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Eid Gift of Hope: LG Sinha Hands Over Jobs to 50 Kin of Terror Victims

Over 400 families already provided employment; administration vows continued support and zero tolerance for terrorism

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, MAR 15: Manoj Sinha on Sunday handed over appointment letters to the next of kin (NOKs) of 50 terror victims under the Compassionate Appointment Rules, describing the initiative as a "Sharansthl" (support) aimed at helping affected families rebuild their lives with dignity.

The Lieutenant Governor presented the appointment letters during a ceremony at Lok Bhavan Auditorium here, calling the gesture a special Eid gift for families who had endured years of pain and uncertainty.

"I am presenting 'Sharansthl' to ter-



ror victims and their families. Many families have been waiting for a long time. By providing employment, we are bringing a new ray of hope and offering them an opportunity to rebuild their lives," Sinha said while extending Eid greetings to the families.

He said the appointment letters symbolised justice, recognition and a new beginning for families who had lost their loved ones to terrorism.

Highlighting the government's efforts, the Lieutenant Governor said more than 400 families of terror victims have already been provided government jobs in Jammu and Kashmir. He said the

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J&K has seen significant progress since abrogation of Article 370: Athawale

HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

JAMMU, MAR 15: Asserting that Jammu and Kashmir has seen significant progress since the abrogation of Article 370, Union Minister Ramdas Athawale on Sunday said that enhanced infrastructure has improved mobility and boosted economic activities in the region.

Addressing a news conference here, Athawale, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Centre stands with J&K that has seen significant progress since the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019."

He stated that enhanced infrastructure has improved mobility and boosted economic activities in the region. "Rail connectivity, with better facilities has also expanded, including the introduction of the Vande Bharat Express. The Ministry of Railways continues to work actively on

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Pak Terrorist, Infiltrator Shot Dead in Uri Operation

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, MAR 15: Security forces foiled an infiltration attempt along the Line of Control in north Kashmir's Uri sector, killing a Pakistani terrorist during a joint anti-infiltration operation in Baramulla district, officials said on Sunday.

The operation was launched in the Buchhar area of Uri on

the intervening night of March 14 and 15 following specific intelligence input shared by the Jammu and Kashmir Police about a possible infiltration attempt.

According to the Army's Chinara Corps, alert troops deployed in the area noticed suspicious movement in thick vegetation and swiftly adjusted their ambush positions. When challenged by the troops, the infil-

trator opened indiscriminate fire, triggering a brief exchange of gunfire.

During the encounter, the terrorist was neutralised by the security forces, the Army said.

Officials said a cache of war-like stores was recovered from the site, including an AK rifle, pistols and a large quantity of ammunition.

Security forces have

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Fresh Snowfall Turns Doodhpathri White as Snowfall Envelops Kashmir Hills

Winter-like spell returns to parts of Valley as fresh snow and temperature dip transform scenic meadow

HT NEWS NETWORK

BUDGAM, MAR 15: Fresh snowfall blanketed the picturesque meadows of Doodhpathri in central Kashmir's Budgam district on Sunday, as a fresh spell of snow enveloped parts of the Kashmir Valley, bringing back winter-like conditions across the region.

Residents said light to moderate snowfall was witnessed in the higher reaches of Doodhpathri during the day, covering the



lush meadows and surrounding hills with a fresh layer of snow. The snowfall was accompanied by a noticeable drop in temperatures across several areas of the Valley.

The sudden change in weather comes amid fluctuating climatic conditions in Kashmir over the past few days due to the influence of western disturbances affecting the region.

The fresh snowfall transformed the scenic landscape of Doodhpathri, a

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First Batch of Stranded Indian Students from Iran Lands in Delhi

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, MAR 15: The first batch of over 70 Indian students, mostly from Jammu and Kashmir, along with several pilgrims stranded in Iran, safely arrived at Delhi's Indra Gandhi International Airport on Sunday after an arduous evacu-

ation journey, the Jammu and Kashmir Students Association (JKSA) said.

National Convenor Nasir Khuehami said the students returned via Armenia and Dubai following coordinated efforts between the Ministry of External Affairs and Indian missions in Tehran and Yerevan.

He said most of the students had

been studying at universities across Iran, including Urmia University of Medical Sciences and Tehran University of Medical Sciences. Several students had earlier been moved to safer locations by the Embassy of India, Tehran amid the deteriorating security situation in the region.

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Mutton prices rise ahead of Eid in Kashmir

HT NEWS NETWORK / KNS

SRINAGAR, MAR 15: Mutton is being sold above the officially fixed rate in several parts of Kashmir ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr, with consumers alleging that authorities have failed to enforce the government's price cap.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration has fixed the retail price of mutton at Rs 750 per kilogram. However, residents in several districts said the meat is being sold for as high as Rs 800 per kilogram in many markets.

Reports of overcharging have surfaced from Srinagar, Baramulla, Bandipora and other areas of the Valley, where customers said the price increase has become common in recent days as Eid approaches.

"We went to buy mutton for our household preparations for Eid, but the shopkeeper demanded Rs 800 per kg. When we mentioned

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Assembly Polls in 5 States & Puducherry on Apr 9 & 23

HT NEWS NETWORK

NEW DELHI, MAR 15: The Election Commission of India on Sunday announced the schedule for Assembly elections in five states and the Union Territory of Puducherry, with polling set to begin

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FASTag Annual Pass Fee Hiked to Rs. 3,075 from April 1

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, MAR 15: The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) will revise the FASTag Annual Pass fee to Rs. 3,075 for the financial year 2026-27, increasing it from the existing Rs. 3,000, with the new rate coming into effect from April 1.

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CS takes stock of key land records digitization initiatives



HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MAR 15: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo today chaired a com-

prehensive review meeting on the Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP), Survey of Villages and Mapping with Impro-

vised Technology in Village Areas (SVAMITVA), Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN)

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Government of Jammu & Kashmir

Witness a mesmerizing sea of colors with over 1.8 million tulips on display

Inauguration of

Tulip Festival 2026

Tulip Garden, Srinagar

by

Jenab Omar Abdullah
Hon'ble Chief Minister, J&K

March 16, 2026

Department of Floriculture, Gardens and Parks, J&K

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CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....

Eid Gift of Hope.....

administration is working in coordination with the police and district authorities to ensure that eligible families receive employment without delay.

Quoting a Kashmiri saying, Sinha said justice must translate into meaningful action. "Justice is not mere words on paper; it is a light that dispels darkness in hearts and brings a new ray of hope," he said, adding that the administration is committed to ensuring that families who suffered due to terrorism receive recognition and support.

Acknowledging the pain endured by victims' families since the 1990s, he said terrorism had taken away dreams and stability from thousands of households, but the government remains committed to helping them rebuild their lives.

"This is a matter of justice, not charity," the Lieutenant Governor said, adding that the administration and police will continue to ensure strict action against those responsible for promoting terrorism.

He also referred to the plight of families whose children were very young when tragedy struck, saying some victims were only 12 or 13 years old at the time. He said the administration will review pending cases, including those of families who have not yet received assistance, in the coming months.

Reaffirming the government's stance on security, Sinha said the administration's efforts are aligned with the principle of zero tolerance for terrorism advocated by Narendra Modi.

J&K has seen.....

strengthening the railway network," he added.

Athawale said that development in Jammu and Kashmir has accelerated after the abrogation of Article 370. "Increased investment, improved infrastructure and government initiatives have contributed to greater employment opportunities and faster development in the region," he said.

He informed that as of March 2026, 24 lakh 37 thousand bank accounts have been opened in the Union Territory under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, with a fund allocation of 1754.25 crore rupees released from 2014-26, enabling greater financial inclusion. "In addition, 12 lakh 79 thousand gas connections have been allotted in under Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala Yojana Yojana to improve access to clean cooking fuel. He also informed that 25 lakh nine thousand loans, with an allocation of 54267.91 crore rupees have been provided to beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana from 2015-26," the Union Minister said, adding, "As many as 35000 houses costing Rs 586 crore have been constructed in J&K under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) from 2016-26 to provide housing for all. Under Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, 3638 crore rupees have been provided from 2018-26, benefiting 19 lakh 73 thousand people. Around 94 lakh rupees have been released for 13 old age homes in Jammu and Kashmir from 2023-25."

Highlighting India's economic progress, Athawale stated that the country has moved from being the 10th largest economy to the 4th largest in the world, and is expected to soon become the third largest economy.

He noted that initiatives aimed at strengthening domestic manufacturing, including the Make in India initiative, and continued support for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have contributed to increased production and exports.

Athawale stated that the government will initiate a caste-based census to better understand the socio-economic conditions of different communities. He noted that the Scheduled Caste population constitutes approximately 16.6 per cent of the country's population.

The Minister highlighted that persons with disabilities (Divyangjan) in Jammu and Kashmir are now receiving reservation benefits following the abrogation of Article 370, thereby ensuring greater access to opportunities and social justice.

Athawale reiterated the Government's commitment to inclusive development, social justice and economic progress, while ensuring that the benefits of government initiatives reach all sections of society.

Responding to queries regarding global developments, he stated that fuel supply could be impacted due to the ongoing conflict involving US-Israel and Iran. However, he assured that the government has adequate fuel stock available, and is taking necessary steps to ensure uninterrupted supply—(KNO)

Pak Terrorist.....

continued the operation in the area to ensure no other infiltrators are present, officials added.

Fresh Snowfall.....

meadow widely known for its vast green grasslands during the summer season.

"The snowfall has covered the meadows and nearby hills, giving the area a winter-like appearance again," a local resident said, adding that visitors and locals were seen

capturing photographs of the snow-covered landscape.

Located about 42 kilometres from Srinagar, Doodhpathri is among the well-known tourist destinations in central Kashmir and attracts tourists during summer for its rolling meadows, pine forests and flowing streams.

Officials said occasional snowfall in higher altitude areas during early spring is not unusual when western disturbances bring moisture to the region.

Authorities have advised travellers and visitors to follow safety advisories while travelling to higher altitude tourist destinations.

Locals said the fresh snowfall, which has attracted parts of the Kashmir Valley, may entrap tourists in the coming days as snow-covered landscapes often draw visitors seeking winter scenery even in early spring.

First Batch.....

According to Khuehami, the students travelled by bus from different Iranian cities to Armenia, from where they boarded a Flydubai flight from Zvartnots International Airport in Yerevan to Dubai before taking a connecting flight to Delhi. The group landed at around 9:45 am on Sunday.

He said the evacuation was carried out through coordinated efforts of the Ministry of External Affairs, Indian missions in Tehran and Yerevan, and other authorities, with the students returning on commercial flights as part of the initial evacuation phase.

The JKSA expressed gratitude to the Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian Embassy in Tehran for facilitating the safe return of the students.

Khuehami said the development has brought much-needed relief to families across Kashmir who had been deeply concerned about the safety of their children. He urged the government to launch a full-scale evacuation operation, similar to those conducted during the Ukraine crisis and last year's conflict in Iran, to ensure that all remaining Indian students are brought home safely.

He added that AC sleeper buses arranged by the Jammu and Kashmir government were stationed at Terminal 3 of Indira Gandhi International Airport to assist the returning students and pilgrims in travelling onward to Jammu and Kashmir.

Many students, exhausted after days of continuous travel, opted to use the arranged buses for their journey home, while others booked connecting flights due to fatigue.

Mutton prices.....

the official rate, he said this is the price everywhere now," said Bashir Ahmad, a resident of Srinagar.

Several consumers alleged that the situation persists due to the absence of regular market inspections.

"In Bandipora markets also, mutton is being sold for more than the government rate. If the official price is Rs 750, then why are we forced to pay Rs 800?" said Abdul Rashid, a resident of the north Kashmir district.

Similar complaints were reported from parts of Baramulla, where locals said the prices have gradually increased in the run-up to Eid-ul-Fitr, when the demand for meat usually rises.

"Every year the same thing happens before Eid. Rates go up and there is hardly any checking in the markets," said a resident of Baramulla town.

Consumers said the difference of Rs 50 per kilogram may appear small, but it adds to the burden on families already facing high food prices.

"Eid is approaching and people have to buy meat for celebrations, but traders are taking advantage of the situation," said another resident in Srinagar.

Officials from the concerned departments were not immediately available for comment on the allegations of overpricing.

Eid-ul-Fitr, which marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan, is expected to be celebrated later this month depending on the sighting of the moon.

Mehraj Uddin Ganie, president of the All Jammu and Kashmir Wholesale Mutton Dealers Association, said reports of mutton being sold at Rs 800 per kilogram were "unfortunate" and demanded action against violators.

"If anyone is selling mutton above the official rate, strict action should be taken and such shops must be sealed," Ganie said.

He alleged that the government had not convened any meeting with mutton dealers ahead of Ramadan this year.

"Earlier, meetings used to be held with the administration before Ramadan to discuss rates and supply, but this year no such meeting was convened. It shows the government's lack of seriousness on the issue," he said.

Ganie also urged the authorities to ensure proper market monitoring to prevent overcharging. (KNS)

Assembly Polls.....

from April 9 and counting of votes scheduled for May 4.

Addressing a press conference, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar said,

the electoral exercise will cover Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry.

"The festival of elections, our pride, is going to be held in the states of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, and the Union Territory of Puducherry. The total electors are 17.4 crore and the assembly constituencies are 824. The number of polling stations is roughly 2.19 lakh and the electoral machinery would consist of around 25 lakh personnel," Kumar said.

Giving details of voters, he said Assam has around 2.25 crore electors, Kerala about 2.7 crore, Puducherry around 9.44 lakh, Tamil Nadu nearly 5.67 crore and West Bengal approximately 6.44 crore voters.

"We also have centenarian voters in all these states and UTs. A total of about 2.18 lakh polling stations will be set up, most of them in rural areas. The average number of voters per polling station will be between 750 and 850," he added.

The CEC further said model polling stations will be established across the states and the UT, including special polling stations managed by women and also those run by persons with disabilities. "Webcasting will be done in 100 percent polling stations," he said.

According to the poll schedule announced by the Commission, voting in Assam, Kerala and Puducherry will be held on April 9, while Tamil Nadu will go to polls on April 23. In West Bengal, polling will be conducted in two phases on April 23 and April 29. The counting of votes for all states and the UT will take place on May 4, the Commission said. (KNC)

FASTag Annual.....

According to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, the revised fee has been fixed in accordance with the provisions of the National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rules, 2008.

The revised annual pass will apply to eligible non-commercial vehicles equipped with a valid FASTag electronic toll collection system in India and will remain valid across nearly 1,150 fee plazas on National Highways and National Expressways across the country.

Officials said the annual pass facility has been witnessing increasing adoption among private vehicle owners, with the number of users currently exceeding 56 lakh. The pass allows motorists to pay a one-time annual fee, eliminating the need for frequent recharges while enabling smooth travel through toll plazas.

Under the scheme, the pass remains valid for one year or up to 200 toll plaza crossings, whichever comes earlier. Authorities said the system is designed to provide a convenient and cost-effective travel option for regular highway commuters.

The activation process has been kept simple and fully digital. After paying the one-time fee through the Rajmarg Yatra app or the official website of the National Highways Authority of India, the annual pass gets activated on the existing FASTag linked to the vehicle within two hours.

The FASTag Annual Pass was launched on Independence Day, August 15, 2025, and the government said the initiative has received a strong response since its introduction, highlighting its growing popularity among highway users.

CS takes.....

and National Geospatial Knowledge-based Land Survey of urban Habitations (NAKSHA) here.

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, Shaleen Kabra; Secretary Revenue Department, Kumar Rajeev Ranjan; Divisional Commissioners of Jammu and Kashmir divisions; and Deputy Commissioners who joined through video conferencing from their respective District Headquarters, and other concerned officers.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Secretary underscored the transformative potential of these land digitisation initiatives, drawing a parallel with some of India's most successful digital revolutions. "These initiatives are going to revolutionise governance just like the success of UPI and other ambitious programmes like Agristack. We are witnessing a technological revolution and Jammu and Kashmir must be an active and leading part of it," he observed.

Emphasising the direct public benefit of the ongoing digitisation drive, he noted that a great number of public grievances pertain to land-related issues and these will be resolved as the digitisation process reaches completion. "This is a great service to the masses. It will bring immense convenience to the public and usher in new arenas for development and governance," the Chief Secretary said.

Speaking on the occasion the Additional Chief Secretary (Financial Commissioner, Revenue) Shaleen Kabra, highlighted the transformative potential of land records digitisation, describing it as a major step towards transparent, efficient and citizen-centric governance. He emphasized that the initiative will significantly improve accessibility, accuracy and reliability of land records, thereby reducing disputes and enhancing

public trust in the revenue administration.

Stressing the importance of maintaining high standards, he underscored the need for rigorous quality checks at every stage of the process to ensure that the digitised records remain error-free and authentic. He called upon the concerned revenue officers down the line to exercise due diligence and accountability so that the digitisation exercise results in a robust, reliable and future-ready land records management system.

Presenting the progress made under DILRMP, the Administrative Secretary, Revenue, Kumar Rajeev Ranjan apprised the meeting that 98 percent of Khasras across the Union Territory have been digitised and approved, with 97 percent of villages completing the first-level freezing process.

Additionally he gave out that in over 5,401 grievance camps have been organised at the village level for public reading of Jamabandis, during which over 52,000 non-quasi judicial and more than 5,700 quasi judicial grievances have been recorded and are being addressed. Final freezing of the updated Jamabandis 2026 has been targeted for completion by 31st March this year.

Regarding ULPIN or Bhu-Aadhar, the meeting was apprised that over 20.56 lakh Unique Land Parcel Identification Numbers have been generated for 3,320 villages so far. Under the digitisation of cadastral maps, 6,518 out of 6,857 villages, accounting for 95.2 percent, have been geo-referenced.

Moreover it was divulged 7.28 crore

revenue documents including Jamabandis, Mutations and Girdawari records have been scanned and uploaded on the Land Records Information System (LRIS). The NAKSHA programme for creation of land records in urban habitations is also progressing, with aerial survey, ORI generation and ground truthing completed for Bishnah.

The Chief Secretary acknowledged the significant ground covered but maintained that the remaining targets are well within reach. "We have covered a lot of ground and progressed greatly. We have just so much more to finish, but the targets are achievable," he said, adding that many states are already leading in these endeavours and J&K must keep pace.

He gave several specific directions for resolution of deadlocks and tough situations being encountered during the digitisation process. He called for strict adherence to rules at every step, cautioning officers to avoid complications and focus on weeding out illegal mutations. "We have to take every step based on rules. Let us put in concerted efforts to weed out illegal mutations and purify revenue records," he directed.

The Chief Secretary asked the Divisional Commissioners to personally monitor progress under each component and actively guide the Deputy Commissioners for effective on-ground implementation. Specific timeline-based targets were assigned to all districts for completion of pending milestones.

Stationery Kits distributed among students under BBBP in Shopian

HT NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN, MAR 15: Sankalp Hub for Empowerment of Women, Mission Shakti Shopian organized a stationery distribution drive among school students as part of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative.

The programme was aimed at promoting education, encouraging school participation, and providing essential learning materials to young students.

During the drive, stationery kits were distributed among students of Government Boys Upper Primary School Sedow, Government Primary School Parraypora Sedow, Boys Upper Primary School Rangmarg Sedow, and Government Upper Primary School Checki Sedow.

On the occasion, officials



from the Sankalp Hub for Empowerment of Women interacted with students and teachers and emphasized the vital role of education in building a progressive and empowered society.

They also highlighted the core message of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative, stressing the importance of ensuring equal educational opportunities and nurturing the potential of every child.

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Deputy Chief Minister reaffirms commitment towards strengthening road network, seamless accessibility

Lays foundation stones for multiple road projects, holds public outreach programmes in Nowshera

HT NEWS NETWORK

RAJOURI, MAR 15: Reaffirming commitment towards strengthening road connectivity and seamless accessibility for the people, Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary today laid the foundation stones for several road projects in Nowshera Constituency of Rajouri district.

During his day-long visit, the Deputy Chief Minister held an extensive public outreach programmes in the Nowshera area to listen to public grievances and developmental concerns.

He laid the foundation stone for construction and maintenance of the link road from Auto Stand Kheri to Masjid Potha East in Block Seri of Rajouri district under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY). The project, spanning 4.0 kilometre, has been sanctioned at an estimated cost of Rs. 927.62 lakh and is expected to significantly improve the connectivity and facilitate smoother movement for the local population.

On the occasion, the Deputy



Chief Minister also laid foundation stones for two additional road projects including "Dwaka to High School Moh Potha" and "Gania to Patli (Link Road)" aimed at strengthening the rural road infrastructure and enhancing access to essential services in the region.

Following the foundation stone

laying ceremonies, the Deputy Chief Minister held public outreach programmes where he interacted with the local residents and listened to their grievances and suggestions regarding developmental works.

Key issues raised by the public included construction of a road from Mangal Devi to Shamshan

Ghat, forest clearance for developmental projects, scarcity of drinking water, establishment of a library at Panchayat Gagrote, construction of a community hall at Gania, development of a mini sports stadium near Gania School and dilapidated condition of the road from Chowki to Langhar. Addressing the gathering, the

Deputy Chief Minister reiterated the government's commitment towards accelerating developmental works and ensuring that basic amenities reach every corner of the region. He assured the public that the issues raised during the outreach programmes would be taken up with the concerned departments for prompt redressal. He also directed the officers to prepare development plans in consultation with the local population so that projects reflect the genuine needs and priorities of the people.

Later, the Deputy Chief Minister undertook local visits and engagements in Nowshera, interacting with the residents and reviewing developmental requirements of the area.

Among others present on the occasion were ADC Nowshera Pritam Lal Thapa, DFO Nowshera Shweta Deonia, SE PWD (R&B) Devi Dayal, DDE Mohd Nawaz Choudhary, ACD Auqil Naveed, ALC Pradyot Gupta, EXEN PWD (R&B) Sarwar Mehmood, besides other district and sectoral officers and a large number of local residents.

Iftar party programme for Visually Impaired Students Held at Blind School Baramulla

■ UMAR RASHID

BARAMULLA, MAR 16: Women Wing of the Jammu and Kashmir Employees Coordination Committee (JKECC) Baramulla on Sunday organised an Iftar party for students of Blind School Baramulla, highlighting the theme of humanity and brotherhood with sharing and care. The programme was organised under the leadership of Women's Wing President Asiya Iqbal.

Several prominent personalities attended the event including Director School Education Kashmir Nasir Ahmad Wani, Chairman JK Teachers Association Shah Fayaz, General Secretary Hatim Qayoom,



Provincial President JKTA/JKECC Ishaq Ahmad Shah, District President JKTA Altaf Hussain Bhat, Vice President JKTA Mushtaq Ahmad Bhat, Bar Association Baramulla President Advocate Neelofar Masood, Sameer Ahmad Khan, Manzoor Ahmad Rather and others.

Speaking on the occasion, the guests emphasised the importance of supporting specially-abled students and spreading the message of compassion and unity in society. They said that the visually impaired students of Blind School Baramulla require various facilities, including improvement in school infrastructure, building support and other essential resources.

The speakers appealed to society, government departments and philanthropists to extend help and support to the institution so that these students can receive better educational opportunities and facilities.

The programme concluded with the Iftar gathering where students and guests shared the meal together, symbolising the spirit of Ramadan, humanity and brotherhood.

RISE Coaching Institute Hosts Iftar Gathering in Srinagar

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, MAR 15: Rise Coaching Institute hosted an Iftar gathering in Srinagar, bringing together people from different walks of life to share the spirit of the holy month of Ramadan.

The event witnessed the participation of educators, officers, and members of the local community



who gathered to break their fast together.

The gathering aimed to promote a sense of unity, compassion, and togetherness that defines the true essence of Ramadan.

Participants appreciated the initiative taken by the institute, stating that such gatherings not only strengthen social bonds but also provide an opportunity for meaningful interaction among people from diverse backgrounds.

The head of the institute, Salman Shahid (an IITian), expressed gratitude to all the guests who attended the Iftar and emphasized the importance of community engagement and mutual respect.

He said that organizing such events helps foster goodwill and reinforces the values of sharing and solidarity during the sacred month of Ramadan.

DMO Kupwara-Led QRT Cracks Down on Illegal Mining, 144 MTs Muck Seized

■ DR. AB QAYOOM

KUPWARA, MAR 15: In a significant move to curb illegal mining activities in the district, a Quick Response Team (QRT) headed by District Mineral Officer Kupwara, Mumtaz Ahmad Shah, conducted a raid at Geerhatti and seized around 144 metric tons of Nallah muck that had been illegally stocked near a marriage hall in the Goose area. The operation was carried out following specific information about unauthorised mining and storage of construction material extracted from a nearby Nallah. The QRT team included the Naib Tehsildar Headquarters Kupwara, a

police party from Bazar Police Station, and members of the Mining Department's enforcement squad.

During the raid, the team identified several individuals allegedly involved in the illegal mining activity at the site. Officials said the seized material was subsequently handed over to Bazar Police for further legal proceedings against those responsible. Officials said that the crackdown is part of the district administration's ongoing efforts to prevent the unlawful extraction and transportation of minerals, which has been causing environmental damage and loss to government revenue. It is pertinent to mention

that the Quick Response Team (QRT) the first of its kind in the Kashmir province was constituted earlier by Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, to strengthen enforcement against illegal mining across the district. The proactive functioning of the QRT has been widely appreciated by the public and various stakeholders, as it plays a crucial role in protecting natural resources and maintaining ecological balance in the region. Authorities have reiterated their commitment to continue strict action against those involved in illegal mining and warned that such activities will not be tolerated.

THREE DRUG PEDDLERS HELD IN KULGAM, CONTRABAND RECOVERED IN TWO NDPS CASES

■ FAROOQ RATHER

KULGAM, MAR 15: In its continued crackdown against drug trafficking, Kulgam Police on Sunday arrested three alleged drug peddlers in two separate operations and recovered contraband substances from their possession.

According to police officials, during a routine naka checking at Khudwani on the National Highway, two individuals attempted to evade the checking party but were swiftly apprehended by the police. Upon their search, police recovered 1.2 kilograms of charas from the possession of Ranjeet Singh, son of Dilbeer Singh, a resident of Maratal Wandi, Amritsar. Additionally, 0.86 grams of brown sugar and 57

grams of charas were recovered from Jobin, son of Major Singh, a resident of Meno Wali, Amritsar.

In connection with the seizure, FIR No. 24/2026 under sections 8/20/21 of the NDPS Act has been registered at Police Station Qaimoh, and both accused have been taken into custody for further investigation.

In another operation, police during naka checking at Khrewan-Lassipora intercepted a suspicious person who tried to flee after noticing the police party. However, the alert naka team managed to apprehend him tactfully. During the search, 205 grams of charas-like substance in powder form was recovered from his possession.

The accused has been identified as Idrees Ahmad Ganai, son of Ghulam Mohammad Ganai, a resident of Furrar. In this regard, a case under relevant sections of the NDPS Act has been registered at Police Station Qazigund, and further investigation has been initiated.

Meanwhile, Kulgam Police reiterated its commitment to eliminating the menace of drugs from society and urged the public, particularly parents and youth, to cooperate with law enforcement agencies by sharing any information related to drug peddling or substance abuse. Police assured that the identity of informants would be kept strictly confidential.

Renowned Social Activist & Youth Leader Muzamil Mehmood Greets People on the Eve of Shab-e-Qadr

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, MAR 15: Renowned social activist and youth leader Muzamil Mehmood has extended his warm greetings to the people on the eve of the sacred night of Shab-e-Qadr, observed during the holy month of Ramadan.

In his message, Muzamil Mehmood said that Shab-e-Qadr, also known as the Night of Power, holds immense spiritual significance for Muslims around the world. He said this blessed night is a time for prayers, reflection, and seeking forgiveness from



Almighty Allah. He urged people to make sincere supplications for peace, prosperity, and well-being of humanity.

He further appealed to the people,

especially the youth, to utilize this holy night for spiritual growth and to strengthen the values of compassion, unity, and brotherhood. He also encouraged everyone to remember the poor, needy, and underprivileged members of society and extend a helping hand so that they too can experience the blessings of the holy month.

Muzamil Mehmood prayed for lasting peace, harmony, and progress in Jammu and Kashmir and hoped that this sacred occasion would bring hope, positivity, and prosperity to every household.

Nasha Mukh Khel Mela Held at GHSS Seri Khawaja to Promote Drug-Free Lifestyle

■ FAROOQ RATHER

POONCH, MAR 15: The Department of Social Welfare Poonch organised a "Nasha Mukh Khel Mela" at Government Higher Secondary School Seri Khawaja under the Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan, spreading the message "Say Yes to Life, No to Drugs."

More than 300 student athletes enthusiastically participated in various sports competitions including Kabaddi, Kho Kho, Volleyball, Badminton and Shot Put. The participants displayed remarkable energy, discipline and sportsmanship during the event. The

programme was organised on the directions of Deputy Commissioner Poonch Ashok Kumar Sharma (JKAS) who has emphasised conducting such awareness and youth engagement activities in rural and far-flung areas. Earlier, the department had also organised a similar event at Government Higher Secondary School Chandak.

The Principal of the institution, former PRI members, local youth and residents appreciated the initiative of the Social Welfare Department, stating that such activities help channelise the energy of young people towards sports and healthy lifestyles, keeping them

away from drug abuse. A large number of locals witnessed the mela and encouraged the participating athletes. Refreshments were also provided to all participants. District Social Welfare Officer Khalil A. Bandy (JKAS) welcomed the guests and thanked the school administration, staff, students and athletes for their cooperation and active participation.

The Social Welfare Department Poonch has been actively organising awareness drives, youth engagement programmes and sports activities across the district to combat drug abuse and promote a healthy and productive lifestyle among the youth.

HT EDITORIAL

When Seasons Lose Their Rhythm in Jammu and Kashmir

The weather in Jammu and Kashmir is no longer following the rhythm people once knew. Winters that once brought steady snowfall now pass with long dry spells, only to be interrupted by sudden bursts of heavy precipitation. Springs arrive earlier or later than expected, summers witness unexpected rain, and autumns increasingly carry signs of climatic uncertainty.

These shifting patterns are not isolated events but part of a broader climate trend affecting the Himalayan region. Scientists point to changing global temperatures and the growing unpredictability of western disturbances—the weather systems that traditionally bring winter snow to the Valley—as key factors behind these irregularities. As these systems fluctuate in intensity and timing, the region experiences delayed snowfall, unseasonal rain, and abrupt temperature swings.

The consequences are already visible on the ground. Farmers and orchardists, whose livelihoods depend on predictable seasons, are struggling with early flowering, frost damage, and crop diseases caused by untimely rainfall. The delicate balance that supports apple orchards, saffron fields, and other horticultural produce is increasingly under strain.

Tourism, another pillar of the region's economy, also depends heavily on stable weather. Uncertain snowfall affects winter tourism while sudden weather disruptions during peak seasons create challenges for travel and hospitality sectors.

Equally concerning is the rising frequency of extreme weather events such as intense rainfall and localized flooding. In a mountainous region with fragile terrain, such incidents increase the risks of landslides and infrastructure damage.

The changing climate of Jammu and Kashmir serves as a reminder of how vulnerable the Himalayan ecosystem is to environmental shifts. Strengthening climate research, improving weather forecasting, and adopting sustainable environmental practices will be crucial steps in preparing the region for an increasingly uncertain climate future.

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Rivers in Kashmiri Literature and Life



■ DR. RATAN BHATTACHARJEE

Literature often reflects this intimate relationship between rivers and daily existence. In Kashmiri poetry, the river frequently appears as a companion of human emotions. Poets describe lovers meeting on the banks of a river, or the reflection of mountains in its calm surface. Sometimes the river represents longing and separation. Just as the river travels endlessly toward distant lands, human life is also seen as a journey filled with hope and uncertainty. In many poems the sound of flowing water becomes a metaphor for the passage of time and the fleeting nature of human happiness. The rivers of Kashmir have always flowed through two landscapes at once: the physical valley of mountains, meadows, and orchards, and the inner landscape of literature, memory, and imagination. From the ancient Sanskrit chronicles to modern Kashmiri, Urdu, and English writings, rivers have appeared not merely as geographical features but as living presences that shape the rhythm of life and the emotional universe of the people. The river is not only water moving through land; it is history moving through time. In Kashmir, the story of rivers is inseparable from the story of civilization, culture, spirituality, and artistic expression.

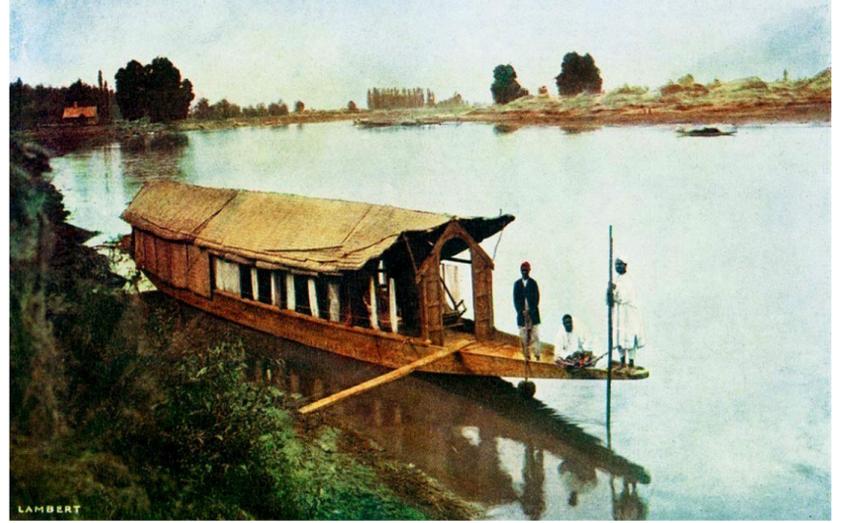
The rivers of Kashmir left a profound impression on Rabindranath Tagore, whose visits to the valley in the early twentieth century deeply influenced his reflections on nature, beauty, and civilization. During his travels through Kashmir, Tagore encountered the serene flow of the Jhelum River, historically known as Vitasta. Although Tagore did not write an entire poem solely devoted to the Jhelum, his letters, travel reflections, and lyrical observations contain evocative descriptions of Kashmiri rivers that reveal how deeply the landscape touched his imagination.

Tagore's writings on Kashmir appear primarily in his travel letters and essays written during his visits in 1915 and later years. These reflections combine poetic imagery with philosophical meditation. When Tagore wrote about the rivers of Kashmir, he saw them not merely as geographical features but as living expressions of nature's quiet harmony. The Jhelum flowing through Srinagar particularly fascinated him because of its calm and reflective character. Unlike the turbulent Himalayan rivers that rush through narrow gorges, the Jhelum moves slowly through the valley, almost like a thoughtful traveler. In one of his reflective passages about Kashmir, Tagore describes how the river flows through the city like a silent companion of human life. Boats glide gently along its surface, wooden houses lean over the banks, and chinar trees cast trembling shadows upon the water. The scene seemed to him like a painting in motion. In his poetic language he suggested that the river carries the daily life of the people with quiet dignity, reflecting both the beauty and the simplicity of Kashmiri existence.

The river nourishes the land, shapes the culture, and inspires the imagination. It reflects both the beauty and the complexity of Kashmiri existence. As long as the rivers continue their journey through the valley, they will remain an inexhaustible source of inspiration for writers and a vital element in the collective life of Kashmir. The earliest literary reference to the river appears in the Nilamata Purana, an ancient Sanskrit text that describes the sacred geography of Kashmir. According to legend, the river was created by the goddess Parvati to drain the waters of the mythical lake that once covered the valley. Thus, from the beginning, the river was seen as a divine force that made life in Kashmir possible. The mythological imagination transformed the river into a symbol of both creation and purification. Among the rivers that define Kashmir, the Jhelum occupies a central place. Known in ancient texts as Vitasta, it flows gently through the valley like a quiet narrator of centuries.

The Jhelum also occupies an important place in Kalhana's Rajatarangini, the famous twelfth-century historical chronicle of Kashmir. Kalhana often describes the river while narrating the rise and fall of kings, the building of cities, and the movement of armies. In his narrative the river becomes a silent witness to the drama of history. Known in ancient texts as Vitasta, it flows gently through the valley like a quiet narrator of centuries. The river became a natural highway for trade and transportation. Boats carrying fruits, vegetables, timber, and handicrafts once moved regularly along its waters. The image of boats gliding across the river, especially the traditional shikaras, has become one of the most enduring symbols of Kashmiri life.

The mystic poets of Kashmir also drew deeply from the imagery of rivers. Lal Ded, the fourteenth-century mystic poet, often used natural symbols to express spiritual truths. Although her verses are brief and aphoristic, they reflect a profound awareness of nature. The river in her symbolic universe



represents the path of spiritual realization. Just as a river moves toward the sea, the soul moves toward union with the divine. The journey may pass through many obstacles and bends, but the ultimate destination remains the same. Another great spiritual poet of Kashmir, Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Noorani, known as Nund Rishi, also expressed deep reverence for nature. In his poetic sayings the harmony between human beings and the natural world becomes an ethical principle. Rivers are part of this sacred harmony. They provide water for fields and orchards, sustain villages, and inspire humility in those who observe their quiet power. In this sense the river is both a physical resource and a spiritual teacher.

In modern Kashmiri literature the symbolism of rivers has become even richer and more complex. Writers often portray rivers as witnesses to the social and political transformations of the valley. The river that once carried boats filled with goods now carries memories of conflict, migration, and loss. Yet the river continues to flow, reminding people that life cannot remain frozen in sorrow. In many contemporary poems the river becomes a metaphor for resilience and survival. Urdu literature written in Kashmir has also drawn heavily upon river imagery. The lyrical tradition of Urdu poetry, with its emphasis on emotion and reflection, easily accommodates the symbolism of flowing water. The landscape itself seems to participate in the emotional life of the people. In addition to poetry, rivers appear prominently in Kashmiri fiction. Short stories and novels often use the river as a setting where human relationships unfold. A meeting on a bridge, a journey in a boat, or a solitary walk along the riverbank becomes a moment of introspection for characters. The quiet flow of water encourages reflection on the complexities of life. The river also plays an important role in the economic life of Kashmir. Agriculture, which has long been the backbone of the valley's economy, depends on the irrigation provided by rivers and canals. The fertile fields of rice, saffron, and vegetables owe their abundance to the water that flows from the mountains. In traditional Kashmiri culture the river was therefore associated with prosperity and sustenance. Festivals and seasonal rituals often acknowledged the blessings of water. Folk songs and oral traditions of Kashmir preserve many references to rivers. In these songs the river often appears as a confidant to whom lovers express their feelings. A girl waiting for her beloved may speak to the river as if it were a living friend. She asks the river to carry her message across distant lands or to reflect the face of the one she longs for. Such poetic expressions reveal the emotional closeness between people and the natural world.

Travel writers and visitors to Kashmir have also been captivated by the rivers of the valley. During the nineteenth century many European travelers described the beauty of the Jhelum and the surrounding landscape. Their writings helped create the image of Kashmir as a paradise on earth. The slow movement of boats along the river, the reflections of chinar trees, and the snow-covered peaks in the distance produced scenes that seemed almost dreamlike. These descriptions contributed to the romantic image of Kashmir in global literature.

However, the rivers of Kashmir have also witnessed suffering and tragedy and blood and water flowed at the same time for long. The terrorists once killed many innocent people and soldiers of the Indian Army. Floods have periodically devastated villages and towns, reminding people of the unpredictable power of nature. The great flood of 2014, for example, left deep scars in the memory of the valley. Literature responding to such events often portrays the river as both giver and taker of life. This dual nature adds complexity to the symbolic meaning of rivers in Kashmiri writing. The cultural landscape of Kashmir cannot be imagined without its bridges. The old wooden bridges over the Jhelum in Srinagar are architectural landmarks as well as cultural symbols. Each bridge has its own history and stories. They connect neighborhoods, markets, and communities, but they also connect

past and present. In everyday life, rivers have always been the lifeline of the Kashmiri people. The city of Srinagar grew around the curves of the Jhelum, with wooden houses leaning toward the water and bridges connecting the two sides of the city. The river became a natural highway for trade and transportation. The image of boats gliding across the river, especially the traditional shikaras, has become one of the most enduring symbols of Kashmiri life.

Urdu literature written in Kashmir has also drawn heavily upon river imagery. The lyrical tradition of Urdu poetry, with its emphasis on emotion and reflection, easily accommodates the symbolism of flowing water. Poets describe the river under moonlight, the trembling reflection of stars on its surface, and the gentle sound of waves touching the banks. These images create a mood of melancholy beauty, which is characteristic of much Kashmiri poetry. The landscape itself seems to participate in the emotional life of the people. In addition to poetry, rivers appear prominently in Kashmiri fiction. Short stories and novels often use the river as a setting where human relationships unfold. A meeting on a bridge, a journey in a boat, or a solitary walk along the riverbank becomes a moment of introspection for characters. The quiet flow of water encourages reflection on the complexities of life. Through such scenes writers explore themes of love, memory, exile, and belonging.

The river also plays an important role in the economic life of Kashmir. Agriculture, which has long been the backbone of the valley's economy, depends on the irrigation provided by rivers and canals. The fertile fields of rice, saffron, and vegetables owe their abundance to the water that flows from the mountains. In traditional Kashmiri culture the river was therefore associated with prosperity and sustenance. Festivals and seasonal rituals often acknowledged the blessings of water. Folk songs and oral traditions of Kashmir preserve many references to rivers. In these songs the river often appears as a confidant to whom lovers express their feelings. Travel writers and visitors to Kashmir have also been captivated by the rivers of the valley. During the nineteenth century many European travelers described the beauty of the Jhelum and the surrounding landscape. Their writings helped create the image of Kashmir as a paradise on earth. The slow movement of boats along the river, the reflections of chinar trees, and the snow-covered peaks in the distance produced scenes that seemed almost dreamlike. These descriptions contributed to the romantic image of Kashmir in global literature.

Tagore often interpreted landscapes in symbolic and philosophical ways. Observing the Jhelum, he wrote that the river appears to move "as if it were listening to the mountains." This striking metaphor reflects his belief that nature forms a continuous dialogue between land, water, sky, and human consciousness. The mountains surrounding the valley seem ancient and silent, while the river becomes their moving voice. Through such imagery Tagore transforms the Kashmiri landscape into a living poem. The emotional significance of rivers in Kashmiri culture can also be understood through the concept of nostalgia. For many Kashmiris who live away from their homeland, memories of rivers evoke a deep sense of longing. Thus, the relationship between rivers, literature, and life in Kashmir is profoundly interconnected. The river nourishes the land, shapes the culture, and inspires the imagination. It reflects both the beauty and the complexity of Kashmiri existence. As long as the rivers continue their journey through the valley, they will remain an inexhaustible source of inspiration for writers and a vital element in the collective life of Kashmir.

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Celebrating the Life of Prophet (PBUH)



■ **MOHAMMAD ARFAT WANI**

On 12 March 2026, Ramzaan College of Nursing and Paramedical Sciences, Galander Pampore, organized a memorable and spiritually uplifting Seerat Conference dedicated to reflecting upon the blessed life, noble character, and timeless teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The event brought together students and faculty in an atmosphere filled with reverence, learning, and inspiration. The conference served as a meaningful reminder that the Seerah of the Prophet is not merely a historical account but a complete guide for humanity. His life teaches compassion, justice, patience, humility, honesty, and kindness toward others. For students preparing themselves for the noble profession of healthcare and service to humanity, the message of the Seerah carried particular significance. The gathering encouraged participants to understand that professional excellence must always be accompanied by moral integrity, sincerity of intention, and a deep commitment to serving humanity with compassion and dignity.

The success of this significant event is the outcome of genuine dedication and thoughtfulness of the respected faculty members. Mr. Mudasir Maqbool, Tutor of the Department of Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing at RCON, Mr. Zahid Majeed, Tutor of the department of pediatrics at RCON, and Ms. Mehak Nabi, Tutor at RCON, played a vital role in managing the event. All the segments of the program were conducted successfully and meaningfully under the guidance of the above-mentioned individuals. Among the above-mentioned individuals, Ms. Mehak Nabi deserves special appreciation as she played the role of the anchor of the whole program. She conducted the event with remarkable confidence, clarity, and elegance. While conducting the event, she did not only limit herself to the introduction of the events, but she skillfully linked the segments of the program with the help of the Holy Quran, authentic Hadith, and thoughtfulness from the Seerah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

The program started with the recitation of the Holy Quran by Hafiz Faheem Nazir, who recited a complete Ruku from Surah An Naziat with remarkable beauty and devotion. The beautiful recitation filled the hall with a peaceful ambiance. The recitation of the Holy Quran provided a beautiful platform for the conference, as it reminds everyone of the close relationship between the teachings of the Holy

Quran and the glorious life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as his life reflects the practical implementation of the teachings of the Holy Quran.

After this recitation, I, Wani Arfat, was invited to recite a Naat on the praise of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This particular event has a special significance for me because it was for the first time in my life that I had to recite a Naat before an audience. Earlier, when our respected teacher had asked the class to come forward and recite a Naat on the occasion of the conference, the whole class remained quiet. This might be because everyone had a little hesitation. However, keeping in view the importance of the occasion, I took up the challenge despite having a little nervousness due to my inexperience. On the day of the conference, I was guided by Mr. Mudasir Maqbool, who suggested that I should select a more appropriate Naat for the occasion. Out of his generosity, he had even composed a beautiful Naat for the occasion and had shared it with me just a few hours before the conference started.

When the opportunity knocked, I stepped onto the stage with mixed feelings of nervousness and devotion. With utmost sincerity and heartfelt devotion, I recited the Naat, which was titled "Door rood daag rood seenan sannen sultan channen wand-haa paan." Despite it being my first experience with the recitation of Naats in front of people, the experience turned out to be extremely significant and unforgettable for me. It not only helped me overcome my fear, but it also filled my heart with spiritual satisfaction. It also taught me how encouragement and devotion can encourage a person to step forward with courage in new circumstances.

Following this, an enlightening Dars-e-Quran by Mr. Mudasir Maqbool shed light on the ever-relevant guidance provided by the Holy Quran. He explained to the students the relevance of the Quran's guidance in today's life. With his clear and elucidatory speech, he focused on the importance of the Quran's guidance not only for spiritual growth but for ethical behavior and harmonious living. He informed the students that by following the moral guidance provided by the Quran, they can become a part of a just and respectful society.

Following this session, Mr. Zahid Majeed addressed the audience with an inspiring and thought-provoking speech. He talked to the audience about those blessed people who will be granted the special grace and shade of Allah on the Day of Judgment. He explained to the audience with sincerity and clarity the noble traits that will lead a person to this divine grace. These traits include honest worship, honesty in speech, patience during hardships, generosity in charity, remembering Allah, kind treatment with parents, service to humanity, and promotion of peace and justice.

The honored Principal, Professor Jam-



sheeda Zaroo, then gave an inspiring speech. She said that the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the ideal example for humanity. If we follow his character with true devotion, we will not only attain success in this life, but we will also attain success in the Hereafter. She also appreciated the valuable points raised by Mr. Zahid Majeed. Professor Jamsheeda Zaroo again emphasized the importance of patience, honesty, charity, and devotion to Allah. Her inspiring speech motivated the students to excel in their studies with good morals and spiritual knowledge to become responsible citizens of the country.

Then the conference continued with a speech session in which several students presented their views about the Seerah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Aamina gave an excellent speech with humility and honesty. She stated that she did not think that she was worthy enough to describe the Seerah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Nevertheless, Aamina beautifully described the mercy, kind heart, and excellent character of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). She reminded the audience that the Seerah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) remains an ideal for the entire humanity and an inspiration for every Muslim.

Another remarkable speech was presented by Aksha Farooq, a fourth-semester student of BSc Nursing. Her speech had a profound effect on the audience. Her speech focused on the Seerah of Prophet Muham-

mad (peace be upon him) as the greatest example for humankind. She beautifully described how the Prophet (peace be upon him) had been known for his truthfulness, honesty, and trustworthiness since his childhood, which earned him the esteemed title of Al-Ameen. She further described the revelation received by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the Cave of Hira by Angel Jibreel and the beginning of his noble mission. Personally, I felt highly impressed by her speech, and I am sure the whole audience felt the same admiration.

Madeeha Rafiq also gave a thought-provoking speech on the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). She discussed the good character and mercy of the Prophet. She explained that the teachings of the Prophet regarding honesty, patience, and justice should be followed to attain success in this world as well as the next.

The last part of the conference included a fascinating quiz competition, and the session added excitement and energy to the conference. There were a number of student groups, and they represented different academic classes. Group A of Post Basic BSc Nursing, second year, included Shazia Rasheed and Syed Hanan. Similarly, Group B of BSc Nursing, sixth semester, included Roshiba Nabi and Aliya Jan. Further, Group C of BSc Nursing, fourth semester, included Rashida Lone and Yawar Bashir. Group D of BSc Nursing, second semester, included Inshah Ishaq and Sameer Ahmad Dar. Moreover, Group E of GNM, third year, included Muskan Nazir and

Sabiya Jan. Similarly, Group F of GNM, second year, included Saira Gulzar and Iqra Jan, and Group G of GNM, first year, included Onusha and Farzan.

The quiz competition started with questions asked by Zeeshan Sir, and the groups responded with enthusiasm by raising their hands to give the answers. All the groups performed well in the initial quiz rounds, and the respected Principal Professor Jamsheeda Zaroo and Ms. Ishrat maam from the Administration Department monitored the whole event. After a series of questions, the groups started to be eliminated one by one. The competition reached its final round with Group C, comprising Rashida Lone and Yawar Bashir, and Group D, comprising Insha Ishaq and Sameer Ahmad Dar. Both groups performed exceptionally well, and the results were neck and neck. In the most crucial moment, when the final question was asked by Mudasir Sir, Insha Ishaq quickly raised her hand and answered the question correctly, surprising everyone and receiving a thunderous round of applause. Group D emerged as the winner, and everyone present applauded the result.

As the program came to a conclusion, appreciation and recognition were extended to the winning team as well as to all the participants for their remarkable efforts and enthusiastic participation. After the program, everyone gave their prayers and then started to leave the venue. From a personal point of view, the day proved to be of special importance. After the program, I met Mudasir Sir, and he appreciatively acknowledged my recitation of Naat for the first time and motivated me for showing courage to come forward when everyone else was hesitating. This moment gave me immense pleasure and pride. Another moment of pride for me and the class came when BSc Nursing 2nd Semester was declared the winner of the quiz competition. This achievement deserves special congratulations to our respected class coordinator, Mr. Zahid Majeed, whose guidance and motivation to the students never go in vain. This achievement of his students reflects the blessings and dedication associated with his guidance. Thus, the Seerat Conference proved to be a day of immense importance and a day to remember, reminding everyone present of the fact that the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are still guiding the way for humanity even after fourteen centuries.

The author is a writer, social activist, and nursing student from Kuchmulla, Tral. He is currently a B.S.C. Nursing 2nd Semester student at Ramzaan College of Nursing & Paramedical Sciences, Galander Pampore. He writes on social issues, culture, and public concerns with the aim of raising awareness and inspiring positive change. Email: wania6817@gmail.com

Say No To Drugs And Yes To Life



■ **MOOL RAJ**

Drug addiction, also called substance use disorder, is a disease that affects a person's brain and behavior and leads to an inability to control the use of a legal or illegal drug or medicine. Substances such as alcohol, marijuana and nicotine also are considered drugs. Drug addiction can start with experimental use of a recreational drug in social situations, and, for some people, the drug use becomes more frequent. For others, particularly with opioids, drug addiction begins when they take prescribed medicines or receive them from others who have prescriptions. The risk of addiction and how fast you become addicted varies by drug. Some drugs, such as opioid painkillers, have a higher risk and cause addiction more quickly than others. As time passes, you may need larger doses of the drug to get high. Soon you may need the drug just to feel good. As your drug use increases, you may find that it's increasingly difficult to go without the drug. Attempts to stop drug use may cause intense cravings and make you feel physically ill. When they first use a drug, people may perceive what seem to be positive effects.

They also may believe they can control their use. But drugs can quickly take over a person's life. Over time, if drug use continues, other pleasurable activities become less pleasurable, and the person has to take the drug just to feel "normal." They have a hard time controlling their need to take drugs even though it causes many problems for themselves and their loved ones. Some people may start to feel the need to take more of a drug or take it more often, even in the early stages of their drug use. These are the signs of an addiction. Even relatively moderate drug use poses dangers. "Undoubtedly, drug addiction is a great socio-economic and health problem. It is a kind of disease which is curable with the help of proper treatment. But for the total recovery of the addict, psychological treatment side by side medical treatment through individual counseling, group therapy, re-education and yoga is of immense help. The planning of treatment must focus on self-exposure and self-help. Remember that just because you hit bottom doesn't mean you have to stay there."

Consider how a social drinker can become intoxicated, get behind the wheel of a car, and quickly turn a pleasurable activity into a tragedy that affects many lives. Occasional drug use, such as misusing an opioid to get high, can have similarly disastrous effects, including impaired driving and overdose. When their capabilities and efficiencies are not well-rewarded and not well-recognized, they opt out and seek alternative gratifications in drugs. When the ordinary social fabric



is disrupted by several socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, migration, etc. The Problems Unless a person wishes to get rid of this evil, it is very difficult to give it up. Hence, an awareness campaign can serve the purpose. The media, the NGOs, self-help groups and other governmental and non-governmental agencies can play influential roles. Besides, our educational curriculum should be so designed that value-based moral education is made a part of it. Since in very early age, more values need to be inculcated in children, they should be taught to develop good hobbies to spend time happily and meaningfully in good company. They need to be taught to develop a useful and constructive work-oriented daily routine in which they do manage some time for social activities. They should be made aware of the vices of addiction. Drug addiction gets a chance to flourish. Undoubtedly, drug addiction is a great socio-economic and health problem. It is a kind of disease which is curable with the help of proper treatment. But for the total recovery of the addict, psychological treatment side by side medical treatment through individual counseling, group therapy, re-education and yoga is of immense help. The planning of treatment must focus on self-exposure and self-help. Remember that just because you hit bottom doesn't mean you have to stay there

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KU holds two-day national workshop on intergenerational action for gender equality

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR MAR 15: The Centre for Women's Studies and Research (CWSR), University of Kashmir (KU), organised a two-day national workshop on "Give to Gain: Intergenerational Action for Gender Equality" at the Main Campus to deliberate on collaborative approaches for advancing gender equality through shared learning and engagement across generations.

The workshop aimed to bring together academicians, researchers and students to reflect on the importance of intergenerational dialogue, knowledge sharing and collective action in addressing contemporary gender challenges.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Vice-Chancellor KU, Prof. Nilofer Khan, highlighted

the importance of inclusive dialogue in strengthening gender justice initiatives.

"Gender equality requires sustained engagement across generations, where experience, new ideas and collective commitment come together to build more inclusive and equitable social spaces," she said, adding that universities must serve as platforms for critical discussion and collaborative action on issues of gender and social justice.

Dean, College Development Council KU, Prof. Aneesa Shafi, said that it is important to utilise the potential of each generation and create meaningful networks that can translate ideas into actionable solutions for achieving gender equality.

In her keynote address, Prof. Pamela Singla, Department of Social Work, University of Delhi, spoke about the role of



intergenerational engagement in strengthening feminist scholarship and practice, emphasizing the need for collaborative frameworks that address evolving gender concerns in society.

Earlier, in her welcome address, Coordinator, CWSR KU Dr Roshan Ara, highlighted the objectives of the workshop and underlined the Centre's continued efforts to promote research, dialogue and awareness on issues related to gender and social development.

The two-day workshop featured technical sessions by experts and academicians on various aspects of gender equality, intergenerational dialogue, policy perspectives and contemporary gender challenges.

The proceedings of the event were conducted by Dr. Shazia Malik, faculty at CWSR KU, who also proposed the vote of thanks.

Stationery Kits distributed among students under BBBP in Shopian

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN, MAR 15: Sankalp Hub for Empowerment of Women, Mission Shakti Shopian organized a stationery distribution drive among school students as part of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative.

The programme was aimed at promoting education, encouraging school participation, and providing essential learning materials to young students.

During the drive, stationery kits were distributed among students of Government Boys Upper Primary School Sedow, Government Primary School Parraypora Sedow, Boys Upper Primary School Rangmarg Sedow, and Government Upper Primary School Checki Sedow.

On the occasion, officials from the Sankalp Hub for Empowerment of Women interacted with students and teachers and emphasized the vital role of education in building a progressive and empowered society.

They also highlighted the core message of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative, stressing the importance of ensuring equal educational opportunities and nurturing the potential of every child.

Food Safety Department conducts intensive market inspection in Shopian ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN, MAR 15: In anticipation of the auspicious festival of Eid-ul-Fitr, the Food Safety Department Shopian carried out a comprehensive market inspection across the localities of Killora, Krawora, and Traperpora within the jurisdiction of Shopian District today.

The inspection drive was undertaken with the primary objective of ensuring strict adherence to food safety standards and safeguarding public health during the heightened commercial activity associated with the upcoming festive celebrations.

During the inspection, special focus was laid on establishments dealing with commonly consumed food items, including bread makers, mutton shops, bakery units, and vegetable vendors.

The inspection team conducted a thorough scrutiny of food handling practices, storage conditions, and the quality of food items being offered for sale.



snack items were found in the possession of some Food Business Operators (FBOs).

In order to prevent any potential risk to consumer health, the expired food articles were immediately seized and destroyed on the spot.

Furthermore, three Food Business Operators were found to be in violation of the stipulated food safety regulations. Consequently, they were penalized under Section 69 of the Food Safety and Standards Act (FSS Act).

Bridging the Divide- Confronting Rural Health Disparities and Building Healthier Communities: Dr Sushil

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MAR 15: In view of great disparity in cardiac health and ailments in rural and urban areas Head Department of cardiology GMCH Jammu Dr Sushil Sharma held a day long cardiac awareness cum health check up camp at Panchayat Ghar Budwal Block Khour Jammu. The Camp aimed to raise awareness about cardiovascular diseases, provide essential screenings, and empower rural residents with knowledge and resources to manage their cardiovascular health.

While interacting with the people Dr Sushil stated that across the world, rural communities continue to face profound health challenges that often remain hidden behind geographic isolation and limited infrastructure. While cities benefit from advanced medical facilities, specialized healthcare professionals, and abundant resources, rural populations frequently struggle with restricted access to essential health services. These disparities contribute to preventable illnesses, delayed diagnoses, and poorer health outcomes. The issue of rural health inequity is not merely a medical concern but a complex social and economic challenge that demands coordinated and innovative solution.

He elaborated that rural populations often encounter significant barriers in accessing healthcare. Long travel distances to hospitals and clinics create delays in receiving timely med-



ical care. Many rural areas lack adequate numbers of healthcare professionals such as physicians, nurses, and specialists, leading to overburdened facilities and limited appointment availability. In addition, healthcare infrastructure including diagnostic services, emergency care, and mental health resources is frequently underdeveloped in rural regions. These limitations make it difficult for residents to receive preventive care, routine check-ups, and early treatment for chronic diseases. Socioeconomic factors further intensify these disparities. Rural communities generally experience lower average incomes, higher unemployment rates, and reduced health insurance coverage. These financial constraints discourage individuals from seeking medical attention until conditions become severe. Furthermore, limited educational opportunities may affect health literacy, making it harder for people to

understand disease prevention, treatment adherence, and lifestyle modifications necessary for long-term well being.

He maintained that another critical contributor to rural health disparities is the scarcity of resources that promote healthy living. Many rural areas lack recreational facilities, safe walking paths, or community centers that encourage physical activity. Addressing these persistent disparities requires innovative and community-centered solutions. Telemedicine has emerged as a powerful tool in bridging geographic barriers by connecting rural patients with specialists located in urban centers. Through digital platforms, individuals can receive consultations, follow-up care, and even mental health counseling without traveling long distances. Expansion of tele health services, supported by reliable internet connectivity, can dramatically improve healthcare

accessibility in remote regions. Strengthening the rural healthcare workforce is another essential strategy. Incentive programs that encourage healthcare professionals to practice in rural areas such as loan repayment programs, rural residency training, and financial subsidies can help reduce the shortage of providers. Community health workers and nurse practitioners also play an important role by delivering primary care, health education, and preventive services directly within rural communities.

He added that infrastructure development must also be prioritized. Investments in rural hospitals, transportation systems, and digital connectivity will not only enhance healthcare delivery but also strengthen economic stability. When rural communities receive adequate support and resources, they become better equipped to address both current health challenges and future public health emer-

gencies. Ultimately, reducing rural health disparities requires a holistic and sustained commitment from policymakers, healthcare professionals, and community leaders, He Said

Dr Sushil Sharma in his concluding remarks told that rural health disparities represent one of the most pressing and enduring challenges in public health. Geographic isolation, limited healthcare infrastructure, socioeconomic disadvantages, and restricted access to health resources collectively contribute to poorer health outcomes in rural populations. However, these challenges are not insurmountable. Tarsem Lal, Harbans Singh, Rattan Singh, Karnail Singh, Sat Pal and esteemed community members, lauded Dr. Sushil Sharma's team for organizing the health camp in the remote area. They praised the initiative for delivering healthcare services and CVD awareness to local residents, expressing gratitude for bridging the healthcare gap. Their efforts have empowered the community with vital health knowledge and services

Others who were part of this camp include Dr Bhola Kumar and Dr Adarsh Sharma. Paramedics and volunteers includes Rajkumar, Ranjeet Singh, Mohd Altaf, Gourav Sharma, Vikas Kumar, Rajinder Singh, Manoj Sharma, Anmol Singh, Dimple Bhagat, Khushbinder Sandhu, Paramveer Singh, Gokul Sharma, Shubham Sharma, Rohit Nayyar, Irfan Hassan, and Nirvair Singh Bali.

AJKPC Begins 72-Hour Hunger "Strike Satyagraha" at Nagrota

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MAR 15: A 72-hour hunger strike led by Anil Sharma, President of the All Jammu & Kashmir Panchayat Conference (AJKPC), started today at Narsingh Mandir, Jindrah in Nagrota Assembly Constituency to highlight several long pending issues affecting the people of the area.

The decision to begin the hunger strike was taken earlier during a meeting of prominent citizens of Nagrota Assembly Constituency held under the banner of AJKPC. The meeting discussed various concerns related to administration, healthcare and education in the constituency and decided to start a peaceful protest so that the government and concerned authorities take note of the demands of the people.

The hunger strike began today at around 11:00 AM with Anil Sharma along with social activists and local residents sitting on the protest. People from nearby villages and areas also reached the site during the day to extend their support.

Speaking on the occasion, Anil Sharma said the people of Nagrota constituency have been raising these issues for a long time but no concrete action has been taken so far. He said the hunger



strike has been started to draw the attention of the government towards genuine public demands.

Among the main demands raised during the protest is the grant of functional Sub Division status to Nagrota along with establishment of an SDM office. The participants have also demanded Tehsil status for Jindrah.

The protesters have also sought setting up of a Tehsil Treasury in Dansal block of Nagrota constituency to facilitate official and financial work in the area.

The protesters also demanded better healthcare facilities in the constituency including establishment of proper accident and trauma hospitals in Nagrota Assembly Constituency. In the education

sector, the participants demanded construction of a new building for Government Degree College Jindrah and sought an ACB probe into the damage caused to the existing building of the college.

Another important demand raised during the agitation is the filling of all vacant posts in schools and colleges of Nagrota constituency so that students do not suffer due to shortage of staff.

The hunger strike will continue for 72 hours in the first phase. The participants said that if the government starts dialogue and takes steps to address the demands, the agitation may be reviewed. In case there is no response, the protest may be extended further

The organisers said the agitation will

remain peaceful and disciplined and will focus only on issues concerning the people of the constituency.

They also said that any MLA, Member of Parliament, Minister or government official visiting the protest site will be welcomed and a memorandum highlighting the demands will be submitted to them. Prominent people who spoke on the occasion include Retd. Head Master Ganga Dutt Sharma, Retd. Chander Mouli Sharma, Sh. Krishan Kumar Dave, Mohd. Fajji, Nazeer Ahmed, Sham Lal, Akshay Kumar, Sudesh Kumar, Darshan Kumar, Sanjay Jamwal, Hridayesh Jamwal, Vijay Kumar, Joginder Kumar, Tanish Kumar, Sanjay Kumar, Sahil Sharma and many more who attended.

Hyderabad agri-biotech entrepreneur Devanur elected President of World Neem Organisation

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

HYDERABAD, MAR 15 : City-based agri-biotech entrepreneur and scientist Venkatesh Devanur has been elected President of the World Neem Organisation (WNO) at the 3rd International Neem Summit-2026 and the 4th Global Neem Trade Fair held in Pune.

The summit and trade fair were organised by WNO, an international non-profit body dedicated to promoting the neem tree and its benefits in agriculture, health, environment and industry.

WNO serves as a global forum for researchers, industry stakeholders and practitioners working with neem to exchange knowledge, research findings and resources, while promoting the wider use of neem across the world.

The organisation focuses on promoting neem cultivation and plantation globally, encouraging research into its medicinal and



agricultural benefits, supporting the production and commercialisation of neem-based products and spreading awareness about neem's role in sustainable agriculture, health and environmental protection.

Devanur has been actively associated with several agriculture-related organisations.

He is a founding member and secretary of the BioAgri Inputs Producers Association (BIPA). Prior

to his election as President, he served as Vice-President of the World Neem Organisation.

He is also a Director in a joint venture with Koppert Biological Systems, Netherlands.

A pioneer in India's biopesticide and organic agriculture sector, Devanur runs companies involved in developing eco-friendly crop protection and soil health solutions.

Justice K.K. Tated, Chairman of the Animal Rights Commission, Government of Maharashtra, and B.N. Vyas, President of the organisation, along with researchers, industry representatives, farmers and neem enthusiasts from India and abroad attended the summit.

During the conference, a White Paper on the status of the neem industry was released.

A documentary highlighting the importance of collecting and processing neem seeds and fruits was also unveiled to benefit suppliers and emphasise value addition in the neem supply chain.

More than 150 participants from India and overseas attended the summit on Saturday. Eminent scientists and experts presented scientific papers highlighting the importance of neem in agriculture, human health, cancer research and other areas, paving the way for greater collaboration between academia and industry. UNI

AI adoption could unlock over USD 3 trn opportunity for India's MSMEs by 2047: Report

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 15 : Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to significantly transform India's micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), unlocking economic opportunities worth over USD 3 trillion by 2047, according to a joint report by PwC India and the Observer Research Foundation (ORF).

The report "Unlocking the AI Edge for MSMEs," highlighted that India's MSMEs play a crucial role in the country's economic and industrial landscape and could emerge as a major driver of manufacturing growth with the adoption of advanced technologies such as AI.

"If India succeeds in increasing manufacturing's share of GDP to 25pc, and MSMEs raise their contribution to India's manufacturing gross value added (GVA) from 35.4pc in FY 2023-24 to 50pc by 2047, they stand to unlock growth opportunities in the range of USD 3.13-3.21 trillion by 2047" it said.

According to the report, MSMEs currently contribute 35.4 percent of India's manufacturing value added and about 48.6 percent of the country's total exports, while employing more than 33 crore people across the country.

The sector, therefore, holds significant potential to support India's ambition of becoming a global manufacturing hub.

The study noted that if manufacturing expands to account for 25 percent of India's GDP and MSMEs increase their share in manufacturing value added to 50 percent by 2047, the sector could generate economic opportunities worth USD 3.13 trillion to USD 3.21 trillion.

Artificial Intelligence, the report said, could act as a powerful enabler for MSMEs by improving operational efficiency, strengthening decision-making processes and enhancing product quality.

AI-driven technologies such as predictive maintenance, intelligent supply chain management, demand forecasting and

automated quality inspection could help businesses reduce costs and boost productivity.

The report estimated that AI adoption alone could contribute USD 135.6 billion to USD 149.9 billion to the growth of manufacturing MSMEs by 2035, provided the sector strengthens its participation in India's manufacturing ecosystem.

It also pointed out that the rapid expansion of AI infrastructure, including data centres and computing systems, could create an additional USD 100 billion to USD 150 billion demand opportunity for MSMEs involved in supplying components, cooling systems and other industrial equipment required for AI ecosystems.

However, the report observed that several barriers continue to hinder the widespread adoption of AI among MSMEs. These include limited digital readiness, lack of technical expertise, high costs associated with new technologies and concerns about the reliability and long-term returns of AI investments.

To address these challenges, the report suggested a structured adoption model that focuses on improving access to AI tools, building awareness and acceptance among business owners and workers, integrating AI solutions into operational workflows and eventually embedding them into core business processes.

The study also recommended the development of a comprehensive ecosystem that can help MSMEs identify appropriate AI solutions, test them in controlled environments and scale them effectively across industries.

It emphasised that collaboration between the government, technology providers, financial institutions and industry bodies would be crucial to accelerate AI adoption among small businesses.

According to the report, enabling MSMEs to harness AI technologies could not only strengthen their competitiveness but also help India position itself as a global hub for advanced manufacturing and innovation in the coming decades. UNI

Rs 300 cr investment in Life Sciences sector to create 250 jobs in Genome Valley: Sridhar Babu

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

HYDERABAD, MAR 15 : Telangana Minister for IT, Industries and Commerce Duddilla Sridhar Babu on Sunday announced that US-based Cambridge Isotope Laboratories (CIL) and Hyderabad-based Chem Thathva Chiral Solutions will jointly establish an advanced manufacturing facility in Genome Valley with an investment of Rs 300 crore.

The Minister said the companies plan to invest the amount over the next three years and set up the facility in Phase-4 of Genome Valley in Hyderabad. The project is expected to generate employment for around 250 people.



Sridhar Babu revealed that the decision was conveyed by the CEOs of both companies during a meeting with him at the Secretariat on Sunday, according to an official statement.

He said Telangana is steadily emerging as a global hub for Life Sciences and Speciality Chemicals, and the partnership between Cambridge Isotope Laboratories and Chem Thathva reflects the growing confidence of international companies in the state.

He stated that the proposed state-of-the-art facility will manufacture isotope-labelled compounds, which are widely used in pharmaceutical research, metabolic studies, diagnostic testing, modern electronics, organic electroluminescent materials (OLED) and the semiconductor sector. Once operational, the project will help reduce the country's dependence on imports of such products.

The Minister noted that companies are choosing to invest in Genome Valley due to its strong industrial ecosystem, availability of skilled scientists, world-class infrastructure and the state government's progressive policies.

Chem Thathva Chiral Solutions CEO Dr Vishal Rajput said the collaboration with Cambridge Isotope Laboratories would help build world-class manufacturing capabilities in Telangana.

Cambridge Isotope Laboratories CEO Cliff Caldwell, Telangana Life Sciences Director Shakti Nagappan and other officials were present at the meeting. UNI

Tata Motors CV bags orders for 5,000 buses across India

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

MUMBAI, MARCH 15 : Auto major Tata Motors Commercial Vehicles Ltd has informed in a regulatory filing to the stock exchanges that it has won a cumulative pan-India order of over 5,000 buses from multiple state transport undertakings.

However, Tata Motors has not disclosed the exact value of these cumulative orders.

These orders pertain to the delivery of more than 5,000 buses and bus chassis, spanning across various states in India.

Each of the tenders was won through a competitive e-bidding process, according to the statement issued here today.

Some of the state transport undertakings that have issued orders to Tata Motors include the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC), Gujarat State Road Transport Corporation (GSRTC), North Western Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (NWKRTC), Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC), and Bihar State Road Transport Corporation (BSRTC), among others.

Geopolitical tensions may keep markets volatile; experts advise selective investing

BY SOURAV SHEKHAR

NEW DELHI, MARCH 15 : Escalating tensions between the United States and Iran are likely to keep financial markets volatile in the near term, with market experts highlighting both risks and potential opportunities for investors amid the uncertainty.

N. Aruna Giri, CEO of TrustLine Holdings, said that historical trends suggest markets often witness the sharpest corrections in the initial days of geopolitical conflicts.

"Almost without exception, in most crises, the bulk of the price damage—particularly in the Indian markets—tends to happen within the first few days of the outbreak of the conflict. After the initial shock, markets may remain volatile for some time, but historically the sharpest correction usually occurs in those early days," he said.

According to him, the current tensions between the United States and Iran could follow a similar pattern, though volatility may be higher due to the strong link between the crisis and global crude oil supplies passing through the Strait of Hormuz.

"The current crisis triggered by the US-Iran tensions may not be very different in that sense. However, since the situation has strong linkages to crude oil prices via the Hormuz Channel, the volatility could be more intense this time around," Aruna Giri said.

He added that the worst of the price damage may have already occurred during the initial phase of the crisis.

"Having said that, it is quite likely that the worst of the price damage may already have played out in the initial phase. What may follow from here is continued

volatility, but not necessarily sustained or deeper price declines, particularly in the broader small and mid-cap space," he said.

Aruna Giri also noted that geopolitical crises have historically presented investment opportunities for long-term investors.

"But if history is any guide, almost every geopolitical crisis has eventually turned out to be a compelling buying opportunity, especially in the broader small and mid-cap segments in the Indian context," he said.

"It is time to invest, not to time the bottom. However, the approach needs to remain selective, bottom-up, and gradual. In the current environment, disciplined stock pickers are almost spoilt for choice, with no dearth of compelling opportunities emerging across the broader market," he added.

Meanwhile, Aditya Agrawal,

CFA and Chief Investment Officer at Avis Wealth Creators, said the escalating tensions between Iran and the United States could influence investors through several channels beyond the immediate impact on oil prices.

"Escalating tensions between Iran and the United States can influence investors in multiple ways beyond just oil prices," Agrawal said.

"First, market swings—geopolitical unrest triggers immediate 'risk-off' behaviour, leading to short-term equity volatility as investors seek clarity," he said. He further noted that rising crude prices could fuel inflationary pressures and affect monetary policy.

"Second, inflation and rates—rising oil prices drive up inflation, often forcing interest rates higher and hurting both stock and bond

returns," Agrawal said.

Highlighting trade risks, he said threats to the Strait of Hormuz could disrupt global supply chains.

"Third, trade bottlenecks—threats to the Strait of Hormuz spike shipping costs and disrupt global supply chains, slowing overall economic growth," he said.

Agrawal added that geopolitical tensions also tend to trigger capital outflows from emerging markets.

"Fourth, currency shifts—foreign capital often flees emerging markets like India for 'safer' shores, weakening local currencies in the process," he said.

He also pointed to asset reallocation during such periods of uncertainty.

"Finally, asset rotation—investors pivot toward safe havens like gold, while cyclical industries face significant selling pressure," Agrawal added. UNI

Telangana CM to inaugurate Rs 300 Cr Palm oil processing factory in Siddipet District soon

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

SIDDIPET (TELANGANA), MARCH 15 : Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy will inaugurate the state-of-the-art palm oil processing factory at Narmetta in this district.

The facility is constructed at a cost of Rs 300 crore under Telangana Oil

Fed. The factory was completed in a record 18 months, and will soon be inaugurated by the CM, said Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao here on Saturday. He said Telangana government is taking decisive steps to transform the state into the country's oil palm hub. Speaking to reporters after inspecting the factory, along with

Minister Ponnam Prabhakar and Oil Fed Chairman Janga Raghavareddy, Tummala said "This factory marks a new phase for oil palm cultivation in Telangana." Built using advanced Malaysian technology, the facility can process 30 to 120 tonnes of palm fruit per hour, the Minister said that it includes units for crude palm oil.

Coal Minister G. Kishan Reddy visits mine closure process at Murpar underground mine

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

CHANDRAPUR, MARCH 15 : Union Minister of Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy today visited the mine closure process of the Murpar Underground Mine of Western Coalfields Limited (WCL) on the second day of his visit to Chandrapur district.

During the visit, the minister reviewed various activities and the progress related to the closure of the Murpar Underground Mine.

Coal production at the mine began in 2003, and operations were discontinued in 2022, after the area was declared part of the Eco-Sensitive Zone of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve.

Addressing the gathering,

Reddy said that mine closure should not be viewed as the end of a project but as the beginning of a new phase aimed at sustainable development.

He emphasised that the closure process must be carried out in a scientific and systematic manner so that the environmental balance in the region can be restored and natural resources conserved after mining activities cease.

He also stressed that the interests of local communities must be given priority in mine closure plans.

According to him, through various initiatives promoted by the central government, efforts are being made to transform closed mines into assets that are socially,

economically and environmentally beneficial.

Providing details about the Murpar Underground Mine, WCL Chairman-cum-Managing Director Harish Duhan said the mine, located in Chimur tehsil of Chandrapur district in Maharashtra, produced approximately 9,95,926 tonnes of coal since its inception.

The Final Mine Closure Plan for the mine was approved by the WCL Board on January 19, 2026. Around 426 employees working at the mine have been redeployed to other mines in the Umrer Area.

Duhan further said that all mining infrastructure at the Murpar Mine has been dismantled in accordance with regulations, while the Manager's Office and the

Canteen Building have been retained for social use on the recommendation of the district administration.

All physical mine closure activities, along with three years of environmental monitoring, have already been completed.

As part of environmental protection initiatives, plantation will be carried out over five hectares of land in the mine area between June and September 2026 in collaboration with the Tropical Forest Research Institute, Jabalpur.

In addition, eight free medical camps were organised for residents of nearby villages, benefiting around 715 people.

Among those present on the occasion were Additional Secretary

in the Ministry of Coal Sanoj Kumar Jha, Private Secretary to the union Minister Dr. Pankaj Jain, IAS, Chandrapur Collector Vinay Gowda, Coal India Limited Chairman B. Sairam, Coal Controller Sajeesh Kumar N, Director (Technical) in the Ministry of Coal Birendra Kumar Thakur, Additional Private Secretary to the Minister A. Venkateshwar Reddy, IPos, WCL CMD Harish Duhan, Director (Finance) Bikram Ghosh, Director (Technical-Operations) Anandji Prasad, Director (Human Resources) Dr. Hemant Sharad Pande, Director (Technical-Projects & Planning) Sandeep Paranjpe, Chief Vigilance Officer Ajay Madhukar Mhetre, and Umrer Area General Manager Avinash Prasad. UNI

Market valuation of top 10 firms erode sharply by Rs 4.48 lakh Cr.

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 15 : Last week, the combined market valuation of top 10 domestic firms eroded sharply by Rs 4.48 lakh Crore. Banking majors including State Bank of India and HDFC Bank took the biggest hit. The market valuation of State Bank of India tumbled Rs 89,306.22 Cr. to Rs 9,66,261.05 Cr. while the HDFC Bank faced an erosion of Rs 61,715.32 Cr. to Rs 12,57,391.76 Cr. The valuation of Bajaj Finance dived Rs 59,082.49 Cr. to Rs 5,32,053.54 Cr. while the market capitalisation of ICICI Bank dropped by Rs 42,205.04 Cr. to Rs 8,97,844.78 Cr.

The M-cap of LIC diminished by Rs 31,245.49 Cr. to Rs 4,88,985.57 Cr.

The valuation of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) tanked Rs 53,312.52 Cr. to Rs 8,72,067.63 Cr. and that of Infosys declined by Rs 24,230.96 Cr. to Rs 5,06,315.58 Cr. Hindustan Unilever's M-cap dipped by Rs 15,401.57 Cr. to Rs 5,07,640.94 Cr. while that of Reliance Industries' valuation fell by Rs 33,289.88 Cr. to Rs 18,68,293.17 Cr. In a rank-wise analysis, Reliance Industries remained the most valued domestic firm, followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, TCS, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever, Infosys and LIC.

On Friday, the bears were leading as the Nifty was dragged below 23,150 intra-day amid broad-based selling.

At close, the Sensex was down 1,470.50 points or 1.93pc at 74,563.92, and the Nifty was down 488.05 points or 2.06pc at 23,151.10. During the week, both the indices declined over 5pc, recording their biggest weekly fall in more than a year. UNI



Competition Didn't Bother Me: Sanju Samson

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI: India opener Sanju Samson said his desire to live-up to the team's needs helped him overcome the initial apprehension of competing with his own teammates for a spot in the eleven during the recent T20 World Cup, and churn out a series of match-winning performances.

Sanju scored 97 against the West Indies in the must-win Super Eights, and then came up with identical 89 against England in the semifinal and the New Zealand in the finale at Ahmedabad.

It completed a remarkable personal turnaround for the Kerala batter, who was moved out of India's starting eleven in the initial phase of the ICC showpiece after a lowkey bilateral home T20I series against New Zealand.

"I am the type of a person who do much better for others than doing things better for myself. In that series (against NZ), I was competing with my own people (for a place in the team) and I was not very comfortable with it," Sanju said during India Today Conclave.

Sanju admitted that the failure to find

a place in the eleven left him a broken man. "I was too desperate knowing that my dream is so near. But was the team still trying some combinations? So, is Sanju there or not there? So, that kind of feeling played in my mind at that time.

"I was absolutely broken because my dream was to win the World Cup and I am not even in the XI. So, actually I was gone away for 5-6 days and I started rebuilding myself. Started preparing myself knowing you never know what the game want to give back to you," he said.

The much-awaited chance came Sanju's way during India's Super Eight match against Zimbabwe at Chennai.

The 31-year-old did not make too many runs, but received an assurance from the the team management that he will be in the eleven in the next four matches.

It was also partly because the think tank wanted to break the left-hander's sequence at the top to nullify the effect of rival off-spinners.

"I knew the team management had trust in me. When the World Cup came in I kind of figured out now that the team wants you, so that is the mindset change

which happened in my head.

"So, right from the Zimbabwe game, we had to win four out of four matches and the team needs you. So, that's when it became very positive for me, and I was very fired up," he said. Fellow opener Abhishek Sharma was a tad disappointed that he could not produce the kind of knocks expected of him during the World Cup, partly because of a stomach bug.

But the left-hander made a crucial fifty in the title clash against the Kiwis, and was delighted to be able to make a contribution. "From the day, I started playing cricket the only goal was firstly was to play for the country and then once you played for the country, the ultimate goal is to win the ICC trophies for your country.

"It wasn't the start I wanted, but still I was happy that because the team was doing well and we were still winning the game," Sanju said.

"Obviously, I had a dream that I wanted to be a world champion one day and it's just not about one trophy, as it's all about how many trophies I can win for my country and that's all I play about," he noted.

Fighting India lose 0-2 to England in FIH Women's Hockey WC Qualifiers, but qualify for WC

■ AGENCIES

HYDERABAD: The Indian women's hockey team lost 0-2 against the higher-ranked England to finish runners-up in the FIH Hockey World Cup Qualifiers but still managed to qualify for this year's mega-event, here on Saturday.

World No. 6 England scored through a penalty corner conversion by Grace Balsdon in the 13th minute before doubling their lead through a field strike from Elizabeth Neal in the 43rd minute.

The Indians, ranked ninth in the world, tried their



heart and soul throughout the entire 60 minutes but failed to break the resolute English defence.

Besides champions England, runner-up India and Scotland, who defeated Italy 1-0, qualified from this event for the World Cup.

This edition of the World Cup will be jointly hosted by the Netherlands and Belgium from August 14 to 30 along side the men's tournament.

India began the game on the front foot with Navneet Kaur helping her side earn a penalty corner within the opening two minutes.

However, her drag-flick from the resulting set piece was kept out by the England goalkeeper.

The hosts showed great discipline, maintaining a solid defensive shape while also making inroads on the end of the field.

However, England grew into the game towards the end of the first quarter, earning a penalty corner with two minutes to go.

Balsdon made the most of that opportunity, finding the back of the net with her drag-flick and scoring her fifth goal from a penalty corner in this tournament to give England the lead.

The second quarter began in a similar manner, with both the teams not giving much away in this engaging contest.

With eight circle penetrations in the first half, India were asking questions to the England defence but didn't really test the rival goalkeeper, allowing the visitors to hold onto their one-goal advantage at half time.

With the lead, England controlled the tempo of the game by neatly working the ball and maintaining possession.

India had a few opportunities to pile on the pressure, but the visitors stood firm at the back.

England eventually doubled their lead courtesy Neal (43rd). The midfielder was fortunate as her effort deflected off an Indian defender before finding its way past Bichu Devi, giving the visitors a 2-0 lead at the end of the third quarter.

Today, Team India means victory: Jay Shah

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

MUMBAI: Likening India's current winning streak to the unstoppable Australian teams of the past, ICC chairman Jay Shah stated on Saturday that the name 'Team India' is now a definitive marker of triumph in world cricket.

The Indian men's team recently became the first side to successfully defend a T20 World Cup title, beating New Zealand in a one-sided final in Ahmedabad. In November, the women's side won their maiden World Cup.

Reflecting on India's presence in the global game, Shah said during a private awards function, "Just as there was a time when Australia meant victory, today, Team India means victory. That has become the reality now."

Shah, who has served as the BCCI's secretary before going to the ICC, was honoured for his

exceptional contribution in the field of sports.

Shah dedicated the award to the athletes for their hard work on the field.

"I would like to dedicate this award to all the athletes, especially the women athletes who are working hard on the field," Shah said.

The ICC chief also congratulated Indian captain Suryakumar Yadav and head coach Gautam Gambhir for the Indian team's triumph last week, and also praised all the semi-finalists.

"I want to congratulate Surya, Gautam Gambhir, and all the players of Team India. I also want to congratulate not just Team India, but also the South African team and the England team, who did not lose a single game before the knockout stage.

"And finally, the finalist, the New Zealand cricket team, for the way they performed and



worked hard on the field. Congratulations to them as well," Shah said.

Shah also listed Indian cricket's achievements since he took charge as the secretary of the BCCI in 2019.

"From 2019, when I joined the BCCI, to 2026, in these seven years, Team India has won two Under-19 Men's World Cups, two Under-19 Women's World Cups, finished as runners-up in the

WTC final once, runners-up in the ODI World Cup once, won two consecutive T20 World Cups, and the 2025 Champions Trophy. This is a huge achievement. I congratulate you all for that.

"I remember this because I have been following cricket since 1998, and as an administrator, I have been handling cricket since 2009." Shah also advised the Indian team to keep working hard with the same zeal and

passion that helped them achieve success in recent years.

"Through Gautam bhai, Surya, and this platform, I want to give a message to the entire team again. For me, in my seventeen years as an administrator, I've learned that it takes months to go from the top to the bottom, but it takes years to go from the bottom to the top.

"For you (the players), you just have to sustain your performance; it's relatively easy. So, work as hard as you have been, so that you keep receiving awards every year," he said.

"When I was in the BCCI, I had planned up until the 2028 Olympics. But then Surya took charge as captain, and I came to the ICC. "New people have come in my place at the BCCI. All of you together need to prepare for the 2030 & 2032 games, and you know where the 2036 Olympics will be held. So, prepare for that as well."

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