, the people of Jammu and Kashmir are committed to peace and stability. He added that the region seeks to promote harmony and development despite provocations.

He also referred to the participation of visitors and groups from different parts of the country in recent events in Jammu and Kashmir, saying it reflects confidence in the situation.

Sharma said the collective response of residents to security incidents sends a message that violence will not derail progress in the Union Territory.

Quarry Material Lifting at Booh Awantipora Being Carried Out Legally for Flood Protection Works

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

PULWAMA, FEB 26: The Department of Geology and Mining, Pulwama, has confirmed that the lifting and transportation of quarry material from the Booh Awantipora quarry belt is being carried out strictly in accordance with legal provisions and valid disposal permits for use in government flood protection and anti-erosion projects.

According to an official order issued by the Office of the District Mineral Officer, Pulwama, a disposal permit was granted following an online application submitted by Ghulam Rasool Dar, a resident of Ghat Mohalla Awantipora, through the e-service portal. The permit allows the regulated lifting of loose quarry material accumulated at the Booh quarry belt.

A committee constituted by the Geology and Mining Department had earlier conducted a physical inspection of the quarry site and reported the availability of approximately 15,150 cubic meters of loose material suitable for disposal under rules. Officials stated that permits are being issued in a phased manner to ensure environmental safety and prevent any untoward incidents during extraction and transportation.

The quarry material is being utilized for critical flood protection and anti-erosion works, including ongoing projects on Romshi Nallah and River Jhelum under the Flood Management Programme. The Flood Control Division Kakapora had requested the supply of quarry stones for these works, citing urgent requirements to complete stone pitching and other protective measures aimed at preventing riverbank erosion and safeguarding vulnerable areas.

Officials further confirmed that the required royalty and applicable charges amounting to Rs. 1,13,586 have been duly deposited, and the disposal permit has been issued in accordance with the J&K Minor Mineral Concession, Storage, Transportation of Minerals and Prevention of Illegal Mining Rules.

Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay Prashikshan Mahabhiyan-2026' workshop held at Srinagar

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 26: The Bharatiya Janata Party organized a workshop under the banner of the 'Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay Prashikshan Mahabhiyan-2026' for Srinagar, Anantnag and Baramulla districts at Amar Singh Club in Srinagar, Kashmir. The workshop witnessed enthusiastic participation from party office bearers, district representatives, and grassroots functionaries.

The workshop was addressed by MLA and Zonal Co-convenor for the Mahabhiyan Ajay Mahawar and J&K BJP General Secretary (Organization) Ashok Koul. Prominent leaders present included J&K BJP Vice President Shehnaaz Ganie, State Secretaries Arif Raja, Mudasir Wani (Incharge Programme), Sajid Yousof Shah (Program Co-Incharge), senior leader Sofi Yousof, Dr Ali Mohammad Mir, along with several other senior party functionaries and district office bearers.

Speaking on the occasion, Ajay Mahawar underscored that the BJP stands apart as a cadre-based party rooted firmly in discipline, commitment, and a clear ideological foundation inspired by the philosophy of Antyodaya and nation-first principles. He stated that structured training workshops form the backbone of the party's organizational framework, ensuring that workers at every level remain aligned with its ideology,



policies, and contemporary national priorities. He elaborated on crucial organizational subjects including party structure, effective communication, public outreach strategies, and the responsibility of elected representatives toward society. He emphasized that systematic and continuous training fosters political maturity, accountability, leadership skills, and efficient public service among party leaders and activists. He further added that while political and social landscapes evolve over time, the ideological core and guiding principles of the party remain steadfast and unwavering.

Ashok Koul, in his address, provided a comprehensive overview of the

Mahabhiyan programme, detailing the roadmap for training sessions to be conducted from the district level down to mandal and booth levels. He stressed the importance of coordination, dedication, and collective effort to ensure the programme's successful execution. Highlighting the need for ideological clarity and informed activism, he urged that from senior leadership to booth-level workers, every cadre must remain updated about the party's stance on national, socio-economic, and geopolitical developments. He also outlined the methodology for conducting structured workshops, strengthening grassroots connect, and effectively disseminating the party's message among the masses.

LG Ladakh Kavinder Gupta flags off 30 students for Rashtriya Ekatmata Yatra 2026

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

LEH, FEB 26: Reaffirming the commitment to strengthening the spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat', the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Kavinder Gupta, today flagged off a batch of 30 students from Lok Niwas, Leh, for the Rashtriya Ekatmata Yatra 2026 - Student Experience in Regional Understanding (SERU) tour. The initiative is organised by Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) in collaboration with Vidyarthi Sewa Trust.

The group comprises 11 girls and 19 boys from Eliezer Jordan Memorial College, University of Ladakh, and the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, Choglamsar. During the 13-day tour, the students will visit Gurugram, Chandigarh, Manali, and Jammu as part of a structured exposure programme aimed at fostering national integration and regional understanding.

The itinerary includes visits to premier institutions and landmark sites such as the Maruti Suzuki India Limited plant at Gurugram and Rashtrapati Bhavan, among others. A unique feature of the



programme is the students' stay with host families in different regions, enabling them to experience local culture, traditions, and lifestyles firsthand, thereby deepening their appreciation of India's rich diversity.

Addressing the students, the Lieutenant Governor underscored the importance of such exposure tours in strengthening national integration and mutual understanding among youth. He observed that the SERU initiative is a meaningful step towards realising the vision of Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat by creating platforms for dialogue, cultural exchange, and experiential learn-

ing. Shri Kavinder Gupta highlighted that SERU (Student Experience in Regional Understanding) promotes awareness and appreciation of specific regional cultures, citing previous tours from Ladakh to Delhi as notable examples. He emphasised that through activities such as cultural exchanges, visits to historical sites, and interactions with local communities, participants gain first-hand insight into the country's diverse traditions and ways of life. Such initiatives, he noted, foster lifelong friendships, lasting memories, and a deeper emotional bond among citizens from

different regions.

The Lieutenant Governor further remarked that the primary objective of the initiative is to provide Ladakh's youth with an opportunity to understand India's diverse cultural, geographical, and administrative landscape. The programme familiarises students with governance systems, higher educational institutions, industrial establishments, and the historical backdrop of various states, thereby broadening their academic and professional horizons.

"It is not merely an educational tour but a powerful medium for fostering collaboration, dia-

logue, and national unity. When young people from different regions engage with one another and exchange experiences, it strengthens harmony and mutual cooperation," he stated.

Commending ABVP and Vidyarthi Sewa Trust for their sustained efforts, the Lieutenant Governor appreciated their role in enabling the youth of Ladakh to connect with the nation's cultural heritage, democratic values, and governance framework. He encouraged the students to act as ambassadors of Ladakh, uphold its rich traditions, and contribute meaningfully to nation-building.

During the interaction, the organisers informed that the tour is designed to broaden students' perspectives, promote cultural understanding and national unity, and inspire them in their future academic and career pursuits.

The Lieutenant Governor extended his felicitations and best wishes to all participating students for a safe, successful, and enriching journey, reiterating the Administration's commitment to youth empowerment and nation-building initiatives in the Union Territory of Ladakh.

CEO Ganderbal Visited various schools after reopening of schools

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

GANDERBAL, FEB 26: After the reopening of schools following the winter break, the Chief Education Officer Ganderbal, Shri Oneel Kumar Bhat today on 26-02-2026 (Thursday) visited various schools across the district to review the necessary arrangements made by the HOIs for smooth reopening of schools and ensure smooth academic functioning. CEO visited the following institutions:-

1. GHSS GBL
2. GHS Shallabugh
3. BHS Shallabugh

During the visits, the CEO inspected classrooms, sanitation, availability of drinking water, Wash rooms etc. and overall cleanliness of the school premises.

The CEO interacted with the heads of institutions, teaching staff, and students, stressing punctuality, regular attendance, and effective implementation of the academic calendar.

Directions were issued to ensure proper utilization of teaching-learning materials and to focus on strengthening foundational learning outcomes.

During the visit to GHS Shallabugh CEO reviewed the existing infrastructure available and the requirement of Additional class rooms.

The concerned school heads were instructed to address any deficiencies on priority and ensure that all facilities remain functional.

JKECC delegation calls on Education Minister Sakeena Itoo, express gratitude for reviewing TET order

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 26: A delegation of the Jammu Kashmir Employees Coordination Committee (JKECC) today called on Minister for Education, Social Welfare, Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo and expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Government led by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and Education Minister for timely and considerate intervention in keeping in abeyance the order concerning the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) requirement for in-service teachers across the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

The delegation, led by senior representatives of JKECC, apprised the Minister of widespread concerns and anxiety among thousands of serving teachers following the issuance of the order. They highlighted that many experienced educators, who have been rendering dedicated services in far-flung and challenging areas for years, were apprehensive about the implications of the directive on their professional stability and morale.

In her interaction with the delegation, the Education Minister reiterated the Government's commitment to welfare of teaching community. She assured the representatives that the department remains open to consultations with stakeholders to ensure that reforms in the education sector are implemented in a manner that is fair, transparent, and in the larger



interest of both students and teachers. "Teachers in Jammu and Kashmir have consistently contributed to society and have strengthened the education system despite infrastructural constraints, climatic challenges and difficult terrain", Minister Sakeena said.

The Minister asked the delegation to extend cooperation to the Department in its ongoing efforts to enhance quality education and implement progressive reforms. She added that such collaborative engagement between the government and employee representatives would continue in the future for the overall development of the education sector across Jammu and Kashmir.

During the meeting, the delegation apprised the Minister that the decision to revoke the order has brought immense relief to the teaching fraternity and has reaffirmed their faith in the government's commitment to safeguarding the interests of employees. They described the Minister's action as empathetic, pragmatic and pro-education, noting that it reflects a balanced approach between maintaining academic standards and recognizing the ground realities faced by teachers.

They stated that the Government's responsiveness has not only addressed an administrative concern but has also boosted the morale of educators who form the backbone of the region's schooling framework.

DC Shopian presides over NCORD meeting, Calls for strengthened action against drug menace

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN, FEBRUARY 26: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta today presided over a meeting of the District Level NCORD (Narco Coordination) to review and strengthen measures aimed at curbing drug abuse and illegal narcotics activities in the district.

During the meeting, the DC directed all concerned departments to intensify efforts to speed up preventive and enforcement actions.

Drug Control authorities were directed to conduct regular inspections of pharmacies and ensure strict compliance with prescribed norms regarding sale of medicines. He emphasized maintaining proper sale registers, verification of prescriptions and preventing misuse of scheduled drugs.

Agriculture and horticulture departments were asked to rope in farmers in hotspot areas for alternative cropping ventures.

The DC directed the education department to ensure installation of prominent signboards outside all schools across the district declaring the areas as "No Smoking Zones." Authorities were further instructed to strictly enforce the prohibition of smoking and sale of tobacco products around educational institutions as per established norms.

Review of constitution of anti drug committees in schools and engagement of youth in sports activities was also focused upon for action.

Directions for sustained awareness campaigns and collective responsibility to safeguard the youth from the menace of drugs was emphasized on the occasion.

SSP, Shopian, Mushtaq Ahmed Choudhary; ADC, Dr. Zakir Hussain Faaz; ACR, Shakoor Ahmed Dar, district officers, Tehsildars and other concerned attended the meeting.

DC Kulgam reviews implementation of PM Surya Ghar-Muft Bijli Yojana

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM, FEBRUARY 26: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, today chaired a meeting of concerned officers to review the implementation and progress of the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana in the district.

The scheme aims to enhance rooftop solar capacity across residential households, enabling them to generate their own electricity, significantly reduce monthly power bills, and benefit from substantial government financial assistance.

During the meeting, Executive Engineer, KPDC, Kulgam, presented a detailed overview of the progress achieved so far.

He informed that around 4,012 applications have been received for registration under the scheme in the district.

Against a target of 625 installations set by the Managing Director KPDC for Kulgam, the department has already surpassed the target with 659 Solar Rooftop (SRT) systems installed as on date. Additionally, material has been delivered at 62 more sites for further installations.

The DC emphasized on the sub-division wise mass outreach campaign to sensitize public about the scheme.

He also directed the KPDC officials to ensure timely installation of the roof top solar plants and release of subsidies to beneficiaries.

The DC also emphasized to accelerate the conversion of applications submitted to SRT installations. He also directed the SDO's for immediate commissioning of SRT's where material is delivered or installed.

The meeting was attended by SE KPDC, XEN KPDC, Lead District Manager (LDM), representatives from JKEDA, and all AEs, AEs, and JEs of KPDC.

Awareness programme on New Labour Codes, Welfare Schemes held at Bandipora

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, FEBRUARY 26: A Mega awareness programme on the newly introduced Labour Codes and social security schemes was organised on Thursday by the Office of the Assistant Labour Commissioner (ALC), Bandipora, in collaboration with District Information Centre Bandipora, at Town Hall Bandipora.

The programme witnessed active participation from members of Traders' Federations of Bandipora, Sumbal and Naidkhai, along with a large number of shopkeepers, contractors, HR representatives, management representatives of private educational institutions, construction workers and workers from the unorganised sector.

During the programme, officers imparted detailed awareness about the four new Labour Codes, highlighting key reforms, simplified compliance procedures, enhanced social security coverage, mandatory issuance of appointment letters, timely payment of wages, improved safety standards, and provisions for inclusion and protection of women workers. Participants were also sensitised about the rights and responsibilities of employers and workers under the new legal framework.

Special emphasis was laid on the registration of unorganised and construction workers and the benefits available under labour welfare schemes. The participants were informed about various social security measures, including medical assistance, educational assistance for wards, disability



assistance, and other welfare benefits available to registered workers.

On the occasion, labour cards

were distributed among eligible workers on the spot. Additionally, sanction letters for educational assistance and disability assistance

were also provided to registered construction workers, extending immediate support to the beneficiaries.

The programme was interactive, with participants actively engaging in discussions and seeking clarifications regarding labour laws, compliance requirements, and welfare entitlements.

On the occasion, stakeholders appreciated the efforts of the Labour Department and District Information Centre Bandipora for organising the awareness programme and facilitating access to welfare services at the grassroots level.

Among others, Labour Officer Mushtaq Ahmad Kambay, Labour Inspector, Abid Rashid Naik, and officials of the Information Department were also present on the occasion.

Dr. Bilal Mohiud Din Bhat assumes charge as DC Anantnag

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

ANANTNAG, FEBRUARY 26: Dr. Bilal Mohiud Din Bhat assumed charge as Deputy Commissioner, Anantnag, succeeding SF Hamid, during a formal handover ceremony held today at the DC Office.

Senior officers of the district administration, including ADCs, CEO PDA, GM DIC, ACR, SDMs, ACD, Dy DEO, CPO, CAO, Dy Director Fisheries, Tehsildars, and other officers, were present on the occasion.

Earlier, the Deputy Commissioner was accorded a warm welcome by officers and officials, besides various delegations and social activists. He expressed his gratitude to the officers and the social delegations.

After assuming charge, Dr. Bhat inspected various sections of the DC Office establishment and took preliminary stock of their functioning. He also interacted with several applicants and issued necessary instructions to the concerned authorities regarding their concerns.

Athar Aamir Khan takes over as DC Budgam

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BUDGAM, FEBRUARY 26: In a formal handover ceremony held today in the office chamber of the Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan, takes over as DC Budgam.

He took the charge as the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam succeeding Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-din Bhat.

The DC took the charge in presence of ADC Budgam, Mehraj-ud-din Shah, JD planning, ACR Budgam, all SDMs, DIO Budgam, Tehsildar's and other senior officers were present on the occasion.

The Deputy Commissioner was accorded



a warm welcome by the officers present. He expressed gratitude to the gathering of officers and officials present on the occasion.

Quality Vegetable Seedling sale inaugurated at SM Farm Watapora

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, FEBRUARY 26: The sale of high-quality vegetable seedlings at Seed Multiplication (SM) Farm Watapora was formally inaugurated today by Chief Agriculture Officer, Javid Iqbal Samoon, marking the commencement of seasonal distribution of quality planting material to promote kitchen gardening and commercial vegetable cultivation across the district.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Agriculture Officer (CAO) appreciated the efforts of SM Farm Watapora for raising healthy and disease-free seedlings and highlighted the importance of quality planting material



in enhancing crop productivity and ensuring better returns to farmers. He encouraged farmers and unemployed youth to take maximum benefit of the initiative and adopt vegetable cultivation

as a sustainable and income-generating activity.

He further emphasized that promotion of vegetable cultivation and kitchen gardening not only strengthens household nutritional security but also contributes significantly to the agricultural economy of the district.

On the occasion, a large number of farmers from various areas attended the inaugural event and expressed keen interest in procuring quality seedlings for the upcoming cultivation season.

The CAO assured continuous support and availability of healthy seedlings to meet the requirements of farmers.

SHEW organises Nutritional Kit Distribution Programme at SDH Sedow

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN, FEBRUARY 26: Sankalp Hub for Empowerment of Women, Mission Shakti Shopian, in collaboration with the Department of Health, today organised a Nutritional Kit Distribution Programme for pregnant women under the flagship initiative of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao at Sub District Hospital, Sedow. The programme was conducted with the objective of promoting maternal health, nutritional awareness and overall well-being of expecting mothers.

During the session, Dr. Parvaiz educated the women about the importance of maintaining a balanced and nutritious diet during pregnancy.



He highlighted that proper nutrition plays a vital role in ensuring the healthy growth and development of the baby while also safeguarding the mother's health. The Mission Coordinator for Sankalp

Hub addressed the gathering and urged the women to prioritise self-care. She emphasised that mothers shoulder significant responsibilities within their families and society, and therefore, their physical as well as mental well-being must not be overlooked.

Furthermore, the Gender Specialist from Sankalp Hub provided detailed information about various welfare schemes available for women and girls. The participants were guided on eligibility criteria, benefits, and the step-by-step process to apply for these schemes, empowering them to access government support effectively.

The programme concluded with the distribution of nutritional kits among pregnant women.

Javid Dar inaugurates Modern Processing cum training centre for fruits, vegetables

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 26: Strengthening efforts to boost value addition and self-employment in the agriculture sector, Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar, today inaugurated a Modern Processing-cum-Training Centre for fruits and vegetables at Udheywala in Jammu.

The centre, established at a cost of 90 lakh, aims to promote skill development, entrepreneurship and income generation among the farmers, rural youth and women, particularly members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

While addressing the gathering, the Minister said the government is committed towards empowering



the farmers through modern technology, scientific training and value addition initiatives. He stressed the need for departments to identify high-potential sectors and expand skill-based training programmes to enhance

productivity and ensure sustainable livelihoods.

"The focus must be on equipping the farmers and women with modern processing techniques and encouraging cultivation of improved and hybrid varieties of fruits and

vegetables to increase returns," he said.

The newly inaugurated facility will offer six-month and one-month certificate courses in fruit and vegetable preservation and processing. It will also organise mobile demonstrations and promote community-level processing units to extend technical knowledge to the farmers at the grassroots level.

On the occasion, Soil Health Cards were distributed among the beneficiaries to encourage balanced fertiliser use and scientific soil management practices.

Director Horticulture Jammu, Gul Syed, Director Agriculture Jammu Anil Gupta, Director Rural Development Department Jammu, Shehnaaz Akhter and other senior officers were present at the event.

SWD Srinagar organizes sensitization Programme for teachers under BBBP

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 26: Social Welfare Department, SANKALP-Hub for Empowerment of Women (Mission Shakti), Srinagar organized a sensitization programme on Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) at Government Degree College, Nawa Kadal today. The programme witnessed active participation of teachers from various government and private educational institutions. The session commenced with opening remarks by Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad, District Social Welfare Officer, Srinagar, who highlighted the significance of collective responsibility in addressing gender disparities and reaffirmed the department's commitment towards strengthening initiatives that promote the rights and dignity of the girl child. Dr. Tawheeda Rasool, Assistant Professor, deliberated on teachers role in preventing school dropouts among girls and emphasized the transformative role educators play in shaping mindsets, ensuring retention of girls in schools, and fostering

an inclusive academic environment that nurtures equality and empowerment.

The legal dimensions of the initiative were comprehensively discussed by Advocate Mir Naveed Gul, Panel Lawyer, who spoke on the legal aspects related to Beti Bachao Beti Padhao. He elaborated on the constitutional safeguards, laws protecting the girl child, and the legal responsibilities of institutions in upholding gender justice and preventing discrimination.

District Mission Coordinator, SANKALP-HEW while speaking during the programme reiterated the department's continued dedication towards empowering women and girls through sustained community-based interventions. The sensitisation programme aimed to engage educators as key stakeholders in advancing the objectives of BBBP. By strengthening awareness and institutional responsibility, the initiative seeks to foster long-term behavioral change and reinforce the educational ecosystem as a powerful platform for promoting gender equity and social inclusion.

CHC Rajpora achieves historic breakthrough with inaugural of TKR under Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

PULWAMA, FEBRUARY 26: In a landmark achievement for rural healthcare, the first-ever Total Knee Replacement (TKR) surgery under combined spinal epidural anaesthesia (CSE) at Community Health Centre (CHC) Rajpora was successfully performed under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) scheme, marking a major step forward in providing advanced medical care at the grassroots level.

The surgery was successfully performed by Orthopedic Surgeon, Dr. Ajaz Rafeeq and his dedicated surgical team, with the anaesthesia team led by Dr. Mohsin Farooq. The coordinated expertise, meticulous planning, and teamwork of both surgical and anaesthesia teams ensured that the procedure was carried out smoothly, safely, and successfully, restoring hope and mobility to the patient.

This historic achievement was made possible due to the recent upgradation of the operation theatre at CHC Rajpora into a fully modular facility, equipped with modern surgical instruments and advanced technology. The upgradation was accomplished through the dedicated efforts of the hospital administration and the proactive support of the Deputy Commissioner Pulwama and the Health Administration, including the Director of Health Services, Kashmir. Their combined commitment has significantly strengthened the capacity of CHC Rajpora to perform such high-end surgical procedures locally, bringing advanced medical care closer to the community.

The patient received completely cashless treatment under the Ayushman Bharat scheme, eliminating the financial burden that often accompanies such advanced orthopedic procedures. The successful surgery not only brings relief to the patient but also sets a precedent for providing specialized surgical care in rural healthcare centers.

This milestone reflects the Health Department's ongoing commitment to strengthening secondary-level healthcare infrastructure and expanding access to specialized, affordable, and high-quality medical services for rural populations. The hospital administration lauded the dedication, professionalism, and teamwork of all healthcare personnel involved in achieving this feat and expressed sincere gratitude to higher authorities for their continued support in upgrading healthcare facilities in the district.

With this achievement, CHC Rajpora has firmly established itself as a capable center for advanced orthopedic care, demonstrating that high-quality medical interventions can now reach patients closer to their communities without the need to travel to urban centers.

ADC Budgam reviews arrangements for JKSSB OMR-Based written examination

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BUDGAM, FEBRUARY 26:- A meeting regarding the arrangements for OMR-Based Written Examination for the posts of Laboratory Attendants (Home Department) by the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB), scheduled to be held on 01-03-2026, was convened today at the New Conference Hall of DC Office Budgam.

The meeting was chaired by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Budgam, Mehraj-ud-Din Shah.

Besides representatives from JKSSB, the meeting was attended

by District Information Officer Budgam, representative of Assistant Regional Transport Officer Budgam, Centre Superintendents/Dy. Superintendents of all examination centres, Magistrates/Observers and Heads of Institutions of all designated examination centres.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held regarding security arrangements, deployment of magistrates, traffic regulation, transportation facilities, seating plans, availability of basic amenities, and strict adherence to examination guidelines to ensure smooth and fair conduct of the



examination.

The ADC stressed the importance of coordinated efforts among all stakeholders and directed the concerned officers to ensure foolproof arrangements well in advance. He emphasized transparency, maintaining strict vigil, and ensuring all necessary facilities for candidates appearing in the examination.

All departments were instructed to work in close coordination to ensure that the examination is conducted in a smooth, transparent and hassle-free manner across all centres in the district.

DDC Rajouri reviews preparedness for launch of HPV Vaccination Programme, Telemedicine facilities

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

RAJOURI, FEBRUARY 26: District Development Commissioner Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma, today convened a meeting in the VC Room of the DC Office Complex to review the preparedness for the launch of the HPV Vaccination Programme and operationalization of telemedicine facilities at Badhal, Dhar Sakri and Bagla Kotli in coordination with Government Medical College Rajouri.

Threadbare discussions were held for effective implementation of telemedicine services in these identified locations to provide access to specialized healthcare to the local population.

Emphasizing the need for capacity building, the DDC directed the Health Department to impart hands-on training to the concerned staff for smooth implementation and management of telemedicine facilities.

He further instructed the preparation of a comprehensive roster for daily online consultation of doctors, including specialists from paediatrics, medicine, dermatology, gynaecology and orthopaedics



to ensure regular and structured service delivery.

The DDC also reviewed the planning for the rollout of the HPV Vaccination Programme and stressed the importance of proper micro-planning and awareness to ensure maximum coverage of eligible beneficiaries. He directed the officers to put in place a well-coordinated strategy for effective implementation of the programme across the district.

ADDC Rajouri Malikzada Sheraz-ul-Haq, ACR Mohammad Jahangir Khan, Medical Superintendent Shamim Ahmed, CMO Manohar Lal Rana, CEO Mohammad Hafeez and other district and sectoral officers attended the meeting.

District level MIDH event held at Doda

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

DODA, FEBRUARY 26: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Doda, Krishan Lal, today inaugurated a District Level Event under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) Scheme here at the Community Hall. The programme was organized by the Department of Floriculture, Parks and Gardens with the objective of promoting commercial floriculture, beautifying the environment and empowering farmers through sustainable livelihood opportunities. A large number of farmers and stakeholders associated with floriculture and allied sectors attended the programme.

ADDC, Roshan Lal; CPO, Manesh Kumar; PO ICDS, Akhter Qazi; Assistant Floriculture Officer, Arjun Singh Parihar; Sheep Husbandry Officer, Agriculture Officer, Horticulture Officer along with other officers, officials and staff members of the Floriculture Department were also present.

After inauguration, the DC inspected the stalls showcasing floriculture products, innovative cultivation techniques and government-supported initiatives. He also interacted with participating farmers and exhibitors, appreciating their efforts in



adopting modern agricultural practices.

Addressing the gathering, the DC emphasized the importance of such programmes in creating awareness among the public about the government schemes. "Commercial floriculture has immense potential to enhance farmers' income while contributing to environmental beautification and sustainable development," he noted.

The Deputy Commissioner applauded local farmers for their remarkable contribution to lavender cultivation, which has earned national recognition for District Doda and opened new avenues for economic growth in the region. Later, appreciation certificates were distributed among progressive farmers in recognition of their dedication and achievements in the field of floriculture.

KVK Budgam organizes programme on "Clean and Safe Spices" to mark 39th Foundation Day of Spices Board

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BUDGAM, FEBRUARY 26: Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Budgam organized a collaborative programme in association with the Spices Board Regional Office, Srinagar, to mark the 39th Foundation Day of the Spices Board and to observe the National Campaign on "Clean and Safe Spices."

The event focused on quality improvement in spice production and post-harvest management.

During the event, Ashutosh Gautam, Scientist from the Spices Board in Srinagar, conducted an extensive discussion on the national and international standards applicable to spices, including the quality regulations of USFDA, ASTA, and EU, along with Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), and Good Hygiene Practices (GHP). He also brought attention to the FSSAI standards relevant to the domestic market and elaborated on the 8th edition of the National Program for Organic Production (NPOP) concerning organic spices.

The technical session included scientific discussions from KVK scientists, covering a broad spectrum



of topics such as scientific production techniques, pest and disease management, post-harvest processes.

Prof. & Head, KVK Budgam, Dr. Bilal A. Lone emphasized that ensuring clean and safe spice production is essential not only for consumer health but also for enhancing the market competitiveness of farmers. He highlighted that quality improvement must begin at the farm level through the adoption of good agricultural practices, scientific post-harvest

handling and proper storage.

He appreciated the collaborative efforts of the Spices Board Regional Office, Srinagar, and stated that such joint programmes strengthen the extension network and build the capacity of farmers to meet national and export standards. He further assured that KVK Budgam will continue to organize need-based training programmes to promote quality, value addition and sustainable spice production in the district.

Commissioner SMC inspects Municipal assets, reviews infrastructure and civic service delivery

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 26: Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Faz Lul Haseeb, conducted an extensive inspection of municipal assets at Tibetan Colony, Eidgah, and Devi Angan, Badam Wari, to review the status of civic infrastructure and assess the management, maintenance, and utilization of public facilities.

During his visit to Tibetan Colony, Eidgah, the Commissioner undertook a comprehensive review of municipal infrastructure, including sanitation arrangements, drainage networks, and waste management operations. He evaluated the performance of field-level services and directed concerned officials to ensure sustained cleanliness, improved operational efficiency, and prompt resolution of civic grievances raised by residents. At Devi Angan, Badam Wari, the Commissioner inspected the municipal asset and reviewed its maintenance standards, operational functionality, and potential for enhanced public utilization. Emphasizing the importance of safeguarding public infrastructure, he instructed officials to maintain the



facility strictly in accordance with municipal norms and to maximize its effective use for community benefit.

Highlighting the importance of regular on-ground monitoring, the Commissioner reiterated SMC's commitment to strengthening urban

governance through improved infrastructure management, enhanced accountability, and responsive civic administration. Senior officers and officials of Srinagar Municipal Corporation accompanied the Commissioner during the inspection.

HT EDITORIAL

Impart modern skills, training to government teachers

Thousands of teachers discharging their responsibilities in the government sector heaved a sigh of relief when the minister for education Sakeena Masood Itoo announced that the Jammu & Kashmir government has no immediate plans to conduct Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) in the coming days. The minister came out with this statement after the High Court ordered the union territory government to conduct the test.

As soon as the High Court order came out the government teachers became nervous and they raised a revolt over the same. These people don't want to go through the test and want to carry out their job as they are doing in the present day context. The government teachers who are at the fag end of their career and are superannuating in the near future opine that the test is an insult to them.

It is important that the teaching community understands that the contemporary world is an evolving one and the traditional methods of teaching have become obsolete one. In the world of Artificial Intelligence (AI) it is imperative that all the people irrespective of the professions they belong to keep themselves abreast with the latest knowledge and modern techniques. One has to move on and move on with the technology otherwise the person or persons would lose out in the race of competition.

It may be difficult for the elder generation of teachers to adopt the new techniques of teaching but the same excuse can't be given by the younger ones. They need to develop the necessary skills so that the children receiving education in the government sector get to know about the latest trends in the field of education. As on date the students of the different private schools are getting a chance to explore and experiment new things while receiving education.

Same parameter has to be applied with respect to the government schools and the students of these schools should not feel that they have missed out on something that is important. The people at helm should understand this and the school education department should hold training workshops for the teachers so that they don't feel deprived on account of advancement. Sooner it is done better it will be for the teachers as well as students. At the end of the day the society will benefit and gems would be produced in the government schools.

History of Mansar Lake: The Lake Of Excellence



MOOL RAJ

In the peaceful green hills of the Shivalik range lies Mansar Lake, one of the most beautiful and sacred places of the Duggar region. It is located in the Samba district of Jammu and Kashmir, around 62 kilometers from Jammu city and about 19 kilometers from Samba town. It is widely known for its natural beauty, religious faith and historical importance. Mansar Lake is one of the most visited tourist destinations in the region.

Mansar Lake is deeply connected with the ancient Indian epic, the Mahabharata. According to local tradition, after the great Kurukshetra war, the warrior Arjuna performed the Ashwamedha Yagna. During this ritual, the sacrificial horse entered the

region ruled by his son Babruvahana. A battle took place between father and son because Babruvahana did not know Arjuna was his father. In the fight, Arjuna was killed.

When Babruvahana came to know the truth, he felt very sad. To bring his father back to life, he went to the underworld (Patal Lok) to obtain a magical jewel from the serpent king Sheshnag. It is believed that he shot a powerful arrow into the earth to create a tunnel to the underworld. The entrance of this tunnel later became known as Surinsar Lake. After defeating Sheshnag and receiving the divine jewel, Babruvahana returned to the surface at another place, where the earth split and water emerged, forming Mansar Lake. Because of this sacred story, the lake is often called the "Mansarovar of the Duggar region."

Mansar Lake has been a center of faith for many generations. On the eastern side of the lake stands the Sheshnag Temple, where devotees offer milk and prayers to the serpent god. Other temples such as Durga Temple and Umapati Mahadev Temple are also located around the lake.

Many newly married couples visit the lake to perform parikrama (walking around the lake) to pray for a happy married life. Families also perform the Mundan ceremony (first haircut of a child) here as a sacred tradition. These customs show the deep spiritual importance of the lake for local communities.

Mansar Lake is oval in shape and surrounded by green hills and forests. A well-maintained walking path circles the lake, allowing visitors to enjoy peaceful morning and evening walks. The calm water beautifully reflects the sky and trees, creating a soothing view.

The lake is mainly fed by rainwater and underground springs. In November 2005, Mansar Lake and Surinsar Lake were declared Ramsar Sites, recognizing them as wetlands of international importance. The lake is part of the Mansar-Surinsar Wildlife Sanctuary.

The sanctuary is home to animals such as spotted deer, nilgai and monkeys, along with many bird species. The lake is especially known for its large tortoises and different kinds of fish. Migratory birds also visit the lake in certain seasons, attracting nature

lovers and bird watchers.

Mansar Lake is a popular picnic and tourist spot. Boating is one of the main attractions, with paddle and row boats available throughout the day. Feeding fish is a favorite activity among visitors, especially children.

The lake becomes lively during the Baisakhi festival in April, when a large fair is organized featuring cultural programs, traditional music, local food and handicrafts. Food and Craft Melas held in October or November promote Dogra culture and famous local products like Kalari cheese.

Mansar Lake is not just a lake, it is a symbol of Jammu's history, faith, culture and natural beauty. Its connection with the Mahabharata, its temples and rituals, its wildlife and its peaceful surroundings make it one of the most special places in Jammu and Kashmir. A visit to Mansar Lake fills the heart with peace and pride in our rich heritage. It truly stands as a shining jewel of the Duggar region.

THE AUTHOR IS A REGULAR COLUMNIST AND FREELANCE WRITER

From every mountainside Let Freedom ring!

Poonch is a mountainous region!



M S NAZKI

Why do we salute the flags? Here we will give the description!

The National Flag of India (Tiranga) is a horizontal tricolour of deep saffron (kesari) at the top, white in the middle, and dark green at the bottom in equal proportions. Adopted on July 22, 1947, it features a navy-blue 24-spoke wheel, the Ashoka Chakra, in the center of the white band.

Design & Dimensions: The flag has a width-to-length ratio of 2:3. It must be made of khadi (hand-spun cotton/silk).

Colors & Meaning:
Saffron: Represents courage and sacrifice.
White: Represents truth, peace, and purity.
Green: Represents faith, fertility, and growth.
Ashoka Chakra: Located in the center, this wheel represents the "wheel of the law" and signifies progress, righteousness, and movement.

Designer: While based on the 1931 Congress flag, the design is largely credited to Pingali Venkayya.

The flag represents the nation's sovereignty and unity, with strict regulations regarding its display governed by the Flag Code of India.

Whether it's a photo of the Tiranga waving high, a video of your neighbourhood celebrations or a selfie in Tricolour attire that you're sharing, a great Independence Day caption will bring your post to life. The right words can spark pride, inspire hope or remind us of the journey that built the nation.

From every mountainside Let Freedom ring!

Poonch is a mountainous region!

Independence is a myth

This is a beautiful and brutal rendition of how much strength matters in this format of a border game. And the confidence to use it without second thought.

Saluting the flag is a gesture of profound respect, loyalty, and national pride, symbolizing honor for the country's history, sacrifices, and unity. It acts as a tribute to the ideals, freedom, and, in many contexts, the armed forces who protect the nation. The act represents a collective identity and commitment to the country.

Key Reasons for Saluting the Flag:

Respect and Honor: The flag embodies the nation's pride and the sacrifices made to keep it flying.

Symbol of Unity: It brings together citizens regardless of background, representing shared values and identity.

Allegiance and Loyalty: It is a visible demonstration of loyalty to one's country and its principles.

Gratitude: It serves as a silent "thank you" to those who serve in the military and work to protect the nation.

Protocol and Tradition: During national ceremonies, hoisting, or parades, it is a formal, required action to show respect.

The gesture is often accompanied by standing at attention or placing the right hand over the heart, symbolizing respect for the authority and ideals behind the flag.

On 21 February 2026, the BANWAT EKTA STHAL was formally inaugurated by Lt Gen Pratik Sharma, SYSM, PVSM, AVSM, SM, GOC-in-C, Northern Command at Bandi Chechian (CCB) village in Poonch district. This initiative of the Indian Army reflects its continued commitment to Nation building, community development

and strengthening the spirit of unity in border areas.

The BANWAT EKTA STHAL has been developed as a landmark that combines patriotism with public utility. The project was completed in a record time of 45 days, following the laying of foundation stone on 13 December 2025. The site features a towering 105 feet National Flag, tallest in Poonch district and barely at a distance of 2 km from the line of control, symbolizing National pride and sovereignty. In addition, the facility includes a Children's Park for recreation, an Ekta Sthal representing unity and collective harmony and a Ekta Mandap designed to promote peace and mental well-being against the scenic backdrop of Pir Panjal ranges. Coinciding with inauguration, the Tricolour was unfurled and a medical and blood donation camp was organized. The event also witnessed the distribution of educational kits to children, winter relief blankets to the needy and hygiene sanitary pads to women.

As of late 2024, the world's tallest flagpole is located in Baku, Azerbaijan, standing at approximately 191 meters (627 feet) to 201 meters. The flagpole is located at the National Flag Square and features a massive flag measuring 72 meters by 36 meters, weighing over 500 kg.

Record-Breaking Flag: The Azerbaijan flag was officially recognized as the largest/tallest flown in the world, with a new, larger flag installed in November 2024.

Previous/Other Notable Holders: Before the recent updates, other notable record-holders included the 170-meter Jeddah Flagpole in Saudi Arabia, the 165-meter Dushanbe Flagpole in Tajikistan, and the 162-meter pole previously at the same Baku location.

India: India's tallest national flag is at the Attari-Wagah border, reaching a height of 418 feet (roughly 127 meters).

Azerbaijan continues to hold the record for the highest flagpole in the world, having restored and increased its height in 2024.

A flag is a piece of fabric, typically rectangular and featuring distinctive colors and designs, used as a symbol, signaling device, or decoration for nations, organizations, or ideas. Often attached to a pole, flags function as visual representations of identity, such as national, state, or military flags.

Yet, through all the gloom, I can see the rays of ravishing light and glory. I can see that the end is more than worth all the means, and that posterity will triumph in that day's transaction, even though we should rue it, which I trust in God we shall not. Reformation of a nation isn't measured by how many big revolutions it has to face. Reformation of a nation is predicated on how many citizens it has who refuse to bend!

Symbolism: Flags use specific colors, shapes, and symbols to represent history, ideals, or specific groups.

Purpose: They are used for identification, signaling (e.g., naval signals), and marking territory.

Vexillology: This is the study of flags, which dates back to ancient civilizations.

Types: Common types include national flags, ensigns (for ships), banners, and pennants.

Variations: Specific flags include the chequered flag (racing), red flag (danger), and white flag (surrender).

As usual a bit of history:

The first flag-like objects, known as vexilloids (a staff with a 3D emblem on top, often with fabric), appeared in ancient civilizations as early as 3500 BC in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

The earliest known, tangible "flag-like" artifact is the Shahdad Standard, a bronze sheet on a pole dating back to approximately 2400 BC in Iran.

Egypt and Sumeria: Predynastic Egyptian pottery (c. 3500 BC) depicts ships with standards, which were likely the earliest field signs.

Iran: The Shahdad Standard (c. 2400 BC) is a square,

bronze flag-like object depicting figures and a star.

China: The Zhou dynasty (11th century BC) is recorded as carrying white banners in battle, making them one of the first civilizations to use cloth-based signaling.

Rome: Roman legions used "vexilla," which were small rectangular banners hanging from a horizontal crossbar, usually in red, from which the term "vexillology" (study of flags) is derived.

Islamic World: Early in the 7th century, the Prophet Muhammad is believed to have used a black banner, and his successors used green flags.

Scandinavia: The Dannebrog (Flag of Denmark) is traditionally believed to have fallen from the sky during a battle in Estonia in 1219 AD, making it recognized as the oldest continuously used national flag in the world.

Europe: Heraldic flags, such as the Saint George's Cross (England), became popular during the Crusades (11th-13th centuries) to identify knights in battle.

Netherlands: The oldest tricolor (red, white, and blue) flag originated in the 1570s during the Dutch revolt against Spain.

United States: The first official "Stars and Stripes" was adopted on June 14, 1777.

Flags in Ramayana:

Flags in the Ramayana, or dhvaj, were essential, symbolic, and personalized, representing a warrior's lineage, virtues, or power, rather than a uniform national flag. Lord Rama carried the Suryavanshi (Sun) flag, while key figures like Ravana, Meghanatha, and Bharata used distinct emblems on their chariots to signify their specific, unique identity and power.

Lord Rama's Flag: Known as the Dharma Dhvaj or Kovidara Dhvaj, it represented the Ikshvaku lineage. It is often described as having the Kovidara tree (Parijata/Mandara) or a sun emblem on a crimson background, symbolizing his Suryavanshi (sun) lineage and solar energy.

Bharata's Flag: Carried a flag with the Kovidhara (pomegranate/tree) emblem when visiting Rama in the forest.

Ravana's Flag: Often associated with a human skull symbol or a Veena (musical instrument).

Meghanatha's (Indrajit) Flag: Carried the mrigaraja ketu, featuring a lion.

Prahasta's Flag: Featured a snake emblem.

Kambhavan's Flag: Used Sheshanaga as his flag emblem.

Modern Representation: The recently installed flag at the Ayodhya Ram Temple is a triangular Dharma Dhvaj displaying the sun, Om, and the Kovidara tree.

These flags, particularly the Kovidara banner, were essential for identifying warriors on the battlefield and, in the case of Ayodhya, represent a symbol of, tradition, and, continuity, for followers of Sanatan, Dharma.

Flags in Mahabharata:

In the Viraat Parva of Mahabharata, Arjuna under the disguise of Brihannala plays the role of the charioteer for Prince Uttara of Virata kingdom. Under the conditions for exile, the Pandavas were supposed to live in forest for 12 years and then 1 year in hiding. If they were found or their true identity is identified by the Kauravas, their exile term shall get reinitiated. The news of Kichaka's death (Virata's general) signals Kauravas of the presence of Pandavas. The Kauravas devise a plan to distract the Virata army and the king for a small border issue, while they attack from a different direction to take out the Pandavas. Arjuna or Brihannala accompanies Prince Uttara into the battle and then tells him about his true identity. In this war, Arjuna educates Uttara of all the different leaders in the Kaurava army and defines their identifications. These remain true for the Mahabharata war as well. The list below is an attempt to summarize the information found in different sections of Mahabharata!



Liminality in Shakespeare's Macbeth: Transcending Structured Location

■ DR. RATAN BHATTACHARJEE

Liminality in Shakespeare refers to a "betwixt and between" state—a threshold of ambiguity, transformation, and suspended social norms, often occurring in in-between places like forests, ships, or shores. These transitional spaces and states foster subversion, allowing characters to break free from social rigidities and experience personal or political metamorphosis. Liminality in Shakespeare include: 1) Liminal Spaces meaning locations removed from the structured court or city, such as the Forest of Arden (As You Like It), the sea, or the coast, acting as sites for transformative, non-rigid experience 2) Liminal Characters/Gender Fluidity referring to Characters in transition or disguise, such as Rosalind in As You Like It or Viola in Twelfth Night, who use cross-dressing to navigate, challenge, and break free from rigid gender constraints, gaining social mobility and power. 3) Ritual and Transformation referring to the "rites of passage" (e.g., in Hamlet or the romances) where characters move from one social status to another, creating "communitas"—a, temporary suspension of societal rules, allowing for new, more open perspectives. 4) Metatheatricality focusing on the plays themselves operating as liminal, as they exist as both art and "reality" within the "liminoid" space of theater, enabling the audience to explore alternative realities. These liminal, in-between moments often lead to a deeper understanding of human identity, breaking down the strictures of society and allowing for a, reconstruction of the social order.

Shakespeare's Macbeth is a tragedy obsessed with thresholds. Almost every decisive moment in the play occurs not in stable daylight but in spaces of transition—between night and morning, sleep and wakefulness, humanity and monstrosity, loyalty and treason, prophecy and action. The play unfolds in what anthropologists later called liminality: a condition of being "in-between," neither belonging fully to one state nor the other. Though Shakespeare wrote long before the term existed, Macbeth dramatizes liminality so powerfully that the tragedy can be read as the story of a man who enters a threshold and never returns. The Scottish thane moves from order to chaos, but never completes the passage into a coherent new identity. Instead, he remains suspended—king yet not legitimate, warrior yet no longer honourable, human yet haunted by something inhuman. The tragedy emerges precisely from this permanent state of transition.

The play announces its concern with liminality in its opening scene. The witches appear in a landscape that is not fully natural. Thunder and lightning break across a "blasted heath," a place neither battlefield nor domestic space. Their famous paradox, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair," immediately destabilizes categories. The moral world loses its clear divisions. The witches themselves are liminal beings: neither women nor spirits, neither mortal nor immortal. Banquo cannot decide whether they are "women" because they wear beards. They exist on the boundary between genders and between worlds. In early modern belief, witches were thought to live at crossroads, twilight hours, or storm-ridden landscapes—the borders of society and nature. Shakespeare uses them as embodiments of threshold existence. The audience enters the play already standing in a twilight zone where certainty collapses.

Macbeth's first entrance echoes the witches' language. When he says, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen," he unknowingly repeats their paradox. This is the first sign that he too belongs to liminality. At the beginning he is a heroic warrior who has just defended Scotland. Yet even here he occupies an in-between position. He is loyal to King Duncan, but he also has a fierce ambition that seeks something beyond loyalty. The witches' prophecy does not create ambition; it awakens a possibility already suspended within him. Their greeting—



"thane of Glamis," "thane of Cawdor," "king hereafter"—places Macbeth on a temporal threshold. He simultaneously inhabits present identity and future potential. He is both what he is and what he might become. The prophecy introduces psychological liminality. Macbeth is no longer stable within himself. He does not act immediately; he imagines. His famous aside—"My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical"—shows him hovering between imagination and action. He experiences what may be called anticipatory guilt. The crime has not occurred, but its emotional consequence has already begun. This is a mental threshold: he has crossed morally without physically acting. Shakespeare carefully stages this moment as a transition. The world does not yet know Macbeth's crime, but his mind has already entered darkness.

Lady Macbeth intensifies this liminal state. When she reads Macbeth's letter, she understands that he is "too full o' the milk of human kindness." She therefore calls upon supernatural forces: "unsex me here." This is one of the most explicit invocations of liminality in the play. She asks to be stripped of gendered identity, to exist between male and female, tenderness and cruelty. The speech imagines a transformation not into another stable identity but into a suspended one—human in body yet demonic in will. The appeal to "spirits that tend on mortal thoughts" suggests that evil enters through thresholds of the mind. Lady Macbeth wants to cross moral boundaries and remove natural limitations such as compassion and maternal feeling. Her desire to pour her spirits into Macbeth makes their marriage itself a liminal union, a shared psychological space where one consciousness infects another. Duncan's arrival at Inverness brings another threshold. A castle normally symbolizes security and hospitality. Yet this castle becomes a border between innocence and murder. Duncan remarks that the air smells pleasant; he cannot perceive danger. The audience knows that inside the castle the moral order is about to be overturned. Night falls, and Shakespeare deliberately emphasizes darkness.

The murder of Duncan occurs not on stage but in an off-stage chamber, a hidden interior. The unseen act itself becomes liminal—neither visible nor invisible, both present and absent. The knocking at the gate immediately after the murder reinforces the sense of crossing. Macbeth has just stepped into regicide, and the knocking sounds like a call from the ordinary world. For a moment the audience imagines hell's gate being opened. The porter's comic speech about being a "porter of hell-gate" ironically confirms that the castle has

become a threshold between earthly Scotland and infernal chaos. Sleep, throughout the play, is a central symbol of liminality. Sleep lies between consciousness and unconsciousness, life and death. After killing Duncan, Macbeth hears a voice cry, "Macbeth does murder sleep." This is not simply insomnia; it is metaphysical exile. He has destroyed the natural rhythm that allows humans to move between states. Without sleep, he is trapped permanently in wakefulness—a liminal awareness haunted by memory.

Lady Macbeth initially claims that "a little water clears us of this deed," but her later sleepwalking scene proves the opposite. She wanders at night, neither awake nor asleep, reliving the crime. Her candle suggests she fears darkness yet cannot escape it. The boundary between internal guilt and external reality collapses. She inhabits a psychological twilight where the past repeats endlessly. After Duncan's death, Scotland itself becomes liminal. The natural world reacts strangely: horses eat each other, darkness covers daytime, and the earth trembles. Political order, which once provided stability, dissolves. Macbeth is crowned king, but he lacks legitimacy. He occupies the throne yet never belongs to it. This is perhaps the most important liminal condition of the tragedy. A king is supposed to be the center of order; Macbeth is instead the center of uncertainty. He fears Banquo's descendants, suspects betrayal everywhere, and cannot rest. Kingship, rather than completing his transformation, suspends him between ruler and usurper. His power is real but insecure.

Banquo's ghost represents another boundary crossing. A dead man returns to the banquet, visible only to Macbeth. The feast, normally a communal social event, becomes a psychological nightmare. Macbeth speaks to empty space while the guests see nothing. Reality splits into two layers: public appearance and private terror. The ghost is not merely a supernatural horror; it is the embodiment of liminality between life and death. Banquo is neither alive nor fully gone. His presence exposes the incompleteness of Macbeth's crime. Murder cannot eliminate consequences. The past continues to inhabit the present.

The witches reappear later with their apparitions. These prophetic visions are riddles, not clear predictions. The armed head, the bloody child, and the crowned child holding a tree each symbolize partial truths. They place Macbeth again between certainty and misunderstanding. He interprets them literally: no man born of woman shall harm him, and he will remain safe until Birnam Wood moves. Yet these prophecies operate

Lady Macbeth intensifies this liminal state. When she reads Macbeth's letter, she understands that he is "too full o' the milk of human kindness." She therefore calls upon supernatural forces: "unsex me here." This is one of the most explicit invocations of liminality in the play. She asks to be stripped of gendered identity, to exist between male and female, tenderness and cruelty. The speech imagines a transformation not into another stable identity but into a suspended one—human in body yet demonic in will.

in symbolic logic. The witches do not lie, but they speak in thresholds between meaning and deception. Macbeth chooses to hear assurance rather than warning. His tragedy is not ignorance but misinterpretation.

He inhabits language without understanding its ambiguity.

Macbeth's increasing violence reveals the psychological cost of liminality. Once he crosses into murder, he cannot return to moral stability. Yet he also cannot fully become a tyrant without conscience. He still experiences fear, visions, and despair. He confesses, "I am in blood stepped in so far that, should I wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o'er." This is the voice of a man trapped in passage. He recognizes that turning back is impossible, but moving forward offers no peace. The metaphor of wading suggests he stands mid-stream—neither on one bank nor the other. His identity dissolves into perpetual transition. Lady Macbeth's trajectory mirrors his but with a different conclusion. She initially seems stronger, embracing the liminal transformation she invoked. Yet she cannot sustain it. The mind demands resolution.

Lady Macbeth's famous sleepwalking becomes a symbolic attempt to wash away the stain that belongs to neither body nor memory alone. She repeatedly rubs her hands: "Out, damned spot!" The spot is invisible, yet real to her. She lives inside a boundary where imagination has physical power. Eventually she dies, probably by suicide, escaping the threshold through death. Macbeth, however, continues. His reaction to her death—"She should have died hereafter"—shows emotional numbness. Time itself becomes meaningless to him. He experiences existence as repetitive emptiness: "Tomorrow,

and tomorrow, and tomorrow." The speech expresses ultimate liminality, life reduced to a shadow between birth and death without purpose.

The climax of the play resolves the prophecies through paradox. Birnam Wood appears to move when soldiers carry branches as camouflage, and Macduff reveals he was "from his mother's womb untimely ripped," born by Caesarean section. The prophecies were always true but never straightforward. Macbeth dies realizing he trusted words without grasping their threshold nature. His final battle is almost a desperate attempt to escape ambiguity by embracing action. He chooses to fight rather than surrender, seeking a clear ending. Malcolm's restoration to the throne ends the political liminality of Scotland. Daylight returns, order resumes, and proper succession is re-established. Yet the play leaves a lingering sense that the threshold cannot be entirely erased. The audience has witnessed how fragile order is and how easily a heroic man can enter darkness through imagination, desire, and misreading. The witches do not vanish completely; they remain part of the world's possibility.

Thus Macbeth can be understood as a tragedy of the threshold. The witches represent cosmic liminality, Lady Macbeth psychological liminality, and Macbeth himself moral liminality. The motifs of night, sleep, prophecy, and hallucination all reinforce a world where boundaries blur. Shakespeare shows that evil does not always appear as a sudden transformation but as a gradual crossing of small borders—thought to desire, desire to action, action to habit. Macbeth never becomes entirely monster or entirely human. He remains suspended between them, and that suspension is his torment.

In the end, the tragedy warns that human identity depends upon stable moral and social boundaries. When those boundaries dissolve, individuals and societies drift into chaos. Macbeth's downfall is not simply ambition but his willingness to live in the in-between, to accept equivocation as certainty. He mistakes possibility for destiny and imagination for command. By dramatizing a man who inhabits twilight rather than daylight, Shakespeare creates a play where the deepest horror lies not in supernatural terror but in uncertainty itself. The true darkness of Macbeth is the state of being unable to stand firmly anywhere—forever crossing, never arriving.

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Summer Rain

I too dance in the summer rain
Beneath the starry night,
where a river of firebrands flows
Here and there,
And a whisper of cold breeze takes flight.

I too jump in the puddles,
Across the streets of light,
where a curtain hides a series of memories,
And a call echoes –
A distant sea's rumble.

Khurshaed Wani is a teacher, poet, and author from Kashmir, India. He is the author of 'The Seraphic Garland', has co-authored few poetry books, and his work has appeared in International magazines and Anthologies. He received the International Academic Award for Contemporary Literature - Lucius Annaeus Seneca 'Prize De Merit' award for his creative poetry held at Bari in Italy. He holds PG in Pol. Science and BLIT.

Yearning Yore

As I carry the essence of the first rays,
Cease your chase,
Shadows swamp and linger,
Gathering veiled memories of yesteryears.

Even the air pricks my spine
In the foggy lawn of silver dew,
Yet barefoot I walk
To the embrace of your yearning yore.

A moment I taste
Heavy as lead,
Yet pretty as rose,
And I walk,
I walk in your musings.

Health Benefits of Eggs



■ SAHIL MANZOOR

A whitish, oval-shaped shell protects the inner parts known as the albumin (egg white) and yolk. Eggs have many effective health benefits. They contain calcium, vitamins, minerals, and other essential nutrients. Eggs have been used for their health benefits for a long time, and they are easily available. Doctors recommend eggs to patients who suffer from different health ailments.

Today, let us explore a few health benefits of eggs in our day-to-day life. Eggs are very beneficial for maintaining sharp eyesight. They contain vitamin A (retinol is the chemical name for vitamin A). Egg yolk is packed with lutein and zeaxanthin, which are helpful antioxidants that reduce the risk of cataracts and macular degeneration in the eyes.

Eating two eggs a day for six weeks can increase HDL levels by 10%. Regular consumption of eggs leads to elevated levels of high-density lipoprotein (HDL), also known as "good cholesterol."

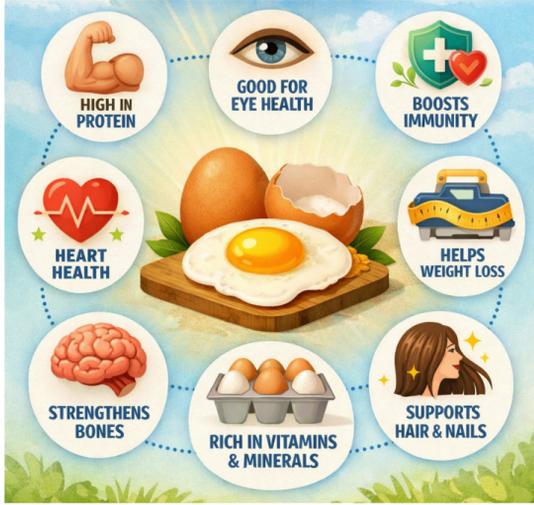
As mentioned earlier, eggs are packed with proteins, minerals, and vitamins. Most of us know the importance of proteins in our body. Proteins help maintain weight, increase muscle mass, lower blood pressure, and strength-

en bones.

Recent studies suggest that eating one egg for breakfast does not cause heart disease. People who follow a low-carbohydrate diet and eat eggs have less chance of developing heart disease.

Some people may have allergies or digestive problems. They should avoid foods that make them uncomfortable or worsen their health issues.

Nowadays, we are very concerned about our health and try to stay fit by engaging in activities like going to the gym, playing football and cricket, or jogging. However, one thing is true: our



dietary discipline determines our good health and keeps us happy and healthy.

Today, junk food is trending, and new varieties are available in streets, restaurants, and hotels. However, we should not forget that healthy food is usually prepared at home. We need balanced and hygienic food for a healthy body.

Sahilmanzoor0401@gmail.com

THE MYSTERY OF CARBONATED DRINKS

■ DR. SURINDERPAL SINGH

Carbonated drinks, commonly known as soft drinks, sodas, or cold drinks, are among the most popular beverages in the world today, especially among children and young people. Their sweet taste, fizzy sensation, and easy availability make them highly appealing. They are often associated with enjoyment, refreshment, and celebration. However, despite their popularity, regular consumption of these drinks can seriously harm health. Medical professionals and health experts increasingly recognize excessive intake of carbonated beverages as a major contributor to modern lifestyle diseases.

Most carbonated drinks are made from a combination of carbonated water, sugar or artificial sweeteners, acids, caffeine, and various colours, flavours, and preservatives. Carbonated water is simply water infused with carbon dioxide gas, which creates bubbles and gives the drinks their characteristic fizz. Regular soft drinks contain very high amounts of sugar; in fact, a single bottle may contain more sugar than the body requires for an entire day. Diet drinks replace sugar with artificial sweeteners to reduce calorie content, but these chemicals are not entirely harmless. Acids such as phosphoric acid are added to provide a sharp, tangy taste, though they increase acidity in the body. Many cola beverages also contain caffeine, a stimulant that affects the brain and may cause dependence. Artificial colours, flavours, and preservatives enhance taste, appearance, and shelf life. Despite containing so many ingredients, these drinks provide almost no essential nutri-

ents such as vitamins, minerals, or fiber; they mainly supply empty calories.

The harmful effects of carbonated drinks on health are significant. One of the most common consequences is weight gain and obesity. Sugary beverages add a large number of calories without creating a feeling of fullness, leading to fat accumulation over time. Regular consumption also increases the risk of type 2 diabetes because liquid sugar enters the bloodstream rapidly, causing sudden spikes in blood sugar levels. Frequent spikes can strain the body's insulin response and eventually result in diabetes. High sugar intake further contributes to heart disease by raising blood pressure, increasing bad cholesterol, and promoting inflammation. Excess sugar, especially fructose, is converted into fat in the liver, which can lead to fatty liver disease. Dental health also suffers, as sugar feeds harmful bacteria in the mouth while acidity damages tooth enamel, causing cavities, pain, and sensitivity. The presence of phosphoric acid may reduce calcium levels, potentially weakening bones over time. Caffeine in these drinks can disturb sleep, increase anxiety, and cause headaches. Even diet drinks are not completely safe, as artificial sweeteners may affect metabolism, appetite, and gut health while increasing cravings for sweet foods.

Young people are particularly attracted to carbonated drinks for several reasons. Aggressive advertising campaigns often target youth, portraying these beverages as symbols of fun, energy, and modern lifestyle. Their sweet taste and fizzy sensation make them enjoyable to consume. They are easily available in

schools, shops, and fast-food outlets and are commonly linked with parties, movies, and social gatherings. Peer influence also plays a strong role, and the combination of sugar and caffeine can create mild addiction, encouraging repeated consumption.

The growing popularity of carbonated drinks has contributed significantly to the rise of non-communicable diseases such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, fatty liver, and dental problems. These conditions are increasing worldwide, particularly in urban areas and among younger age groups, posing a serious public health challenge.

Replacing soft drinks with healthier alternatives can greatly improve overall well-being. Clean drinking water is the best and simplest option. Lemon water, coconut water, fresh fruit juices without added sugar, buttermilk or lassi, and herbal drinks are nourishing choices that provide hydration along with essential nutrients.

Carbonated drinks may offer temporary refreshment, but frequent consumption can result in serious long-term health problems. Their high sugar content, acidity, and artificial additives make them nutritionally poor and potentially harmful. Limiting their intake, especially among children and adolescents, is an important step toward preventing obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and other lifestyle disorders. Choosing natural and nutritious beverages instead of sugary sodas is a simple yet powerful way to protect health and promote long-term well-being.

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

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🕒 8:00PM On January 18th, Sunday

DC Kishtwar reviews performance of banks

Stresses 100% target achievement under employment schemes

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KISHTWAR, FEB 26: The District Level Review Committee (DLRC) meeting for the quarter ending December 2025 was today chaired by the Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar, Pankaj Kumar Sharma to review the overall performance of banks operating in the district.

At the outset, the LDM, Harsh Rawal presented a comprehensive overview of the district's banking performance, highlighting achievements in deposits, advances, Credit-Deposit Ratio (CDR) and progress under the District Credit Plan (DCP) for the year 2025-26.

He also listed the performance under Priority and Non-Priority Sector lending and shared data regarding physical and financial targets achieved under various government-sponsored self-employment schemes including PMEGP and JKREGP.

The meeting also reviewed the performance of banks in issuing Kisan Credit Cards (KCCs) across agriculture, animal husbandry, sheep and poultry sectors.

Progress under schemes such as NRLM, NULM, PMJDY and social security initiatives including PMJJBY and PMSBY was also assessed.

It was informed that ₹429.25 crore was disbursed under the Priority Sector, achieving 85.03% of the ₹504.79 crore Annual Credit Plan (ACP) 2025-26 target. The Non-Priority Sector recorded a credit outlay of ₹456.03 crore.

The Deputy Commissioner directed bankers to improve performance under the Priority Sector, particularly in Education, Housing and Social Infrastructure. He emphasized the need for close coordination between banks and line departments to ensure effective implementation of schemes and improved service delivery.

The DC instructed banks to organize awareness camps in uncovered



and rural areas to sensitize the public about social security schemes, financial inclusion initiatives and youth-oriented employment programmes.

He further directed banks and departments to intensify efforts to achieve targets under PMEGP and other government-sponsored loan schemes, adopting a structured and result-oriented approach to ensure 100% achievement.

The Potential Linked Credit Plan (PLP) for 2026-27 was also discussed during the meeting, which was presented by DDM NABARD.

The chair directed that the proposed targets should be realistic, reliable and achievable.

The RBI Lead District Officer reiterated the importance of conducting Depositor Education and Awareness Fund (DEAF) camps strictly as per the schedule issued by the Lead District Manager (LDM).

J&K Bank was advised to expedite the resolution of pending DEAF cas-

es by proactively tracing account holders and settling eligible claims.

Banks were also directed to enhance public awareness regarding the UDGM portal for tracing unclaimed deposits and to strictly monitor Banking Correspondents (BCs) by reviewing transaction data and login activity to address cases of inactivity.

Chairing the District Level RSETI Advisory Committee (DLRAC) meeting, the Deputy Commissioner also reviewed the performance of RSETI.

The Director RSETI presented an overview of the institute's achievements, ongoing initiatives and training programmes.

The meeting was attended by ADDC Vinod Kumar Behnal, CPO Akhil Thakur, AD Handicrafts Pardeep Shan, CAO Kushal Chandel, CHO Sajid Mustafa, LDO RBI Subin Kundal, DDM NABARD Nikhil Sharma, Director SBIRSETI Sanjay Kumar besides representatives of various banks and concerned departments.

J&K Inam UI Haq Siddiqui Appointed Ombudsman for Srinagar & Ganderbal

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNS

JAMMU, FEB 26 (KNS): The Jammu & Kashmir government has appointed Inam UI Haq Siddiqui, a former senior KAS officer, as the Ombudsman with a mandate to oversee grievance redressal in the key districts of Srinagar and Ganderbal, which include the Hon'ble Chief Minister's constituency.

According to Government Order No. 61-JK (RD&PR) of 2026 issued today of which a copy lies with KNS, the appointment leverages Mr. Siddiqui's distinguished three-decade career in public administration. An official statement highlighted that his vast experience is expected to "reinforce transparency, fairness, and effective grievance redressal mechanisms" in the assigned regions.

Siddiqui's career includes pivotal roles such as Additional Secretary to the Government, Chief Executive Officer of the Gulmarg Development Authority, and



Project Director for the Governor's Grievance Cell, where he was instrumental in strengthening accountability and governance delivery.

He has also been associated with World Bank-funded projects, contributing to financial oversight and land records modernization.

His expertise is further bolstered by advanced professional training in Management Information Systems from the University of East Anglia, UK, and specialized training with the Department of Space, Hyderabad.

Recognized for his integrity and result-oriented governance, Mr. Siddiqui is a recipient of the prestigious Lieutenant Governor's Award for Honesty, Integrity, and Meritorious Public Service. (KNS)

Samba gears up for launch of National HPV Vaccination Campaign

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SAMBA, FEB 26: A meeting of the District Task Force on Immunization (DTFI) was convened today under the chairpersonship of Deputy Commissioner Samba, Ayushi Sudan to review inter-sectoral preparedness for the launch of the National HPV Vaccination Campaign aimed at prevention of cervical cancer.

At the outset, the Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Vidhi Bhatia delivered the welcome address and highlighted the significance of coordinated efforts among various departments to ensure the successful implementation of the campaign. The District Immunization Officer, Dr. Kamlesh Kumari presented a detailed overview of the campaign, including its objectives, operational strategy and target population.

The National HPV Vaccination Campaign aims to vaccinate girls who have attained the age of 14 years but have not yet reached 15 years of age. The initiative seeks to provide timely protection against cervical cancer through administration of the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine.

During the meeting, emphasis was laid on effective interdepartmental coordination, awareness generation, micro-planning, logistics management and monitoring mechanisms to ensure smooth rollout of the campaign across the district.

The Deputy Commissioner underscored the importance of collective responsibility and directed all concerned departments to extend full cooperation for the successful and timely execution of the vaccination drive.

The meeting was attended by senior officers from the Health Department and other line departments.

Public Notice

(NON-AVAILABILITY OF BIRTH CERTIFICATE)

This is to inform the general public that the particulars of my daughter have been wrongly recorded in the school records.

Incorrect particulars recorded: Name: Mehreen Father's Name: Mehraj Din Ronga Mother's Name: Wasiya Correct particulars (as per SMC Birth Certificate, Registration No. 48747 dated 23/03/2019, UID No. 2962): Name: Mehreen Father's Name: Mehraj Uddin Runga Mother's Name: Waseiya Address: Iqbal Colony, Zainakote.

This notice is issued for correction of the above details in school records for all official and legal purposes.

If anyone has any objection to this correction, he/she may contact the undersigned within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. Thereafter, no objection shall be entertained.

Public Notice

(NON-AVAILABILITY OF BIRTH CERTIFICATE)

This is to inform the general public that I, Mohammad Lateef Malik, S/o Ghulam Mohammad Malik, Mother's Name: Saja, R/o Shalteng, have applied for issuance of a Non-Availability of Birth Certificate (NABC). My Date of Birth is 05/11/1973. The NABC has been issued on 25/02/2026 by the competent authority as my birth record was not found in the official municipal records.

This public notice is being published for record and for all official and legal purposes.

If anyone has any objection to the above particulars, he/she may contact the undersigned within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. Thereafter, no objection shall be entertained.

Public Notice

(NON-AVAILABILITY OF BIRTH CERTIFICATE)

This is to inform the general public that the particulars of my daughter have been wrongly recorded in the school records. Incorrect particulars recorded: Name: Mariya Father's Name: Mehraj Din Ronga Mother's Name: Wasiya Correct particulars (as per SMC Birth Certificate, Registration No. 48748 dated 23/03/2019, UID No. 3019): Name: Mariya Father's Name: Mehraj Uddin Runga Mother's Name: Waseiya Address: Iqbal Colony, Zainakote.

This notice is issued for correction of the above details in school records for all official and legal purposes.

If anyone has any objection to this correction, he/she may contact the undersigned within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. Thereafter, no objection shall be entertained.

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir

Office of the Naib Tehsildar, Pahalgam

PUBLIC NOTICE

Subject: Application of Muneer Ahmad Khan S/o Mohammad Afzal Khan, R/o Gujran Batkote, Tehsil Pahalgam, District Anantnag for issuance of ST Certificate.

Whereas the above named applicant has applied in this office for issuance of Scheduled Tribe (ST) Certificate in his favour. In this connection, report from the concerned Patwari Halqa has been sought and the case is under process.

Now, therefore, any person having any objection regarding the issuance of the said certificate in favour of the applicant may file 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 and the case shall be decided on merits as per rules. Issued under my hand and seal of this office.

Naib Tehsildar, Pahalgam

Public Notice

My daughter's name has been wrongly mentioned as AIYZAA JAN in her Date of Birth certificate bearing Id No 101002535055 issued by SDH kreeri while her correct name is AYESHA SARFARAZ which needs to be corrected if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of BMO / SDH kreeri within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained.

Name... SARFARAZ AHMAD DAR
F/O...AYESHA SARFARAZ
R/O ...CHOORA, Tehsil..., KHOIE

Public Notice

This is for information of general public that the (Electric bill) power connection is registered on the name GH QADIR CHOPAN S/O KHZIR MOHD CHOPAN R/O RANJEE Tehsil KHOIE Now this Connection bearing Consumer ID NO 0212040005254 wants to be permanent disconnection of the above mentioned electric connection .If anybody have any objection in this regard He/She may file his/her objection in the concerned PDD office within seven days from the date of publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained.

Name...FAYAZ AHMAD CHOPAN
S/O ...ABDUL AZIZ CHOPAN
R/ORANJEE BARAMULLA

Public Notice

I, Sami Jan, W/o Mohd Ramzan Bhat, R/o Issoo, Anantnag, J&K, hereby declare that my name in Aadhaar No. XXXX XXXX 8900 is wrongly mentioned as Sami Jan. My correct name as per Domicile Certificate is Summy Jan. Henceforth, I shall be known as Summy Jan for all official purposes.

Summy Jan

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir

Office Of The Tehsildar Kreeri (Executive Magistrate 1st Class)

Subject: Issuance of Registration Orders in respect of delayed Birth/ Death certificate.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Registrar Births and Deaths (Block Development Officer Wagoora) chokedar hassubmitted case file pertainingto Birth of AFNAN MANZOOR HAJAM S/O MANZOOR AHMAD HAJAM R/O KREERI Tehsil KREERI Distt. Baramulla having verified the date of Birth as 01/11/2009 and event has been shown to be occurred at HOME for issuance of delay order .In this connection .

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

Sd/- Executive Magistrate 1st Class Kreeri

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir

Office Of The Tehsildar Kreeri

Subject: Application of SARA BEGUM W/O ABDUL RASHID AKHOON R/O KREERI 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 ABDUL RASHID AKHOON S/O ABDUL AHAD AKHOON R/O KREERI Tehsil kreeri has passed away on 23/02/2023

Moreover family structure of the applicant is as under
1... SARA BAGUM wife 63 years H/W widow
2...RIFAT BEGUM daughter 39 years H/W married
3...ZUBIADA RASHID daughter 37 years H/W married
4...RUQIYA RASHID daughter 35 years H/W Married

The applicant has applied for Issuance of Dependent certificate in favour of SARA BEGUM 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 Kreeri

Public Notice

This is for information of general public that the (Electric bill) power connection is registered on the name GH RASOOL GANIE S/O SUBLE GANIE R/O AUTHOORA Now this Connection bearing Consumer ID NO 0212040006280 wants to be registered on my correct name MOHAMMAD YOUSUF GANIE S/O GH MOHAMMAD GANIE R/O AUTHOORA .If anybody have any objection in this regard He/She may file his/her objection in the concerned PDD office within seven days from the date of publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained.

Name...MOHAMMAD YOUSUF GANIE
S/O ...GH MOHAMMAD GANIE
R/OAUTHOORA

Public Notice

This is for information of general public that the (Electric bill) power connection is registered on my Fathers name Gh Mohi ud din Rather S/O Ab Khaliq Rather Now this Connection bearing Consumer ID NO 0212040003446 wants to be registered on my own name Irshad Ahmad Rather S/O Gh Mohi ud din Rather .If anybody have any objection in this regard He/She may file his/her objection in the concerned PDD office within seven days from the date of publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained.

IRSHAD AHMAD RATHER S/O GH MOHI UD DIN RATHER R/O WARIPORA BALA

UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU & KASHMIR DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & FARMERS WELFARE Office of the Chief Agriculture Officer Srinagar

PUBLIC NOTICE

Provisional Merit list of candidates for engagement of Krishi Udyami/Agri Entrepreneur's for the designated Kisan Khidmat Ghar Panzinaara & Kisan Khidmat Ghar Faquir Gujree District Srinagar under HADP Phase - I & II project 20 in response to the advertisement notice issued vide no: -CAOS/P&S/2025-26/1484-97 Dated: -03-01-2026 and CAOS/P&S/2025-26/1502-15 Dated: 06/01/2026.

The Provisional Merit list of candidates for engagement as Krishi Udyami's/Agri Entrepreneur's for Kisan Khidmat Ghar Panzinaara & Kisan Khidmat Ghar Faquir Gujree of District Srinagar under HADP Phase - I & II (Annexure "A & B") as approved by District level selection committee under the Chairmanship of Additional District Development Commissioner Srinagar, is being published for inviting of objections (if any) in this regard.

Any applicant/candidate having any objection, same may be dropped in the office of Chief Agriculture officer Srinagar or mail at chief-sgr.kmr@jk.gov. within 07 days from the date of issuance of the public notice. No objection shall be entertained after the expiry of the given period and the provisional selection list shall be issued.

Annexure "A"				
Provisional Merit list of candidate for engagement as Krishi Udyami's against Kisan Khidmat Ghar Panzinaara under HADP phase-I.				
S.No	Name of the Candidate	Parentage	Residence Total	Points
01	Junead Ahmad Khan	Shabir Ahmad Khan	Ranbirgarh Partabgarh Shalteng	15
Annexure "B"				
Provisional Merit list of candidates for engagement as Krishi Udyami's against Kisan Khidmat Ghar Faquir Gujree under HADP phase-II.				
S.No	Name of the Candidate	Parentage	Residence Total	Points
01	Munazah Manzoor	Manzoor Ahmad Bhat	Haripora Harwan	40
02	Abas Ali	Ali Mohammad Ganie	Gundtal Murinderbagh Harwan	15

Sd/- (Ajijaz Hassain Dar)
Chief Agriculture Officer, Srinagar

DIPK: 11390/25 | Dated: 26-02-2026

DC Ganderbal chairs DLRC/ DCC for quarter ending December-2025

HT NEWS NETWORK

GANDERBAL, FEBRUARY 26:

A meeting of the District Level Review Committee and the District Consultative Committee (DLRC/ DCC) was held today here under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore to review the performance of banks and line departments for the quarter ending December 2025, and to assess the progress under the Annual Credit Plan (ACP).

At the outset, Lead District Manager, Ganderbal, presented a comprehensive report detailing the bank-wise performance in various key areas, including deposits, advances, and Credit Deposit Ratio (CDR). Credit Deposit Ratio of the banks stood at 95.29 %.

The meeting noted a positive rise in the district's overall CD Ratio from 92.75% to 95.2%. However,



the DC flagged poor performance by certain banks, directing them to immediately scale up lending to meet district benchmarks.

The DC emphasized the need for banks to increase credit flow to the agriculture sector to meet the requirements of farmers.

He directed banks to improve their credit dispensation strategies and ensure that the agricultural sector receives adequate financial

support. He also directed the banks and line departments to ensure time bound disposal of pending cases under various schemes such as PMFME, PM Surya Ghar, Mission YUVA etc.

The DC issued a stern directive to all banks, specifically those other than J&K Bank to maximize their outreach. He emphasized that the responsibility for implementing government-

sponsored schemes like PMEGP and KCC must be shared across all financial institutions to ensure broader public access.

Further, Agriculture & allied departments along with banks were directed to ensure maximum coverage under the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme.

Emphasizing the importance of outreach, the DC stressed that awareness about various

government schemes must be integrated into regular departmental programmes, ensuring active participation of officials from the concerned departments.

The performance under various Social Security Schemes (SSS), including Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), Pradhan Mantri Jhan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) and Atal Pension Yojana (APY), was also reviewed. In this regard, banks and line departments were directed to work together to ensure 100% coverage of eligible beneficiaries under these welfare schemes.

The meeting was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner, Manzoor Ahmad; Chief Planning Officer, Senior officials from the district administration, RBI, NABARD, representatives from various banks, and line departments.

District-Level Viksit Bharat Youth Parliament-2026 held at HKM GDC Bandipora

HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, FEBRUARY 26: HKM Government Degree College (GDC) Bandipora, designated as the District Nodal College, Thursday successfully hosted the District-Level Viksit Bharat Youth Parliament-2026, providing a vibrant platform for students to deliberate on democratic values and contemporary issues concerning the nation.

The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation of students from various colleges of the district, including GDC Hajin, GDC Sumbal, GDC Ajas and the host institution. The deliberations were held on the theme "50 Years of Emergency: Lessons for Indian Democracy," encouraging young participants to reflect upon the historical significance of the emergency period and its relevance in strengthening democratic institutions.



Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Bandipora, Nizam Uddin Bhat, who was the Chief Guest on the occasion, appreciated the college for organizing the event and emphasized the importance of youth participation in democratic processes. He highlighted that such platforms help nurture informed, responsible and vigilant citizens capable of contributing positively towards nation-building.

Earlier, Principal HKM GDC Bandipora, Prof. Suresh Kumar Dogra, in his welcome address, underscored the significance of Youth Parliament in fostering leadership qualities, critical thinking and awareness among students, while encouraging them to actively engage in democratic discourse.

During the event, over 30 students delivered insightful and thought-provoking speeches, showcasing their oratory skills and understanding of democratic principles. The performances were evaluated by a distinguished jury.

Following detailed evaluation, the jury selected the top ten performers who will represent district Bandipora at the State-Level Youth Parliament. The winners were felicitated with certificates of merit by the dignitaries in recognition of their outstanding performance.

DDC Rajouri reviews progress of 'Nigraan' CCTV Project, E-Nazar Tracker Portal

HT NEWS NETWORK

RAJOURI, FEBRUARY 26: District Development Commissioner Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma chaired a meeting to review the progress of the establishment of a Centralized CCTV Surveillance System "Nigraan" being implemented through the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative of Jammu and Kashmir Bank, besides assessing the functioning of the E-Nazar Tracker Portal.



At the outset, the DIO NIC briefed the chair about the functioning and monitoring mechanism of the E-Nazar Portal, highlighting its role in ensuring transparency, accountability and real-time tracking of developmental works across the district.

The District Development Commissioner directed all concerned officers to ensure timely completion of works and submission of bills to avoid procedural delays. "All ongoing and upcoming works shall be mandatorily monitored on the E-Nazar Portal with effect from 1st March to strengthen supervision and streamline execution," he directed.

The DDC also reviewed the progress of implementation of the "Nigraan" CCTV Surveillance System in educational institutions across the district.

Stressing the importance of safety and security in schools and other institutions, he directed the concerned departments to expedite the installation process and ensure quality execution within stipulated timelines.

ADDC Malikzada Sheraz-ul-Haq; CPO Maqsood Ahmed; Executive Engineer PHE Sudesh Kumar; Executive Engineer PDD Muneer Ahmed; DIO NIC Parvinder Singh; CEO Mohd Hafeez and other district and sectoral officers attended the meeting.

JKTPO organises District-Level Digital Financing Awareness Drive at Kathua under RAMP

HT NEWS NETWORK

KATHUA, FEBRUARY 26: After the successful conclusion of the UT-Level Digital Financing MSME Workshop, the Jammu and Kashmir Trade Promotion Organisation (JKTPO) has commenced District-Level Digital Financing Awareness Creation Drives across the Union Territory.

Building on the momentum generated during the UT-Level Stakeholders' Workshop on "Penetration of MFIs/NBFCs/FinTech Companies for MSME Financing under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) Programme," the first district-level workshop was organised in Kathua today, marking the beginning of a focused outreach initiative to strengthen access to digital financial solutions for MSMEs at the grassroots level.

The primary objective of these drives is to on-board local and small MSMEs and enhance their access to digital financial services. The

intervention seeks to empower MSMEs by providing structured information on alternative funding sources and technology-driven financial solutions tailored to their business needs.

The District-Level Awareness Workshop at Kathua witnessed the participation of over 50 MSMEs from diverse sectors. The workshop focused on sensitizing entrepreneurs about the importance of digital integration in financial management and expanding their access to formal credit channels.

Managing Director, JKTPO, Sudershan Kumar emphasized that digital financing represents a structural transformation in the MSME credit ecosystem. "JKTPO aims to build a digitally empowered MSME landscape in Jammu and Kashmir by ensuring seamless, transparent and technology-driven access to finance," he stated.

He reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to strengthening last-mile linkages between financial institutions and entrepreneurs under

the RAMP framework.

Delivering the inaugural address, Faculty, JKTPO Vishal Ray highlighted the importance of financial literacy and digital adoption in enhancing MSME competitiveness.

The participating institutions conducted an extensive awareness session on its lending products, microfinance models, digital loan processing systems and flexible repayment mechanisms designed especially for micro and small enterprises.

The representatives from NBFC/ MFIs elaborated upon their lending methodologies, doorstep-oriented credit assessment models and digital onboarding processes, thereby enabling MSMEs to understand the practical pathways for accessing timely and collateral-light finance.

Under this RAMP intervention, MSMEs of Jammu and Kashmir are poised to derive significant benefits, including improved.

ADDC Shopian reviews DLRC, DCC, DLRAC quarter 3 performance of Banks

District records strong growth in deposits & priority sector lending

HT NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN, FEBRUARY 26:

Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Shopian, Dr. Nasir Ahmed Lone today presides over District Level Review Committee (DLRC) Cum District Consultative Committee (DCC) meeting of District Shopian to review the performance of financial institutions for the 3rd Quarter ended December 31, 2025 of FY 2025-26 at the meeting hall of District Administrative Complex Shopian.

Lead District Manager, Farooq Ahmad Dar, apprised the meeting of the key achievements recorded up to 31st December 2025. Key Highlights as on 31st December 2025, deposits registered a growth of 10% on YoY basis and 11% increase

over the previous quarter ended 30th September 2025. Advances recorded a 17% YoY growth.

Priority Sector Advances witnessed a significant increase of 23% on YoY basis and 10% over the previous quarter while as Non-Priority Sector showed a marginal decline of 2% YoY and 9% compared to the previous quarter. CD Ratio of the district stood at an impressive 127, well above the minimum benchmark of 60%.

Against the financial target of Rs 2507.45 crore and physical target of 54,369 beneficiaries under District Credit Plan (DCP) 2025-26, banks in the district have disbursed Rs 1596.37 crore to 48,566 beneficiaries during the 3rd quarter, achieving 64% of the financial target and 89% of the physical target.

The Chair emphasized the need



for sustained efforts to enhance credit flow, particularly in priority and employment-generating sectors and called for coordinated action among banks and line departments to ensure inclusive and balanced economic growth in the district.

DLRAC performance was also reviewed and it was informed that J&K Bank RSETI has registered remarkable progress during the 3rd quarter of the financial year 2025-26. Against a target of 446 candidates up to 31st December, 2025, the Institute successfully

trained 625 candidates, achieving 134% of the target and surpassing the set benchmark. The annual target of 595 candidates (148.75 per quarter) has also been covered during the review period itself.

The ADC stressed for sustained coordination among line departments and banking institutions to further strengthen self employment generation and financial inclusion initiatives across the district.

Among others, the meeting was attended by General Manager, DIC, Shurjil Naik; DDM, NABARD, Junaid Ahmed; Cluster Head, J&K Bank, Abdul Majid; Director, J&K Bank, RSETI, Naseer Ahmed; AGM, RBI, Rajneesh Mahotra, district officers of various Government departments and representatives of banks.

CBC organises awareness on central schemes at Sunderbani

HT NEWS NETWORK

SUNDERBANI FEBRUARY 26:

A One-Day Integrated Communication and Outreach Programme (ICOP) on VBG RAM G, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana and National Livestock Mission was today organized by Central Bureau of Communication (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India) here at Government Industrial Training Institute (ITI) Sunderbani.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Ramkesh Sharma was the chief guest. ITI Superintendent Er. Rajinder Singh; Assistant Veterinary Surgeon, Sheep Husbandry Department Dr. Dalbir Singh; Harish Sharma

from Rural Development Department, Vikram staff members and students attended the programme.

The event featured expert Lectures on VBG RAM G, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana and National Livestock Mission, besides Drawing Competition, Open Quiz, distribution of 'New India Samachar' magazine and cultural items centered on the Centrally Sponsored Schemes.

The ADC enlightened the gathering about the government initiatives aimed at making youth self reliant and job providers. "The Union Government is taking every possible step to make the life of the countrymen easy and respectable through its policies



like VBG RAM G Act-2025, Skill India, National Livestock Mission, DBT, Ujjawala, PKGKAY, Saubhagya Yojna, Har Ghar Jal, SBM, KCC, Stand up India, Start up India, Mudra Loans, etc." he added.

Superintendent ITI Rajinder Singh spoke about the initiatives of Kaushal Vikas Yojana (Skill India). "The scheme focuses on making Indian Youth skilled through professional training, working experience, certification,

scholarship, placement and providing loans for starting entrepreneurs and becoming self reliant," he informed.

Asst. Veterinary Surgeon from Sheep Husbandry Department Dr. Dalbir Singh gave an overview of the schemes related to Sheep Husbandry Department like National Livestock Mission; Dharti Abha for employment generation; sector centric entrepreneurship, schemes for development of Sheep, Goat; poultry, wool and egg productivity; support for fodder cultivation etc. He explained criteria and subsidy for availing these schemes. He also informed about nlm.udyamimitra.in and kissanisati portal.

Earlier, I/c CBC, Vijay Mattoo, in his welcome address, gave an overview of the Integrated Communication and Outreach Programme (ICOP). He said that the Government of India is committed towards making India self reliant and developed by 2047. He discussed various initiatives under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes. He also gave a detailed overview of working and organization of Central Bureau of Communication

Harish Shrama from RDD spoke about the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar & Aajivika Mission (Gramin) Act 2025 (VBG RAM G Act-2025). He said the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajivika Mission Gramin Act

responds to various weak experiences of MGNREGA through a comprehensive legislative reset. "It strengthens the implementation framework by increasing the administrative expenditure ceiling from 6 percent to 9 per cent, providing greater support for staffing, remuneration, training and technical capacity," he said and added that the number of work days per household under VBG RAM G has been enhanced from 100 days to 125. "This shift reflects a practical and people-centered approach to programme management, moving towards a more professional and adequately supported system," he noted.

India launches 'SUJVIKA' biotech data portal as bioeconomy set to touch USD 1 Tn by 2047

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, FEB 26: Minister for Science and Technology, Dr Jitendra Singh on Tuesday said India's bioeconomy is on a rapid growth trajectory and is poised to become a USD 1 trillion sector by 2047, as he unveiled a new AI-driven biotech data portal aimed at strengthening domestic manufacturing and research.

Speaking at the 40th Foundation Day of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), the Minister launched "SUJVIKA" – a Biotech Product Data Portal designed to provide structured and authenticated trade data on biotechnology products, industrial enzymes and biochemical imports.

The platform is expected to help startups, researchers and industry players identify import dependencies and explore opportunities for indigenisation and innovation.

Dr Singh said India's bioeconomy has witnessed a 16-fold rise over the past decade, reflecting the government's sustained push



for innovation-led growth.

"India is steadily moving towards becoming a global biotechnology powerhouse, and our vision is to build a USD 1 trillion bioeconomy by 2047 in line with the goal of Viksit Bharat," he said.

Highlighting the expansion of the biotech startup ecosystem, the Minister noted that the number of biotech startups has grown from fewer than 100 in 2014 to more than 11,000 today.

He said this transformation has been driven by targeted policy support, research incentives and stronger industry-academia

partnerships.

Referring to the recently launched BioE3 Policy – Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment – Dr Singh said it aims to accelerate high-performance biomanufacturing and promote sustainable development.

He also announced the first national call under the Rs 1 lakh crore Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) initiative, with Rs 2,000 crore earmarked to support enterprises ready for scale-up.

The Minister further highlighted initiatives such as the National Biofoundry Network and

a nationwide network of bio-incubators across states and union Territories to facilitate translation of research into commercial applications.

Touching upon frontier areas, Dr Singh said India is making strides in emerging domains such as space biotechnology and precision medicine. He pointed to the GenomIndia Project, which has completed whole-genome sequencing of 10,000 individuals from diverse populations, calling it a major step towards advancing personalised healthcare solutions.

Emphasising the growing integration of artificial intelligence with biotechnology, Dr Singh said digital tools will significantly enhance research efficiency, diagnostics and drug discovery.

"The convergence of biotechnology and digital innovation will define the next phase of India's growth story," he said, expressing confidence that India will emerge as one of the world's leading bioeconomies in the coming decades.

Govt launches 2 pc offer for Sale in IRFC; Retail bidding opens Thursday

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, FEB 26: The union government will launch an Offer for Sale (OFS) of a 2 per cent stake in Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) on Wednesday for non-retail investors, with retail investors allowed to bid on Thursday, according to a post by the Secretary of the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) on X.

"Offer for Sale for Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) opens tomorrow for Non-Retail investors. Retail investors can bid on Thursday. Government offers to disinvest 2% equity in the IRFC with an additional 2% as green shoe option," the DIPAM Secretary said.

The OFS includes a base offer of 2 per cent equity, along with a green shoe option of an additional 2 per cent stake, which can be exercised depending on investor demand.

Indian Railway Finance Corporation is the dedicated financing arm of Indian Railways, primarily responsible for raising funds from domestic and international markets to finance railway infrastructure projects. Established in 1986, IRFC plays a critical role in mobilising resources for rolling stock acquisition and project expansion.

The proposed stake sale is part of the



government's broader disinvestment and asset monetisation strategy aimed at improving public sector efficiency, enhancing market discipline, and raising non-tax revenue. DIPAM, under the Ministry of Finance, oversees such stake sales in central public sector enterprises (CPSEs).

An Offer for Sale mechanism allows the government to dilute its stake in listed public sector companies through the stock exchanges in a transparent manner. The green shoe option provides flexibility to retain the right to sell additional shares in case of oversubscription.

Market analysts say investor response to the IRFC OFS will be closely watched, given the company's strategic role in financing railway expansion and its steady revenue model backed by long-term leasing arrangements with Indian Railways.

BMC tables record Rs 80,952 crore budget for 2026-27; Up Rs 6,500 crore from last year

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

MUMBAI, FEB 26: The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation on Wednesday presented its much awaited budget for the financial year 2026-27, proposing an unprecedented outlay of Rs 80,952.56 crore, marking the first time its annual budget has crossed the Rs 80,000 crore mark.

Infrastructure development and long term urban projects bag the bulk of the increased outlay.

The new budget reflects a sharp rise in spending, registering an increase of more than Rs 6,500 crore over the Budget Estimates for 2025-26, which stood at Rs 74,427.41 crore. With this expansion, the BMC continues to retain its position as the country's wealthiest municipal corporation.

A significant portion of the outlay has been directed towards capital expenditure. The corporation has proposed Rs 48,164.28 crore in capital spending for 2026-27, underlining its commitment to infrastructure development and long-term urban projects.

Among the major allocations, the Mumbai Sewage Disposal Project has been earmarked Rs 5,690 crore to upgrade waste-



water treatment facilities and enhance environmental sustainability. The Goregaon-Mulund Link Road project, aimed at improving east-west connectivity and reducing traffic congestion, has received a provision of Rs 2,650 crore.

The Coastal Road (North) project, which includes the Versova-Dahisar Link Road, and is expected to significantly improve north-south travel across the western suburbs, has been allocated Rs 4,000 crore.

In addition, the Roads Cement Concretisation Mega Project has been granted Rs 5,520.48 crore. The initiative seeks to replace asphalt roads with cement concrete surfaces to improve durability, cut maintenance expenditure and provide smoother travel conditions.

In comparison, the 2025-26 budget had set a then record outlay of Rs 74,427 crore, reflecting a 14 per cent increase over the preceding year. Of that, 58 per cent, amounting to Rs 43,162

crore, was dedicated to asset creation – the highest proportion in the BMC's history.

Key measures in the previous budget included the implementation of the Universal Footpath Policy with an allocation of Rs 100 crore, and the deployment of 100 battery-operated suction machines to address dust pollution.

The civic body had also expanded the Aapla Dawakhana network by adding 25 new clinics and three physiotherapy

centres.

For the first time, a proposal was introduced to levy tax on commercial establishments operating in slum areas, with the aim of generating Rs 350 crore in additional revenue. Additionally, the BMC had extended a grant of Rs 1,000 crore to the BEST undertaking to support the procurement of electric buses and to offset operational losses.

The budget proposals were formally submitted by Municipal Commissioner Bhusan Gagrani to Standing Committee Chairman Prabhakar Shinde.

Officials said the 2026-27 financial plan is built around a three-pronged strategy. With the Standing Committee resuming its role, the administration has renewed its focus on decentralisation at the ward level, responding to criticism that local requirements were being overshadowed by large city-wide infrastructure projects in recent years.

As of January 31, 2026, outstanding dues from various Maharashtra government departments, including grants-in-aid and property tax payments, have accumulated to Rs 10,948.58 crore, according to civic officials. UNI

India's D2C e-comm to grow 3x faster, hit USD 60 billion by 2030: Report

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, FEB 26: India's direct-to-consumer (D2C) e-commerce channel is projected to grow nearly three times faster than traditional online marketplaces, reaching up to USD 60 billion by 2030, according to a McKinsey & Company report released in February 2026.

The report, titled "The great unbundling of Indian e-commerce: MSMEs and the direct-to-consumer revolution," highlights that India's e-commerce penetration, currently estimated at 6-8 per cent of total retail, could rise to 9-11 per cent by the end of the decade.

Within this growth, the D2C channel is expected to increase from USD 10-12 billion in 2025 to USD 55-60 billion by 2030.

The analysis notes that micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are likely to drive nearly half of the incremental growth in e-commerce. India's retail ecosystem remains deeply fragmented, with nearly 60 million MSMEs contributing close to 30 per cent of national GDP, or roughly USD 1 trillion annually.

According to McKinsey's MSME survey conducted in November 2025, 53 per cent of small businesses expressed a preference for selling directly through websites and social commerce channels, while 47 per cent favoured marketplace platforms.

The report attributes the shift towards D2C models to factors such as lower platform fees, reduced fulfilment costs, better access to first-party customer data, and greater control over brand identity and consumer experience.

While D2C adoption accelerates, McKinsey indicates that large marketplaces, including Amazon, Flipkart, Meesho, and Myntra, are expected to remain central to India's digital commerce landscape, with marketplace sales projected to reach USD 90-100 billion by 2030.

Quick commerce is identified as the fastest-growing segment, with a projected compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 45 per cent, expanding from USD 5-6 billion in 2024 to USD 35-40 billion by 2030.

The report also underscores the rising importance of Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, which contribute over 60 per cent of India's e-commerce shipments. By 2030, India could add more than 140 million households earning above USD 10,000 annually, further expanding the digital consumer base.

McKinsey estimates the potential market for modular, unbundled digital commerce solutions tailored to MSMEs at USD 25-30 billion by 2030, representing roughly half of the projected D2C channel size. UNI

Tourism in India has moved from margins of policy to centre of national development: Gajendra Singh Shekhawat

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, FEB 26: Union Minister for Culture and Tourism, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said on Wednesday that Tourism, a sector which has been lurking on the margins of the national policy making for decades, has moved into the centre of national development under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Shekhawat said that the government understands that Tourism is not merely about travel, but is an activity which stimulates livelihood, entrepreneurship and inclusive growth of the economy. Inaugurating the 33rd annual edition of the South Asia Travel & Tourism Exchange (SATTE), a premier travel and tourism exposition of India, in the capital, Shekhawat said that the future belongs to countries which assimilate culture with commerce. He said that globally, tourists are not merely searching for destinations, they are searching for stories, ethnic and authentic cultures, wellness, human connections and experiences. India as a nation of living heritage and rich civilisation and a land of vibrant and thriving democracy is best suited to satiate the hunger for authentic experiences of travelers, he said.

India is not just a land of geographical diversity, but a country with diversity in terms of spiritual journeys, adventure, nature, etc., the minister said.

Speaking about the unprecedented infrastructural and other changes the country has seen over the last decade, Shekhawat said that the government is "transforming tourism through comprehensive national approach" with focus on conservation of heritage, protection of nature and empowering the communities.

India's greatest tourism assets are its culture and rich hospitality, the tourism minister said, adding that the focus is to build India as an "experience-led" destination and a global leader in "responsible tourism".

L&T bags major power transmission project orders in India, West Asia

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

MUMBAI, FEB 26: Larsen & Toubro (L&T) officially announced here today its Power Transmission & Distribution (PT&D) vertical has won a batch of engineering, procurement and construction orders aimed at strengthening electricity grid systems in domestic as well as international markets in West Asia (Middle East).

The newly announced contracts fall under the "major" classification, which, according to L&T's order classification table, means projects which are

valued anywhere between Rs 5,000 crore and Rs 10,000 crore. The scope of the orders covers establishing key grid system elements designed to enhance transmission capacity and network reliability, according to the company's official statement.

In India, L&T has received an order for the design, supply and construction of two 220 KV Gas Insulated Substations in the Durgapur-Raniganj-Asansol industrial belt located in West Bengal. The West Bengal project also includes associated transmission line segments equipped with ad-

vanced conductors and multi-circuit towers, the statement mentioned. These grid modernisation works are expected to provide a stable voltage profile and improve reliability of power networks serving infrastructure and industrial projects in the region.

According to the statement, L&T also won turnkey orders in West Asia (Middle East) from key utilities for the construction of five substations and over 250 km transmission lines. Located across three countries in the region, these projects are rated up to 500 kv. UNI

Air India targets 93 pc flights with new and uniform cabin experience by end of 2026

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, FEB 26: With 85 per cent of the narrow-body aircraft retrofitting completed and retrofitting of the legacy wide-body fleet already underway and poised to get completed later this year, Air India hopes to ensure that nearly 93 per cent of its fleet offer completely new cabin experiences by end of this year.

This was conveyed by Manish Puri, Head of Global Sales while addressing a me-

dia roundtable on the sidelines of SATTE Travel Expo on Wednesday. Puri said the airline is entering the next phase of transformation after focusing largely on internal systems over the past three years. "Last three years was predominantly internal changes," Puri said, adding that from 2026 onwards the focus will shift to "360-degree communication - informing the customer, partner, media, everybody what is now in store."

Puri said 2025 marked a

key milestone for the narrow-body fleet transformation. By October 2025, nearly 87 per cent of the 320/321 family aircraft had been retrofitted. "We completed almost 87 per cent of the retrofitting of the narrow body. Now we have 104 aircraft of Air India Express with the same three cabins - eight business class, 24 premium economy and 132 economy seats," he said.

The move has brought uniformity in configuration across domestic and short-

haul international routes such as Kuala Lumpur, Vietnam, Dubai and Doha, eliminating frequent seat and layout changes that earlier caused customer disruption. The narrowbody overhaul triggered the airline's November brand campaign, positioning the refreshed product as a visible sign that "change is in the air".

Talking about the wide-body legacy carriers operated by the company, Puri said that 26 Boeing 787 Dreamliners will undergo a comprehensive

refit programme now. "The first two have already gone for retrofitment and should be joining in March," he said, adding that all 26 aircraft will be fully upgraded by September-October, 2026.

The retrofit is extensive. "When it goes for retrofit, everything is scraped off. It's only the shell which remains. Everything put inside is brand new," he noted. Alongside retrofit, the airline is inducting factory-fresh, line-fit wide-bodies. UNI



In Chennai's Heat, Varun Found His Breaking Point

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

CUTTACK: There was a time that he wandered around Chennai with a guitar slung around his back. He was a teenager and had just seen Vaaranam Aayiram where one contributed to like 90% of the hero's drip.

Varun even attempted to get into the movie business. He has written entire scripts. In them, he would have imagined an all-is-lost moment. An important, often emotional, turning point that lays the protagonist low and sets up the rest of the film.

4-0-47-1 is not his.

But he's been there before.

Obviously, there is concern, prompted not merely by the loss that India sustained at the hands of South Africa but the manner in which it came about, where what they thought were their strengths - Varun's mystery spin, their top three's productivity - were rapidly undone, leaving their hopes of making the 2026 T20 World Cup semi-final in the balance. But there is another ICC trophy up for grabs in about 12 months. And this one goes back on the block in 2028. And so on and so on. It feels like the consequences of missing out on a title aren't as great as, say, almost dissolving your firm after one of its projects is waylaid by an act of god.

The floods in Chennai in 2016 did a lot of damage to an area called Mogappair. Varun was working in a building there. By the way, this was a time when he thought he

was a better architect than he was a bowler. He incurred significant financial losses.

This was a couple of years into the time when Varun found a great mentor and friend in KB Arun Karthik. Yep, that guy. He's fought for Varun. He's told him "cricket-ah vittrathe" [don't let cricket go] when Varun came back full of doubts from his first IPL, playing one game, bowling 18 balls and going for 35 runs.

He told his TNPL team owners in 2018 that if they didn't pick Varun in the player draft, he would stop playing for them. He tells us from watching Varun since 2014-15, "at the end of the day, it's all about bouncing back. If you press a spring hard, it bounces back even harder and I see Varun as that spring. You just have to keep working hard and Varun keeps working hard." Even when Varun started playing cricket - this was in his mid-20s and it was the tennis-ball variety - his focus was split because people watching those games would've bet on something happening the next ball - INR 500 for a six, INR 200 for a four. An announcement would ring out over the loudspeaker. A game within a game would draw all the players in.

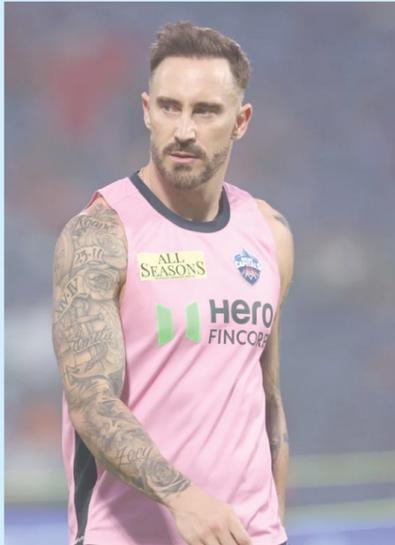
This is the part of the movie where the aimless hero crosses paths with a beautiful heroine. Falls for her. Tamil movie logic means it's love at first sight. He then goes completely overboard trying to learn everything about her. And should the feeling be mutual, it'd set him up with the confidence to do things that are completely bonkers.

Du Plessis to Abhishek: Be aware of opposition plans, keep out the noise

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

DUBAI: Faf du Plessis feels India opener Abhishek Sharma needs to be smarter with his shot selection to counter the tactics bowlers are deploying against him at the 2026 T20 World Cup.

Abhishek came into the tournament in red-hot form. But after four games, he has just 15 runs including three successive ducks. Teams have made smart use of powerplay field settings against him, often deploying both their deep fielders on the off side to counter his strongest area. Against USA, he was caught at deep cover for a first-ball duck,



and in his most recent outing against South Africa, he struggled against the slower ball, with two fielders out at deep backward point and deep cover.

"Tactically, the game has got so smart with analysts and the way that they are trying to get you out," du Plessis said on ESPNcricinfo Timeout. "What I've picked up of late with Abhishek is people are now putting a deep point out and a deep extra cover out because he's so good at hitting the ball through the off side."

"So the key is to make sure that when you get to the crease, you're aware of what the opposition is trying to do. How are they trying to get me out? And then your decision as a batter, am I still sticking to my strengths? Am I trying to whack the ball for six over point, over cover? Or am I trying to bring the risk a little bit down and hit the ball on the ground for one or two, or try to score in a different area? Knowing Abhishek, you're probably trying to whack it for six over cover because he hits the ball so clean. But that's the decisions you have to make as a batter."

Harry Brook restores order on another rowdy night for England

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

PALLEKELE: Sometimes you just need a good bouncer in your life. Not the kind that rears up off the pitch and follows you into your personal space. The kind that stands outside a nightclub and maintains a basic level of orderliness in otherwise disorderly environs. Harry Brook would know. He has been smacked by both.

It was in the early days of England's winter, way back on October 31, when Brook got into an altercation with a Wellington bouncer hours before going on to captain the third ODI against New Zealand. As with the cricketing variety, being struck by a bouncer can really change a guy. If you're smart, evasive action tends to be taken. Since arriving in mid-January in South Asia, about a week after this story emerged in the press, Brook has made it a point to stress team curfews, remaining level, and generally just laying off

them beers, lad.

Maybe it is because Brook has reflected in his weeks of relative sobriety on the value of a bouncer, that he pulled off such an outstanding impression of one against Pakistan. Because for a Tuesday night, it had got very loose, very early for England. The fielding was poor verging on appalling, even on a rough Pallekele outfield. On the boundary, balls were slipping through fingers, or being thwacked right into the boundary after fielders mistimed their slides. In the infield, Brook himself saw a catch burst through his fingers, only for a napping Tom Banton at long-off to let a ball he could have stopped go for four. Fielders were diving over balls, wild throws were coming in from the outfield. The night was going nowhere good, fast.

It was Brendon McCullum who approached Brook on the morning of the big game and, like a nightclub manager organising the



day's shifts, put a tattooed arm around Brook's shoulder and asked him if he'd like to be up front on the doors tonight... you know, go up and bat at No. 3. Brook very much ain't the kind to say no to this kind of offer. So up he went striding out at 0 for 1, before soon it became 17 for 2, before soon it

became 35 for 3, before soon it became 58 for 4, stumbling people just everywhere. It was down to Brook to lay the smack down, sort out a rowdy situation, and quickly become the most feared and domineering presence in his surrounds. He clobbered 100 off 51. The thinking from manage-

ment likely had numbers driving it. Brook had been dismissed by spin four times in the middle overs already this tournament. Against spin, his T20I strike rate was 129, and his average 18.76. Compare this to a career strike rate of 155. In the powerplay, however, Brook seemed to be more comfortable taking spin down, sweeping Mohammad Nawaz over fine leg, before crunching him through the covers, and dumping him over the straight boundary. By powerplay's end, Brook had 41 off 20. Twenty-one off seven had come off spin.

After the powerplay, Brook toned things down for a bit. Sometimes, it's a firm but gentle hand that is needed. This is where he began to rack up the twos, which he ran nine of in his innings. "As you saw in our fielding innings, it was tough to field on there, with the bobbly outfield," Brook said of his decision to look for twos during this spell.

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