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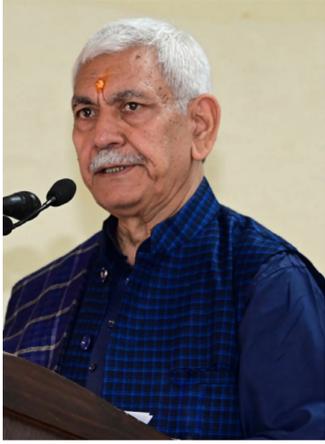
Ranbir Singh's Legacy Honoured: LG Unveils Bust, Renames Sanskrit University Jammu Campus

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MAR 16: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday unveiled the bust of Maharaja Ranbir Singh and announced the renaming of the Jammu campus of Central Sanskrit University as 'Shri Maharaja Ranbir Singh Campus', paying tribute to the ruler's lasting contribution to Jammu and Kashmir.

The ceremony was held at the university's Kot Bhalwal campus where the Lieutenant Governor said the nation owes a profound debt to Maharaja Ranbir Singh for his reforms and for nurturing a vibrant cultural and intellectual legacy in the region.

Addressing the gathering, Sinha said Maharaja Ranbir Singh did not merely govern Jammu and Kashmir but gave the region a new vision, restructuring govern-



nance and illuminating society with knowledge while enriching it with cultural abundance.

He said the decision to rename the campus reflects the continuing relevance of the ruler's legacy, adding that the consciousness he ignited more than 150 years ago continues to guide society in Jammu and Kashmir.

Emphasising the role of youth, the Lieutenant Governor said young people must lead the path of principles and contribute to building a safer and prosperous Jammu and Kashmir. He urged them to embrace the humane values and vision associated with Maharaja Ranbir Singh and play a meaningful role in nation-building.

Sinha also stressed the need to build a society that is technologically strong yet sensitive to human values, stating that

Turn on Page 2

Tulip Garden Opens in Srinagar, Heralds Spring in Kashmir

Asia's largest floral garden thrown open by Omar Abdullah; over 70 tulip varieties on display



HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, MAR 16: The iconic Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden in Srinagar was thrown

open to the public on Monday by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, marking the arrival of spring in Kashmir and the beginning of the Valley's

Turn on Page 2

Dy CM Seeks Security Review After Attack on Farooq Abdullah

HT NEWS NETWORK / AGENCIES

JAMMU, MAR 16: Jammu and Kashmir Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary has asked for jammer and bullet-proof vehicles for his security cover in the wake of an assassination attempt on National Conference president Farooq Abdullah.

Seeking an immediate review of his security cover, Choudhary

informed police authorities that a jammer vehicle was withdrawn from his motorcade nearly six months ago on the pretext of repairs and has not been restored.

Abdullah miraculously escaped gunfire attempted from point-blank range at a wedding function in Jammu on Wednesday. Kamal Singh, the 63-year-old accused, was overpowered and arrested on the

spot.

The deputy chief minister has also expressed displeasure over the "non-serious" manner his requests have been treated so far.

Talking to reporters in Rajouri, the deputy chief minister said security arrangements are the responsibility of the security and police departments, and any decision

Turn on Page 2

Omar Reviews Fuel, Essential Supplies Ahead of Festivals

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, MAR 16: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today chaired a high-level meeting to review the stock position of essential commodities and petroleum products in Jammu and Kashmir in view of the upcoming festivals of Eid and Navratras and the prevailing geopolitical situation in West Asia.

The meeting was attended by Ministers Sakina Itoo and Satish Sharma, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Principal Secretary Home, Commissioner Secretary Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Commissioner Secretary Information, heads of



departments, Deputy Commissioners of all districts, Director Information, Executive Director Indian oil Corporation Ltd Ashutosh Gupta, representatives of oil companies, and other concerned officers. The outstation officers attended the meeting through

During the meeting, the Chief Minister reviewed the availability and supply position of petroleum products, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) and other essential commodities across Jammu & Kashmir.

Addressing the officers, the Chief

Turn on Page 2

Dealers Told to Ensure LPG Home Delivery

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MAR 16: The Jammu administration on Monday conducted inspections at LPG outlets amid panic buying and complaints of delivery failures of gas cylinders and took action against some dealers who were allegedly found violating norms.

Long queues were reported at several LPG outlets in Jammu over the past few days in the wake of the ongoing conflict in West Asia. Officials, however, insisted there was no shortage of fuel and urged people not to fall prey to rumours, while directing dealers to ensure home delivery as per routine practice.

"It is a home-delivery system. Delays are the main issue, not availability. In some cases, delivery is shown in the system and messages are sent to consumers even though cylinders have not actually been delivered. Action is being taken against such

Turn on Page 2

Shab-e-Qadr observed with religious fervor across Valley

HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, MAR 27: Shab-e-Qadr (Lailatul Qadr), one of the holiest nights in Islam, will be observed tonight with an ocean of devotees expected to spend the night in prayers, remembrance of Allah and recitation of the Holy Quran at Masjids and Shrines across Jammu and Kashmir.

According to details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the revered Hazratbal shrine in Srinagar is likely to witness the largest congregation of worshippers, as devotees from different parts of the Valley are expected to gather there to observe the sacred night.

Shab-e-Qadr, also known as the "Night of

Turn on Page 2

LG Sinha, CM Omar, Ministers extend Shab-e-Qadr greetings

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR/JAMMU, MAR 16: Several leaders of Jammu and Kashmir extended warm greetings to the people on the sacred occasion of Shab-e-Qadr (Lailat-ul-Qadr), highlighting the spiritual significance of the blessed night and praying for peace, prosperity and harmony in the region.

Manoj Sinha, the Lieutenant Governor

Turn on Page 2

Rs 364 crore spent on J&K elections in 2024

HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, MAR 16: The expenditure for conducting Parliamentary and Assembly elections in Jammu & Kashmir in 2024 touched Rs 364 crore, official documents reveal.

According to records accessed by news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the combined cost of the two elections amounted to Rs 364.57 crore. Of this, Rs 205.37 crore was spent on the Lok Sabha polls, while Assembly elections accounted for Rs 159.20 crore.

As per documents, Audit certificates worth Rs 200.22 crore have been submitted to the Government of India for reimbursement of expenditure incurred by the J&K administration on the Lok Sabha polls

Turn on Page 2

CS Reviews Youth Sports Initiatives in J&K

Over 35 lakh youth already engaged in sports activities this year

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MAR 16: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo today chaired a comprehensive review meeting to assess the performance of the Youth Services & Sports Department and the Jammu & Kashmir Sports Council, with a

special focus on expanding youth engagement in sports and creative activities across all districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by Commissioner Secretary, Youth Services & Sports; Director General, Youth Services & Sports; Secretary, Sports

Council and other senior officers of the Department.

The Chief Secretary took a detailed review of the initiatives undertaken by the department and the Sports Council to strengthen the sports ecosystem across the UT through grassroots competitions, talent identifica-

tion programmes, national-level sporting events and digital youth engagement platforms.

The Chief Secretary maintained that sports and creative arts play a crucial role in shaping the character of young people by instilling

Turn on Page 2

Fresh Snowfall in Higher Reaches of Kashmir

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, MAR 16: Most higher reaches of Kashmir received moderate to heavy snowfall, while the plains were lashed by rains, disrupting vehicular movement in some stretches, officials said on Monday.

Several vehicles got stuck following heavy snowfall along the Sinthan Top following which police and army carried out a rescue operation on Sunday night to evacuate 214 stranded tourists and locals, they said.

Officials said the tourist resorts of Gulmarg in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, Doodhpathri in central Kashmir's Budgam district, and Sonamarg in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district, received moderate

Turn on Page 2

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CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....

Ranbir Singh's.....

India must prepare its youth to guide a challenge-ridden world while promoting peace, unity and human welfare.

Highlighting India's civilisational ethos, the Lieutenant Governor said the country's journey has always been balanced science and culture. He added that educational institutions must nurture personalities that combine intellectual brilliance with moral and spiritual wisdom.

On the occasion, Sinha also assured financial assistance for the establishment of Gurukuls, Sanskrit Pathshalas and Ved Pathshalas in the region to strengthen traditional learning.

Former Union Minister Karan Singh, Sanskrit scholar Vishwamurti Shastri, Vice Chancellor Shrinivasa Varakhedi and other dignitaries, faculty members, officials and students were present at the event.

Tulip Garden.....

tourism season.

Located at the foothills of the Zabarwan Range and overlooking the picturesque Dal Lake, the garden—Asia's largest of its kind—is expected to attract thousands of tourists and locals eager to witness the annual floral spectacle.

Spread across terraced slopes, the garden is set to bloom with lakhs of tulips in a wide array of vibrant colours and varieties, offering a breathtaking view to visitors. Officials said that more than 70 varieties of tulips have been planted in the garden this year.

Besides tulips, other spring flowers including hyacinths, daffodils, muscari and ranunculus have also been planted to enhance the beauty of the garden and add diversity to the floral display.

The Tulip Garden attracts thousands of tourists, nature lovers and photographers from across the country and abroad during the blooming season every year, making it one of the most visited attractions in Kashmir during spring.

Authorities have made elaborate arrangements to manage the anticipated rush of visitors during the bloom period, including transport facilities, parking arrangements, security deployment and other necessary visitor amenities.

Notably, the news agency KNO had earlier reported that the Tulip Garden would be thrown open on March 16 and had carried detailed reports on preparations, varieties of flowers and arrangements ahead of the opening of Asia's largest tulip spectacle.

Dy CM Seeks.....

regarding enhancement of his cover should be taken by them based on threat assessment.

"If the authorities feel my security needs to be upgraded, they should do so, and if not, they may even withdraw whatever is there," he said, adding he has been elected to work for the people and not to focus on his personal security arrangements.

Terming the recent firing incident on Abdullah as unfortunate, Choudhary said bullets do not see religion or status, and can hit anyone.

In an official communication addressed to the senior superintendent of police (security), Jammu, the officer on special duty with the deputy CM said, "It is submitted that a bullet-resistant vehicle (Fortuner) has been requested for inclusion in the motorcade of deputy chief minister, on March 13 for (his) scheduled visit to Nowshera constituency, a border region, with effect from March 15. However, the same has not been provided.

"This request was made keeping in view of the prevailing security scenario and the recent tragic firing incident on Abdullah (Z+ NSG Protectee), where the deputy chief minister was also present and was in close proximity to the VVIP," the letter read.

He has also called for the replacement of old vehicles. "Further, the bulletproof vehicle, pilot, and scout vehicles currently deployed are mechanically unreliable and have resulted in serious and near-fatal incidents in the recent past.

"Despite repeated requests from this office to the concerned authorities for reviewing the security arrangements of the deputy chief minister and the replacement of the vehicle presently deployed in the motorcade with a new one, no effective corrective action has been taken," the letter reads.

It said that given the prevailing security scenario in Jammu and Kashmir and the nature of responsibilities of the deputy chief minister, which require frequent tours to far-flung and sensitive areas, movement without full and reliable security cover poses a significant risk. (Agencies)

Omar Reviews.....

Minister emphasized that the administration must remain vigilant and proactive to ensure that no artificial scarcity, hoarding or black marketing is allowed to take place in any district.

"I think the administration as a whole is well aware of the situation and also on top of things. I would just like to reiterate that while the Food and Supplies Department does its work, this must be complemented and supplemented in the districts," the Chief Minister said.

He directed all Deputy Commissioners to maintain strict oversight at the district level to ensure smooth supply and fair distribution of essential commodities. "Ensuring that there is no hoarding, artificial scarcity or black market conditions created will require strong oversight at the district level. Since all districts and Deputy Commissioners are connected to this meeting, please take these instructions on board," he said.

The Chief Minister further stressed that the administration must remain alert as the duration of the current crisis remains uncertain.

"We don't know how long this will last. It could last a couple of days, it could last a few weeks. Let us assume it may last longer than we are comfortable with. Therefore, the alert that we are on must continue to ensure that no artificial scarcity or black

marketing situations are created," he said.

He also directed the Information Department to keep the public regularly informed about the stock position and supply of essential commodities to prevent rumours and panic buying.

"Ensure that the Information Department keeps people informed on a regular basis so that we keep reassuring people about our strong position and the available supplies. By detailing the steps taken and the stock position, we can ensure that elements trying to misuse the situation are not able to do so," the Chief Minister said.

The Chief Minister also directed the administration to maintain constant vigil over the availability of commercial LPG, particularly in view of the ongoing Navratras, the upcoming Eid and the beginning of the tourist season. He called for taking inputs from stakeholders such as restaurateurs and hoteliers before any rationalization of commercial LPG supply is undertaken in view of tourist inflow expected and festive seasons ahead.

Earlier during the meeting, Minister Satish Sharma, who holds the portfolio of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, shared inputs and drew attention to certain elements that may attempt to exploit the prevailing situation. He assured the meeting that any unscrupulous elements trying to take advantage of the circumstances would be dealt with strictly and made an example of.

Similarly, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo stressed that Deputy Commissioners must ensure that no violations such as black marketing, hoarding or profiteering occur in their respective districts. He directed them to extend all possible support to the Legal Metrology and Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs departments to ensure effective monitoring and enforcement during the current situation.

Commissioner Secretary Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Saurabh Bhagat gave a detailed presentation on the supply and stock position of petroleum products and LPG in Jammu and Kashmir.

The presentation highlighted that despite the global disruptions affecting the stock position of petroleum products and LPG in Jammu and Kashmir remains stable.

The meeting was informed that adequate reserves of petrol, diesel and LPG are available across storage facilities and distributorships in J&K.

To ensure sustained availability and prevent misuse, several regulatory measures have been implemented.

The meeting was also informed that the Delivery Authentication Code (DAC) system has been introduced to ensure that LPG cylinders are delivered only to genuine consumers. Oil marketing companies have also launched an e-KYC campaign to verify customer authenticity and identify inactive or duplicate LPG connections.

Regarding non-domestic LPG supplies, a temporary cap of 20 percent of the average monthly consumption has been placed, while ensuring uninterrupted supply to essential institutions such as hospitals and educational establishments.

The presentation further informed that the Government of India has provided an ad-hoc allocation of 468 kilolitres of PDS Superior Kerosene Oil (SKO) for cooking and lighting purposes, primarily targeting vulnerable groups including Antyodaya Anna Yojana families.

Dealers Told.....

agencies," Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Ansuya Jamwal said.

The official said some households were attempting to procure multiple cooking gas cylinders, fearing a future supply shortage.

Jamwal also appealed to the public to report cases of overcharging or malpractice, adding that helpline numbers issued by the food and supplies department have been widely publicised.

Teams led by Jamwal inspected several LPG dealers, checking stock registers, booking records and delivery systems. The teams also interacted with customers who had gathered at outlets to collect cylinders directly, bypassing the home delivery mechanism.

"The customers should not visit outlets as cylinders will be delivered to their homes as per established practice. Dealers have been categorically directed to follow the home delivery system in letter and spirit. People should book cylinders through online modes," Jamwal told reporters.

She said that action had been initiated against some dealers found violating norms, while most were operating as per rules.

Jamwal said that the inspections were carried out due to complaints to assess ground realities after numerous complaints of delayed deliveries and mismanagement. "We received complaints that delivery dates were being repeatedly extended and cylinders were not reaching consumers. Therefore, we conducted field inspections along with officials from the Legal Metrology Department to verify the situation," she said.

At one agency, officials found over 2,200 pending deliveries. "In contrast, two other agencies inspected earlier were functioning properly with no pendency," she added. According to Jamwal, records showed that 342 consumers received cylinders on Monday and some balance deliveries from previous days were pending. She stressed that deliveries must be made in the order of bookings.

She warned consumers against panic buying and hoarding, noting that some households were attempting to procure multiple cylinders, fearing future shortages.

"As per government guidelines, in urban areas a new booking cannot be made within 25 days of the last delivery, and in rural areas the gap is 45 days," she said, urging people not to visit agencies physically unless necessary.

Earlier, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah chaired a meeting with deputy commissioners and officials

of the food and civil supplies department to review LPG and fuel stocks across Jammu and Kashmir, especially in view of the upcoming Eid and Navratri festivals.

Officials said that adequate stocks were available and strict action would be taken against hoarding and black marketing.

Police in Jammu also seized around 50 LPG cylinders allegedly stored illegally for black marketing and arrested those involved on Sunday, officials said.

An LPG dealer, however, maintained that there was no shortage of supply and attributed the situation to rumours and panic buying.

Authorities urged people to remain calm and assured an uninterrupted supply of essential commodities. (Agencies)

Shab-e-Qadr.....

Power," falls during the last ten days of the holy month of Ramadan and holds immense spiritual significance for Muslims.

It is believed to be the night when the first verses of the Holy Quran were revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The Holy Quran describes the night as "better than a thousand months," making worship and prayers on this night highly rewarding.

Besides Hazratbal, large congregations are also expected at several major shrines and mosques across Kashmir, including Makhdoom Sahib shrine, Khanqah-e-Moula, Asar-e-Sharif Soura and other prominent religious places, where special night-long prayers and religious gatherings will be held.

Religious scholars have also urged people to utilize the blessed night in prayers, repentance and charity, stressing that it is a night of forgiveness and divine mercy.

"This is the most blessed night of Ramadan. People spend the entire night in prayers, seeking forgiveness and blessings from Allah," said a local cleric in Srinagar.

Devotees said the night holds deep spiritual value and offers an opportunity for reflection and supplication. "We pray for peace, prosperity and the well-being of our families and society," said Mohammad Ashraf, a devotee preparing to visit Hazratbal shrine for the prayers.

Meanwhile, authorities have made elaborate arrangements to facilitate the devotees expected to attend the night-long prayers. Traffic police have issued advisories to regulate vehicular movement around Hazratbal and other major shrines, while additional public transport services are likely to be arranged to ferry worshippers.

Officials said arrangements regarding lighting, water supply, sanitation and security have also been put in place to ensure the smooth observance of the sacred night.

Meanwhile, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Valley's chief religious cleric took to X and shared: "On the most sacred night of 'Laylatul Qadr', when prayers and supplications resound in mosques seeking Allah's mercy and forgiveness, the central Jama Masjid Srinagar of Kashmir has once again been closed upon worshippers, and I have been placed under house arrest."

"Rulers fear prayers in a house of Almighty on such a night speaks volumes about their insecurity and the shrinking of space for religious practices," he added.

Notably, every year, Shab-e-Qadr draws an ocean of worshippers to mosques and shrines across Kashmir and parts of Jammu and Kashmir, with devotees spending the entire night engaged in supplications, recitation of the Quran and voluntary prayers in the hope of attaining Allah's mercy and forgiveness—(KNO)

LG Sinha, CM Omar.....

of Jammu and Kashmir, conveyed his heartiest greetings to the people on the auspicious occasion. In his message, he said that the holy night symbolizes the virtues of selfless service, compassion and divine grace. He prayed that the Almighty accepts the prayers of the faithful and continues to guide society on the path of love, unity and communal harmony.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also greeted the people of the Union Territory on the sacred night of Shab-e-Qadr. He described the occasion as a night of divine mercy, forgiveness and countless blessings that falls during the last ten days of the holy month of Ramadan. The Chief Minister said the night offers believers an opportunity to engage in prayers, seek forgiveness and renew their commitment to the values of compassion, humility and service to humanity. He expressed hope that the prayers offered on this blessed night would bring peace, prosperity and harmony to Jammu and Kashmir and the entire country, while urging people to remember the underprivileged and uphold the spirit of unity and brotherhood.

Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education Sakeena Itoo also extended warm greetings to the people. She said that on this holy night Almighty Allah revealed the Holy Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) for the guidance of mankind. She urged citizens to seek Allah's mercy and blessings and called upon people to support the less privileged, emphasizing that empathy, social harmony and community service reflect the true teachings of the Prophet (SAW). She also prayed for peace, progress and prosperity across Jammu and Kashmir. Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department Javid Ahmad Dar also greeted the people on the eve of Shab-e-Qadr. He highlighted the profound spiritual importance of the night, which the Holy Qur'an describes as "better than a thousand months." He said the blessed occasion provides believers an opportunity to seek forgiveness, divine mercy and spiritual renewal, and urged people to offer prayers for peace, brotherhood and the well-being of all.

Minister for FCS&CA, IT, Transport, Youth Services and Sports, Science and Technology Satish Sharma also extended greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. In his message, he noted that Shab-e-Qadr, also known as the Night of Power, marks the revelation of the Holy Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad (SAW). He said the occasion inspires believers to seek Allah's mercy and forgiveness while reaffirming their commitment to compassion, unity and service to humanity. He also urged people to support the less privileged and promote social harmony during the holy month of Ramadan.

Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary also extended his greetings, stating that Shab-e-Qadr holds immense religious and spiritual significance for the Muslim community as a time of devotion, reflection and prayers. He said people pray for peace, prosperity and the well-being of all on this sacred night and expressed hope that the occasion would further strengthen harmony and brotherhood in society. He also noted that Jammu and Kashmir has long been a symbol of communal harmony where people share each other's festivals with mutual respect.

Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs Javed Ahmed Rana also conveyed warm greetings on the occasion. He described Shab-e-Qadr as the most sacred night of the holy month of Ramadan, offering believers an opportunity to seek the mercy and blessings of Almighty Allah through prayers, reflection and acts of charity. He urged people to spend the night in devotion and to pray for lasting peace, prosperity and well-being in Jammu and Kashmir and across the nation. He also appealed to citizens to remember the poor and the needy and extend help to the underprivileged so that the true spirit of Ramadan reaches every household.

Rs 364 crore.....

"During 2024-25, the Ministry of Law & Justice, Legislative Department, reimbursed an amount of Rs 81.19 crore to the UT Government on account of expenditure incurred on the Parliamentary elections 2024," the document states.

As per rules, the expenditure on Lok Sabha elections is borne by the Union Government, while the cost of Assembly elections is borne by the State/Union Territory.

The election expenditure was primarily utilised for security arrangements, allowances of polling staff, transportation of election materials, voter awareness campaigns, and setting up polling infrastructure across constituencies. It is worth mentioning that the Lok Sabha elections in Jammu & Kashmir were conducted in five phases between April 19 and May 20. Four months later, the Assembly elections were held in three phases from September 18 to October 1—(KNO)

CS Reviews.....

discipline, teamwork, perseverance and a sense of responsibility. He observed that active participation in sports as well as creative pursuits such as art, music and cultural activities helps channel the energy of youth in a constructive direction while nurturing confidence and leadership qualities, competitive spirit in them.

He noted that in the present context, when drug abuse has emerged as a serious concern affecting sections of youth in Jammu and Kashmir, promoting sports and creative engagement becomes even more important. He said that such platforms provide a positive environment and meaningful opportunities that keep young people productively engaged and away from harmful influences. He stressed that sustained investment in sports and creative initiatives at the grassroots level can equip youth with valuable life lessons, strengthen their resilience and guide them towards a disciplined, healthy and purposeful future.

Speaking on the occasion, Commissioner Secretary Youth Services & Sports, Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary presented a detailed overview of the department's initiatives aimed at expanding youth participation in sporting activities while simultaneously strengthening sports infrastructure across districts so that young talent can access quality training facilities closer to their homes.

He stated that the department remains committed to providing year-round opportunities for youth to participate in sporting as well as creative activities. Efforts are also underway to bring national and international sporting events to Jammu and Kashmir, which not only help nurture local talent but also generate enthusiasm among sports lovers by providing opportunities to witness leading athletes performing in the Union Territory.

The Commissioner Secretary took this opportunity to inform that the first-ever Draft Youth Policy for Jammu and Kashmir has been prepared to provide a strategic roadmap for youth empowerment, leadership development and sports promotion. Sports-based interventions are also being integrated into the Nasha Mukta J&K campaign through themed tournaments, youth ambassadors, awareness drives and training of coaches to identify early signs of substance abuse among youth, he added.

Presenting the performance of the Directorate of Youth Services & Sports, Director General YS&S, Anuradha Gupta informed the meeting that mass participation programmes launched by the department have witnessed

an overwhelming response from youth across Jammu and Kashmir.

She informed that the flagship grassroots sports league "Leagues of Classics – Enjoy the Game 1.0" has already engaged more than 2.23 lakh youth as of March 13, 2026 in sports such as cricket, football and volleyball at zonal and district levels, with participation expected to reach around 2.53 lakh by April 2026.

To promote winter sports among youth in mountainous regions of the Union Territory, snowskiing training programmes were organised during January–February 2026 at Gulmarg, Gurez Valley, Baderwah and Sonamarg. These programmes engaged young participants in the Under-14, Under-17 and Under-19 categories, providing them with exposure to winter sports and professional training.

The meeting also reviewed the successful organisation of "SRIJAN – The Making of a Legacy," the first national-level sports conference hosted by the Directorate of Sports earlier this year. The conference brought together sports administrators, policymakers and experts from across the country to deliberate on strategies for strengthening grassroots sports ecosystems.

The meeting was further informed that online engagement initiatives conducted through the MyBharat portal have significantly expanded outreach among young people. The number of registered youth on the portal increased from 3.21 lakh in December 2025 to more than 7.10 lakh by March 2026, reflecting growing participation in online fitness challenges, quizzes and sports awareness programmes.

Additionally, the department has uploaded over 10,000 youth engagement activities on the Youth Engagement and Empowerment Portal (YEEP), placing it among the leading departments in the Union Territory in terms of youth outreach and activity reporting.

The Chief Secretary was also apprised of the extensive calendar of sports and youth activities planned in the coming months. These include inter-school, district and UT-level competitions in 36 sports disciplines recognised by the School Games Federation of India for the U-14, U-17 and U-19 categories, organisation of "Leagues of Classics – Enjoy the Game 2.0" across all 20 districts, and "Aarohan 2026 – Viksit J&K Young Leaders' Dialogue and National Youth Festival" scheduled to be held at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre in Srinagar with participation of around 1,400 youth from across the country.

Other initiatives include Mini Marathon 2.0 (Srinagar Edition) to promote physical fitness among youth, the "Back to Bachpan" initiative aimed at reviving traditional games such as Gilli Danda and Stapoo among children, as well as Spring and Autumn Art Festivals to encourage creativity and cultural expression among youth across districts.

The Directorate also proposed the establishment of cluster-based sports clubs in 788 school clusters across Jammu and Kashmir to identify and nurture sporting talent in the 8-14 years age group through scientific training and talent identification protocols aligned with the framework of the Sports Authority of India.

Presenting the performance of the Sports Council, Secretary Nuzhat Gul informed the meeting that the Union Territory has witnessed a significant surge in sports participation during the current financial year.

Fresh Snowfall.....

snowfall.

They said the higher reaches, including Pir Ki Gali along the Mughal Road in Shopian district of south Kashmir, Zojilla axis, Gurez in north Kashmir's Bandipora, Sadhna Top in north Kashmir's Kupwara, and Sinthan Top, connecting Anantnag in south Kashmir to Kishtwar in Jammu region, received heavy snowfall.

Sadhna Top has received over 12 inches of fresh snowfall, while Sinthan Top around six inches, they added.

The officials said the snowfall has led to the closure of the vital road links in the valley, including the Gurez-Bandipora road, Sinthan-Kishtwar road, and the Mughal Road, the alternate road connecting the Kashmir Valley with the Jammu region.

They said vehicular movement has also been suspended on the Srinagar-Leh highway due to accumulation of snow at Zojilla Pass.

The plains of the valley, including Srinagar, were lashed by rains which continued intermittently till Monday morning.

Srinagar city recorded 15.9 mm of rainfall over the last 24 hours.

Pahalgam tourist resort, which also serves as one of the base camps for the annual Amarnath Yatra, received 15.7 mm of rains.

The wet weather has brought down the temperatures across the valley.

Srinagar city recorded the maximum temperature of 11.5 degrees Celsius on Sunday, which was nearly four degrees lower than normal, the officials said.

The other weather stations across the valley also registered below normal temperatures.

The lower temperatures broke the trend of unusually higher day temperatures prevalent in the valley over the last few weeks.

The Meteorological Department has forecast erratic weather till March 20.

It said there is a possibility of a brief spell of light rain or snow in the higher reaches, at isolated places on Monday and Tuesday,



Govt to ensure steady, uninterrupted supply of essentials: Satish Sharma

Cautions of strict action against hoarding, black marketing'

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, MAR 16: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Transport, IT, Youth Services & Sports, Science and Technology, Satish Sharma, today said that the government is closely monitoring the situation to ensure that the supply of essential commodities across Jammu and Kashmir remains smooth and uninterrupted despite global disturbances.

Addressing the media, the Minister said that the impact of the prevailing international situation is being felt across the world as well as in Jammu and Kashmir. However, he assured the people that the administration is taking all necessary measures to safeguard the interests of the public and prevent any disruption in availability of essential commodities.

Issuing a stern warning to those attempting to exploit the situation, the Minister said strict action will be taken against anyone involved in black marketing, hoarding or creating artificial scarcity of essential commodities. "Whether it is an LPG distributor,

a petrol pump owner or any dealer of essential commodities, if anyone is found indulging in such illegal activities, they will be black-listed and made an example of. The government will not tolerate any attempt to exploit the public during such circumstances," maintained the Minister.

Satish Sharma informed that he is personally monitoring the situation on an hourly basis and recently participated in a high-level meeting chaired by the Chief Minister to review the preparedness of various departments.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister directed the departments including Civil Supplies and Legal Metrology to maintain strict oversight to ensure smooth supply and prevent irregularities.

The Minister said that more than 20 teams led by the Legal Metrology Department have been deployed across the districts to monitor the situation round the clock and ensure that consumers do not face any inconvenience.

Highlighting the steps being taken to augment the supply, Sharma said that the government has written to the Union Minister seeking enhancement of LPG

commercial quota supply to meet the growing demand from commercial establishments such as hotels and restaurants.

"The tourism season has begun, Ramadan is underway and Navratri is approaching. After a challenging period of several months, Jammu and Kashmir is gradually returning to normalcy. We expect record tourism this season and it is our responsibility to ensure that all sectors, including the hospitality industry, receive adequate support," he said.

Satish Sharma added that tourism bookings for the coming weeks are already encouraging and expressed confidence that the Union Territory will witness an all-time high influx of tourists this season. "While some forces try to destabilize peace, the people of Jammu and Kashmir continue to strengthen the economy through tourism and development," he remarked.

The Minister also informed that hospitals and educational institutions will continue to receive 100 percent supply of LPG to ensure uninterrupted services.

Providing an update on the supply chain, Sharma said that vessels

carrying LPG are already enroute and expected to reach the ports soon, which will further stabilize the supply situation. He also announced that the government has decided to provide 2.5 litre of kerosene oil per family under the AAY category as a relief measure. He explained that although Jammu and Kashmir had earlier been declared a kerosene-free region, the sudden surge in demand for alternative cooking options has necessitated it.

The Minister said that the J&K administration has requested the Government of India to enhance kerosene allocation and provide additional support to the Union Territory so that other categories are also covered during the current circumstances.

Satish Sharma also urged the public to remain calm and avoid panic buying, stating that unnecessary stockpiling only creates artificial shortages and benefits unscrupulous elements.

"We appeal to the public not to fall prey to rumors. Some mischievous elements try to spread panic during such situations for personal gain. The government is fully prepared and there is no need

for the people to panic," he said.

To counter misinformation, the Minister said that the department has coordinated with the Directorate of Information, district administrations and other stakeholders to launch awareness campaigns and ensure that accurate information reaches the public. He further informed that district-level task forces have been constituted and vehicles have been deployed to maintain real-time monitoring of supply and distribution.

The Minister reiterated that any complaint regarding irregularities will be addressed promptly and strict action will follow in case of violations.

"As the Chief Minister has said, this situation may continue for a few weeks. Therefore, we are working on a war footing to ensure that the people of Jammu and Kashmir face no inconvenience on this account," he added.

The Minister appealed to the citizens to cooperate with the administration and maintain patience, emphasizing that unity, compassion and responsible behaviour will help overcome the present challenges.

422 lakh person days generated under MGNREGA; Secretary RDD reviews progress, sets deadlines

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MAR 16: Secretary, Rural Development Department (RDD) and Panchayati Raj, Mohammad Aijaz Asad, today chaired a comprehensive review meeting to assess the physical and financial progress under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) for the current financial year 2025-26 and to lay the groundwork for FY 2026-27.

During the meeting, the Secretary reviewed key performance indicators including overall expenditure, employment generation, completion of works, asset geo-tagging, e-KYC status and preparation of the Annual Action Plan for the upcoming financial



KVIB Anantnag organises District Level Bankers Meeting for quick disposal of cases

HT NEWS NETWORK

ANANTNAG, MAR 16: The District Office of the (KVIB), Anantnag, organized a District Level Bankers Meeting today at Anantnag for quick disposal of cases.

The meeting was attended by distinguished officer and representative from various banks, to review the progress of various schemes being implemented by J&K KVIB in the district. The Lead District Manager (LDM) and representatives from various banks were also present.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held regarding the issues related to sanction, Pending claims and rejection of certain cases and rectification of pending cases. The problem causing delays in the timely processing of these cases under PMEGP /JKREGP were also deliberated upon so that corrective measures could be taken to facilitate eligible beneficiaries.

Officials also reviewed rectification cases pending with banks and examined the reasons behind the rejection of certain applications so that corrective measures can be taken to facilitate eligible beneficiaries.

The issue of pending claims under JKREGP scheme was also deliberated upon. Participants stressed the need for better coordination between banks and KVIB to ensure timely sanctioning of cases and effective implementation of the schemes.

MLA Shangus-Anantnag East Lays Foundation Stones for Three School Buildings costing Rs 2.20 Cr

HT NEWS NETWORK

ANANTNAG, MAR 16: Shangus-Anantnag East MLA Riyaz Ahmad Khan on Monday laid the foundation stones for the construction of three additional school buildings at Chake Sheikhgund, Nagenaren and Chake Brah in his constituency. The projects will be executed at an estimated cost of ₹2.20 crore.

Speaking on the occasion, the MLA said that the construction of additional school buildings in these far-flung areas will significantly improve educational infrastructure and provide better learning opportunities for local students. He emphasized that strengthening the education sector remains a key priority of the government led by Omar Abdullah.

Riyaz Ahmad Khan stated that the government is committed to boosting the education sector along with other developmental sectors in remote areas of the Union Territory. He said that providing better infrastructure, qualified teachers and adequate staff in schools across the ADE is among the government's top priorities.

The MLA also highlighted the growing progress of the Scheduled Tribe



(ST) community, noting that many youths from the community are successfully clearing prestigious competitive examinations such as IAS and KAS, thereby bringing laurels and recognition to their community.

Islamic Calligraphy Exhibition Organised by Cultural Academy to Mark Revelation of the Holy Qur'an

Speakers describe Islamic calligraphy as a great spiritual and cultural heritage

JAMEEL ANSARI

SRINAGAR, MAR 16: To mark the auspicious occasion of the Revelation of the Holy Qur'an, the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages organised an Islamic Calligraphy Exhibition at Government Higher Secondary School Jawahar Nagar. The exhibition aimed to promote interest among students in the art of Islamic calligraphy and highlight the aesthetic beauty of the Holy Qur'an.

The exhibition was inaugurated by Chief Education Officer Srinagar, Jb. Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Bhat. Speaking on the occasion, he appreciated the beautiful calligraphic

works displayed in the exhibition and said that Islamic calligraphy represents a rich spiritual and cultural heritage through which the verses of the Holy Qur'an are presented in a graceful and artistic manner. He added that such programmes play an important role in nurturing the creative abilities of students while connecting them with their religious and cultural traditions.

The programme began with the recitation of verses from the Holy Qur'an by class 10 student Tauseer Meraj of GHSS Jawahar Nagar, while Ubaidullah presented a Naat-e-Rasool (poetic tribute to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ), filling the gathering with devotion and

reverence.

On the occasion, former Chief Editor (Urdu) of the Cultural Academy and noted calligrapher Mohammad Ashraf Tak delivered the keynote address on Islamic calligraphy. He said that Islamic calligraphy is a centuries-old artistic tradition and an important cultural legacy of the Muslim world. He emphasised that writing the verses of the Holy Qur'an in beautiful script is not merely an art but a harmonious blend of spirituality and aesthetics. He also encouraged students to take interest in learning and preserving this noble art.

Chief Editor, Arabic, Cultural Academy Mufti Shafiq-ur-Rehman delivered the

welcome address and warmly welcomed the guests and participants. In his speech, he said that the occasion of the Revelation of the Holy Qur'an reminds Muslims to strengthen their bond with the Qur'an and spread its message, while Islamic calligraphy serves as a beautiful medium to present the divine message of the Qur'an.

Calligraphy Officer of the Jammu and Kashmir Cultural Academy Mohammad Anwar Lolabi also spoke on the occasion and said that Islamic calligraphy is a meaningful and spiritually enriching art that presents the verses of the Holy Qur'an in an elegant manner. He added that such exhibitions aim to inspire the

younger generation to develop interest in this great artistic tradition and help preserve it.

Students actively participated in the Islamic Calligraphy Exhibition.

At the end of the programme, Principal of Government Higher Secondary School Jawahar Nagar Huma Mir presented the vote of thanks and expressed gratitude to the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, distinguished guests, teachers and students for their cooperation in making the event a success.

The proceedings of the programme were conducted by Assistant Editor of the Cultural Academy Dr. Shabnam Rafiq.

year. He directed officers to ensure that all incomplete works under the scheme are completed at the earliest. He observed that a new scheme is likely to replace the existing one in the near future, making it imperative for departments to complete all ongoing works without delay.

The Secretary was informed that the UT has recorded a total expenditure of Rs. 1,307.1 crore during FY 2025-26, of which Rs. 1,133.8 crore (86.7%) has been spent on wages. Material expenditure stood at Rs. 133.3 crore, while administrative costs amounted to Rs. 39.9 crore.

Aijaz Asad said that 7,23,412 households were provided employment across the 20 districts, generating 421.69 lakh person-days (PDs).

Emphasizing accountability, he instructed the Assistant Commissioners Development (ACDs) to conduct daily reviews and ensure that monitoring remains directive and result-oriented. He urged ACDs to demonstrate leadership at the district level and personally ensure completion of works within stipulated timelines.

Highlighting the urgency as the financial year draws to a close, the Secretary made it clear that no negligence or delay will be tolerated and directed that 72,000 works must be completed by March 25.

He also informed that the department has recently released Rs. 175 crore to the districts and directed that the funds be utilized for clearance of pending liabilities so that beneficiaries and stakeholders receive their due payments without delay.

Aijaz Asad further instructed officials to ensure 100 percent completion of e-KYC under the scheme.

Reviewing the Yekdhara GP Planning status, he directed that the process be completed by March 19, stressing the need to clear all pending cases. He also asked the Directors of Jammu and Kashmir divisions to closely monitor the process to ensure timely completion.

The Secretary directed that the Annual Action Plan for 2026-27 be finalized and submitted at the earliest. He also instructed that the geo-tagging of assets be completed by March 22.

Emphasizing awareness and outreach, he called for effective implementation of the Samvaad (IEC campaign) to enhance public participation and awareness about departmental schemes.

The Secretary urged ACDs and other officials to discharge their duties with dedication, integrity and transparency, warning that strict action will be taken against any employee found involved in violation of the laid down norms.

He further advised that upcoming plans should focus on sustainable, community-benefiting works, including innovative and theme-based projects, and directed that all social audit issues be resolved promptly. The Secretary reiterated that all deadlines must be adhered to strictly and directed both Directors to conduct regular reviews to ensure progress on the ground.

The meeting was attended by Director RDD Kashmir Shabir Hussain Bhat, Additional Secretary Waseem Raja, Superintending Engineers (REW), Assistant Commissioners Development and Executive Engineers of all districts.

Rana inaugurates water release into Ranbir Canal

Praises timely desilting; assures adequate irrigation for farmers

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

AKHNOOR, MARCH 16: Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmed Rana, today inaugurated the release of water supply into the main Ranbir Canal at its intake structure near Steel Bridge in Akhnoor, ensuring the timely availability of irrigation water for agricultural purposes across the canal's command areas.

Among those present on the occasion were MLA Akhnoor Mohan Lal, MLA Nagrota Devyani Rana, Chief Engineer I&FC Jammu Manoj Gupta and other senior officers of the Irrigation and Flood Control (I & FC) Department.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that the Ranbir Canal plays a vital role in supporting agriculture in the command area, providing irrigation to vast tracts of farmland from Akhnoor to R. S. Pura. He assured the farming community that adequate water supply would be maintained during the forthcoming irrigation season to meet the agricultural requirements.

The Minister also highlighted that the mandatory desilting of canals had been carried out in advance to enhance the discharge



capacity of the canal system and ensure that irrigation water reaches even the villages located at the tail end of the network.

The Minister personally oversaw the preparatory works, directing the department to complete them efficiently.

Pertinently, the annual desilting of the canal network is a planned maintenance exercise aimed at restoring the canal system to its original design capacity by removal of accumulated silt, weeds and other obstructions from the canal bed and banks.

This ensures smooth and efficient flow of irrigation water across the distribution network, including remote and tail-end areas that often face supply constraints.

The officials informed that the desilting works are being undertaken during the canal closure

period from January to March, when irrigation demand is at its lowest, thereby minimising disruption to agricultural activities while preparing the canal network for the upcoming crop cycle.

Notably, for the past three consecutive years, the Irrigation and Flood Control Department has succeeded in completing the desilting works within two months instead of the earlier three-month schedule.

As a result, the canal is now being recharged in March, nearly a month earlier than the previous practice of reopening around April 13. Commending the efforts of the department, the Minister praised the officers and field staff of I & FC for their dedication in completing the desilting works ahead of schedule. He directed that any remaining works be completed at the earliest to ensure uninterrupted irrigation during the upcoming agricultural season.

Rana further stated that several new projects are in the pipeline to strengthen the flood protection infrastructure across the region, aimed at safeguarding the lives, agricultural land and public property from potential flood risks.

J&K Govt rolls out PM-RAHAT scheme to save road accident victims

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU MAR 16 : The Jammu and Kashmir government has launched the PM-Road Accident Victims Hospitalization and Assured Treatment (PM-RAHAT) Scheme, aiming to provide timely medical aid to the road accident victims. According to an official communique received in this regard from Transport Department, the initiative ensures cashless treatment up to Rs. 1.5 lakh per victim in over 140 designated hospitals during the critical "Golden Hour", covering up to 7 days from the accident date, thereby ensuring immediate medical care and significantly improving the chances of survival.

All the concerned departments including the Transport, Health, Police and district administration shall work in close coordination for effective implementation of the scheme besides ensuring prompt response in case of road accidents.

The government has urged the public to report road accidents to the nearest police station or control room, helping the victims reach the designated hospitals quickly so that timely treatment can be provided under the scheme. The good Samaritans, a Rah-Veer, assisting the accident victims will receive Rs. 25,000 and a Certificate of Appreciation. In case more than one person assists in rescuing the victim, the award amount shall be shared equally among them. In addition, 10 National Level Awards of Rs. 1,00,000 each will be given annually to the most deserving Rah-Veers. The scheme will facilitate immediate medical care to the road accident victims and improve their chances of survival.

DC Kulgam chairs Monthly District-Level NCORD Committee Meeting

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM, MARCH 16: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, today chaired a meeting of the District-Level Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) Committee at the Mini Secretariat Kulgam to review measures aimed at curbing substance abuse and narcotic trade in the district.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Kulgam, Viqar Ahmed Giri; Additional Superintendent of Police Kulgam, Mohd Aftab; Joint Director Planning, Malik Suhail; SDM DH Pora, Bashir-ul-Hassan; ACR, Riyaz Ahmad Shah; ACD, Bilal Ahmad Kamgar; Tehsildars and other members of the NCORD Committee attended the meeting.

During the meeting, a detailed review was held regarding the implementation of decisions taken in previous sessions and the actions initiated by enforcement agencies to combat the drug menace.

It was informed that eight drug peddlers have been arrested and FIRs registered against them.

The DC was also apprised that the district has achieved the 100 percent target for installation of CCTV cameras under the NCORD initiative. Further, it was shared that inspections are being conducted across pharmacies, and action is being taken against medical shops for violations related to maintaining sale and purchase records during the current month.

The DC directed the concerned departments to intensify efforts to curb drug abuse and strengthen community involvement in its prevention.

He urged all departments and stakeholders to work in close coordination to ensure the effective eradication of the drug menace from the district.

Later, the DC also reviewed District Level NDPS Committee meet.

DC Kulgam reviews implementation of Poshan projects

Stresses strengthening ECCE services

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM, MARCH 16: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, today chaired a comprehensive review meeting to assess the progress and implementation of Poshan projects across the district, with a special focus on strengthening Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) services at Anganwadi Centres.

During the meeting, the DC emphasized the importance of effective implementation of Poshan initiatives aimed at

improving the nutritional status, health, and early learning outcomes of children.

He highlighted that ECCE forms a crucial component in the holistic development of children in the 3-6 year age group and stressed the need to ensure child-friendly learning environments at all Anganwadi Centres.

The DC directed the concerned officers to ensure the availability of adequate learning materials, regular pre-school activities, and proper monitoring of ECCE sessions at the grassroots level.

Various aspects of the Poshan



programme implementation were also reviewed, including growth monitoring, supplementary nutrition, awareness campaigns, and inter-departmental

convergence for better service delivery. The DC stressed the need for strong coordination among departments to further strengthen

ECCE activities and ensure that every eligible child benefits from nutrition, health, and early education services under the Poshan programme.

The meeting concluded with directions for intensified monitoring and timely reporting to effectively achieve the objectives of Poshan initiatives in the district.

District Programme Officer, Zaheer Ahmad Kaifi; Joint Director Planning, Malik Suhail; Chief Education Officer (CEO) and Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs) attended the meeting.

DC Kulgam chairs District Road Safety Committee meeting; Finalizes Road Safety Plan

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM, MARCH 16: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, today chaired a meeting of the District Road Safety Committee at the DC Office, Kulgam, to finalize the district Road Safety Plan and review measures aimed at improving road safety across the district. During the meeting, the DC emphasized the urgent need for strengthening of District Hospital, Sub-District Hospitals (SDHs) and Primary Health Centres (PHCs) on the e-DAR portal to ensure timely reporting and management of road accident cases. He also stressed the effective

implementation of the PM RAHAT scheme to facilitate prompt assistance to accident victims.

The DC issued strict directions to the concerned departments for the implementation of the norms and guidelines of the Supreme Court Committee on Road Safety (SCORS) and the Road Safety Policy 2025.

He called for coordinated efforts among all stakeholders to strengthen road safety mechanisms in the district.

Special focus was laid on engineering-based remedial measures, including the identification and rectification of accident-prone black spots on major roads. The DC directed

the concerned departments to accelerate the installation of crash barriers and road safety signages at vulnerable locations to minimize accidents and enhance commuter safety.

The meeting also reviewed the overall road safety scenario in the district and discussed strategies to ensure better traffic management, awareness generation and strict enforcement of road safety regulations.

Among others, the meeting was attended by ADC, SE, R&B; Joint Director Planning, Additional SP, ACR, Executive Engineer, R&B, PMGSY, ARTO, CMO and other officers from Police, R&B, Transport and Traffic.

DC Budgam reviews progress under District Capex Budget 2025-26, CDF, DMRRR

Directs officers to ensure 100% fund utilization

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BUDGAM, MARCH 16: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan, today chaired a review meeting at Conference hall of DC Office Complex Budgam, to assess the progress of developmental works being executed under the District Capex Budget 2025-26, Constituency Development Fund (CDF), and DMRRR (Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation and Restoration) (UT Capex) 2025.

The meeting was attended by key officers and sectoral heads who reviewed physical and financial progress, discussed bottlenecks, and examined the status of works under execution across various departments.

The DC directed officers to ensure 100% utilization of available



funds, timely completion of ongoing projects in the District.

He instructed the RDD and other departments to speed up execution and complete all tendering and allotment within the prescribed time frame.

Emphasising transparency, quality, and adherence to timelines, the DC said that effective resource utilization and strict monitoring are vital for the timely creation of public assets.

He also directed departments lagging behind to expedite works, focus on people-centric projects, and ensure third-party quality checks for accountability.

A block-wise review of CDF works was also conducted with respective BDOs, along with an assessment of financial and physical progress under the Capex Budget. The DC added that no

compromise on quality will be tolerated and directed all executing agencies to complete all pending projects within set timelines. He also directed the concerned officers to ensure timely completion of works under the Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation and Restoration (DMRRR) sector with focus on strengthening disaster preparedness, mitigation measures, and restoration of essential infrastructure in vulnerable areas of the District.

The meeting was attended by Joint Director Planning Javid Ahmad Najar; CEO, ACD, ACP, Executive Engineers from PWD, Jal Shakti, KPDC, all BDOs and officers from Agriculture, Education, Youth Services & Sports, Health, and other departments.

SWD Srinagar organises Planation Drive under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, MARCH 16: Social Welfare Department (SWD) Srinagar organized a plantation drive under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative today.

The drive was conducted by SANKALP - Hub for Empowerment of Women (HEW), Mission Shakti Srinagar across various Child Care Institutions of district Srinagar, including Observation Home Harwan and Palaash/Paresha Shalimar.

The plantation drive was organized with the objective of promoting the importance and dignity of the girl child while encouraging environmental responsibility among the community. Under the initiative, saplings were planted in the name of girl children, symbolizing growth, care, protection, and the nurturing of both nature and society.

Students, faculty members, and officials from SANKALP-HEW Mission Shakti Srinagar actively participated in the programme and contributed to the plantation activities within the Child Care Institutions.

The event served as an opportunity to engage young minds in discussions on gender equality, environmental conservation, and social responsibility.

The drive aimed to promote awareness about the importance and value of the girl child in society, encourage environmental conservation through plantation activities, inspire students and youth to participate in sustainable and socially responsible initiatives, strengthen the message of gender equality and women's empowerment.

During the event, participants also pledged to nurture and care for the planted saplings, reflecting the collective responsibility of society to protect the environment and support the growth, development, and dignity of every girl child.

The initiative highlighted the strong message that just like a sapling needs care and protection to grow into a strong tree, every girl child deserves equal opportunities, support, and encouragement to flourish in society.

Javid Dar visits Zawoora CoE; emphasises research-based practices to support farmers, boost horticulture sector

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, MARCH 16: Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar, today visited the Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Horticulture at Zawoora to review its functioning and assess the technological interventions being adopted to enhance the horticultural crop productivity in the Kashmir Valley.

The Minister took stock of the facilities available at the centre and enquired about the modern technologies and innovative practices being implemented to improve the crop yield and quality. He emphasized the importance of adopting advanced horticultural techniques and strengthening research-based practices to support the farmers and boost the horticulture sector.



Highlighting the significance of traditional horticultural crops of the Valley, Javid Ahmad Dar stressed that special attention must be given to preserving and promoting indigenous varieties of walnuts and almonds. He noted that these crops possess strong potential in the face of changing climatic conditions and can play

a vital role in strengthening the region's horticultural economy.

The Minister also directed the department to ensure wider dissemination of high-quality planting material and modern horticultural practices among the farmers so that they can benefit from improved productivity and better market opportunities.

Director Horticulture Kashmir, Vikas Anand, briefed the Minister about the initiatives undertaken by the department to promote fruit cultivation and strengthen horticulture infrastructure in the region. He informed that the Centre of Excellence at Zawoora is providing high-quality varieties of walnuts, almonds and other fruit plants to the growers, aimed at enhancing the productivity and maintaining superior quality standards.

The Minister appreciated the efforts of the department and reiterated the government's commitment towards supporting the farmers and expanding the horticulture sector through innovation, research and improved planting material.

MLA Lal Chowk Sheikh Ahsan Ahmed and MLA Chanapora Mushtaq Guroo accompanied the Minister during the visit.

Arrangements for upcoming religious festivities reviewed at Ganderbal

HT NEWS NETWORK

GANDERBAL, MARCH 16: To review preparations for the upcoming religious occasions of Shab-e-Qadr, Eid-ul-Fitr, Navroz, Navratri and Ramnavmi, the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Ganderbal, Syed Fahim Bihaji today chaired a meeting of officers, here.

The meeting focused on ensuring coordinated and efficient arrangements for the smooth observance of these religious occasions across the district.

The ADC emphasized that all departments must work in close coordination and ensure that necessary facilities are put in place well in advance on the auspicious occasions of Shab-e-Qadr, Eid-ul-Fitr, Navroz, Navratri and Ramnavmi.

He directed the concerned departments to ensure proper arrangements for traffic regulation, parking, sanitation, street lighting, drinking water, power supply and healthcare services, particularly at major mosques, shrines, temples and other places of large gatherings.

Reviewing the preparedness of various departments, the ADC stressed uninterrupted power supply during the auspicious days and asked the concerned authorities to ensure adequate drinking water availability. Deployment of water tankers at prominent religious places was also directed to facilitate devotees.

Municipal Authorities and Rural Development Department were instructed to maintain cleanliness across the district including at congregation sites, Mosques, Shrines and Temples and ensure proper functioning of street lights at key locations. Municipal Council Ganderbal was also directed to place mobile convenience at appropriate place near Eidgah Ganderbal to facilitate public.

For smooth traffic management, the ADC directed the Traffic Police and ARTO to ensure availability of transportation to ferry devotees to religious places including Hazratbal, Jinab Sahib Soura besides others and prepare a comprehensive traffic and route plan, ensure proper regulation of vehicular movement.

They were also directed to arrange transport facilities from Wandhama Transit Camp to Kheerbhawani Temple for the



convenience of devotees during Navratri and Ramnavmi.

The Health Department was asked to establish first aid and medical camps equipped with staff, ambulances and essential medicines at main congregation places and major Shrines besides temples. The Fire and Emergency Services were directed to remain on alert and ensure round-the-clock readiness.

The ADC stressed all concerned officers to work with added zeal and utmost coordination for the seamless and hassle-free culmination of large congregations of Shab-e-Qadr, Eid-ul-Fitr, Navroz, Navratri and Ramnavmi across the district.

To prevent black marketing and hoarding, the ADC instructed enforcement teams to intensify market inspections and take strict action against violators, hoarders, while ensuring availability of quality, essential commodities.

The ADC urged all officers to work with added dedication and synergy to ensure smooth, peaceful and hassle-free observance of these important religious occasions across the district.

The meeting was attended by Sub-divisional Magistrate Kangan, Chief Agriculture Officer, Chief Medical Officer, Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti; ARTO, Tehsildars, Assistant Director FCS&CA, officers of Fire & Emergency Services, Legal Metrology, Police and other concerned departments.

Census 2027: Three-Day Training for Charge Officers commences in Baramulla

HT NEWS NETWORK

BARAMULLA, MARCH 16: In preparation for the upcoming Census of India 2027, a three-day training programme for Charge Officers commenced today at the main meeting hall of DC Office Baramulla for Phase-I (House Listing and Housing Census - HLO).

The training is being conducted by the Principal Census Officer in collaboration with the District Administration Baramulla.



The training programme was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Syed Altaf Hussain Musvi; Chief Planning Officer, Nissar Ahmad; Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Arshad Ahmad Khan; SDM Uri, Prince Kumar; SDM Pattan, Gulzar Ahmad; SDM Gulmarg, National Level Master Trainers, and tehsildars from all tehsils of district Baramulla and officials associated with the census operations from across the district.

The training programme aimed to equip Charge Officers with the necessary knowledge and technical skills required for the smooth and efficient conduct of the House Listing and Housing Census, which forms the first and foundational phase of the national census exercise. During the training sessions, master trainers and experts provided detailed orientation on various aspects of the census operations including roles and responsibilities of Charge Officers, use of digital enumeration platforms, supervision mechanisms, field verification procedures, and data quality assurance protocols. The participants were familiarized with the formats, schedules, and instructions prescribed for the House Listing and Housing Census (HLO).

The training programme will further continue for three days, during which demonstrations and interactive sessions will be conducted to ensure that the officers gain a comprehensive understanding of the census methodology and operational framework.

Multi-Departmental team conducts inspection at Imamsahib, Rs 2200 fine imposed on Spot

HT NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN, MARCH 16: A joint inspection drive was conducted today at Imamsahib area of Shopian by various departments including Food Safety, Police and Food Supplies to ensure compliance with quality and safety standards.

The inspection team was headed by Tehsildar Imamsahib who checked several

restaurants and establishments to verify adherence to prescribed norms related to food safety and enforcement.

During the inspection, violations were noticed at some establishments, upon which a fine of Rs 2200 was imposed on the spot. The team strictly warned the shopkeepers to maintain proper hygiene, keep valid licenses and follow government regulations.



District Admin Bandipora conducts IEC Awareness Programmes under Nasha Mukht Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan

HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, MARCH 16: Continuing its intensified campaign against substance abuse, the District Administration Bandipora on Monday organized a series of IEC (Information, Education and Communication) awareness programmes at multiple locations across the district under the ongoing Nasha Mukht Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan. The awareness programmes were conducted at Panchayat Halqas including Chittibanday-C (Bandipora Block), Kehnusa (Aloosa Block), Gundpora

Rampora (Arin Block), Boothu (Bonakoot Block), Chandergheer (Hajin Block), Naidkhai-D (Naidkhai Block), Rakhi Shilvat (Sumbal Block), Rakhi Asham (Nowgam Block) and Odina-B (Ganastan Block).

A multi-departmental team comprising officials and resource persons from Health, Police, Education, Social Welfare, Youth Services & Sports, JKNRLM and other concerned departments participated in the programmes.

During the sessions, the resource persons delivered awareness lectures highlighting the harmful effects of drug abuse,



preventive strategies and the role of families and communities in tackling the menace of substance abuse. The speakers also stressed the importance of collective responsibility in building a drug-free society. The programmes witnessed active participation from students, youth and local residents, who interacted with the officials and expressed their commitment to support the ongoing campaign. On the occasion, Participants were encouraged to remain vigilant and spread awareness about the ill effects of drugs in their respective areas.

Second Phase of Training Programme for Selected Hajj Pilgrims of Baramulla scheduled

HT NEWS NETWORK

BARAMULLA, MARCH 16: District Administration Baramulla has informed that the second phase of the Orientation/Training Programme for selected Hajj pilgrims of District Baramulla will be conducted in first week of April.

As per the schedule, the Orientation/

Training Programme will be held on 2nd April 2026 for pilgrims belonging to the Tehsils of Pattan, Khoie, Wagora, Kreeri, Singhpora, Tangmarg, Kunzer and Kawarhama at Jamia Hamdania Masjid Sharief.

Similarly, the programme will be conducted on 4th April 2026 for pilgrims from the Tehsils of Baramulla, Boniyar,

Dangi wacha, Rohama, Sopore, Watergam, Zaingeer, Dangerpora and Uri at Masjid-e-Baitul Mukarramah.

All selected Hajj pilgrims of District Baramulla are advised to ensure their presence at their respective venues on the scheduled dates at 10:30 AM to participate in the Orientation/Training Programme.

ADDC Shopian reviews arrangements for upcoming Religious festival

Directs for ensuring essential facilities and proper arrangements

HT NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN, MARCH 16: Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Shopian, Dr. Nasir Ahmed Lone today convened a meeting of district officers to review preparedness and arrangements for upcoming religious festivals.

All departments including PHE, PDD, Health, MC, Police, Food Safety, Legal Metrology, Revenue, Fisheries and others were directed to ensure proper and adequate arrangements at prominent religious places in the district for the smooth and hassle free observance of the



forthcoming religious occasions of Shab-e-Qadr, Navratri and Eid-ul-Fitr.

During the meeting, the ADDC called upon the concerned departments to ensure adequate availability of essential commodities and other facilities including medical, sanitation, traffic security, electricity, water, availability of fish and other arrangements are being put in place in prominent religious places across the district for the public convenience.

It was informed that sufficient stocks are available; however, directions were issued to keep strict monitoring to avoid any

shortage or inconvenience to the public.

Market checking teams were instructed to conduct rigorous market inspections and ensure sale of quality food items, maintenance of hygiene and prevent hoarding and black-marketing. Special emphasis was laid on maintaining daily checking teams at important locations.

The ADDC emphasized that all necessary steps must be taken to facilitate the minority community and ensure that essential food items are easily available during the auspicious occasion of Navratri.

District-level Stakeholder Consultation Meet under RAMP held at Bandipora

HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, MARCH 16: District Industries Centre (DIC) Bandipora on Monday organised a District-level Stakeholder Consultation Meet under the RAMP (Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance) programme at Dak Bungalow Sumbal.

The programme witnessed the participation of officials from various line departments, representatives of banking institutions, and aspiring entrepreneurs from different areas of Sumbal block.

During the meeting, officers from the District Industries Centre highlighted various initiatives being undertaken by the government to promote entrepreneurship and strengthen the MSME sector in the district.

Participants were sensitised about different self-employment schemes including Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) and other incentives aimed at supporting establishment of micro and small enterprises.

Resource persons also emphasised the importance of entrepreneurship in the present scenario and encouraged the youth to take advantage of available government schemes to establish sustainable livelihood ventures.

Representatives from different departments shared information about schemes related to agriculture, horticulture and allied sectors, while banking representatives briefed participants about credit facilities and financial assistance available under various government-sponsored schemes.

HT EDITORIAL

Rain, snow rekindles hopes of better future for valley residents

The inclement weather across the Kashmir valley over the past couple of days has given a hope among the people that all is not lost when it comes to the consequences of global warming. As the Kashmir valley received scant snowfall and rainfall during the winter season there were people who were thinking that there would be no rains during March, considered to be the rainiest month of the year in Kashmir.

Most of the people had dumped the woollens and started wearing the summer apparels. These people had to take out the warm clothes since bone chilling cold is being experienced in the valley. There are many others who had started wearing half sleeves shirts and t-shirts and these people could be seen struggling after the recent spell of cold wave. The day temperature that had crossed the 24 degrees barrier mark came down to 12 degrees on Sunday and one can expect further dip in the coming days.

People as a whole have welcomed the change in the weather and said that the spell of rains in plains and snowfall in higher reaches is conducive for the upcoming agriculture and horticulture season. As the Meteorological department has forecast for more rains and snow in the coming days it is hoped that Kashmir valley would receive yet another bounty of appreciable rainfall and snowfall. The same augurs well for the prosperity of the people of the Kashmir valley. This would mean that there would be less problems on account of clean drinking water.

As the Kashmir valley has faced a deficit in both rainfall and snowfall during this winter one can pray and hope that this would be compensated during the months of March and April. Climate change is not a local issue but a global phenomenon and needs to be acknowledged by one and all. If some solutions are provided at the local level, then one can hope that the situation would not go out of hand completely. The people, especially the planners of Jammu & Kashmir need to keep this thing in mind.

At the same time the government should evolve a mechanism so that the consequences of climate change are minimized. Experts from relevant fields need to be roped in so that some solution is found out with people getting benefitted at the end of the day. Earlier this is done better it will be for the residents of Jammu & Kashmir.

Aroma of Tulip Garden



SAHIL MANZOOR

The spring season in the Kashmir Valley opens its wings with the aroma of the Tulip Garden. This year, on 16th March 2026, the Department of Floriculture is going to welcome visitors with full energy and enthusiasm.

Tulips have great charm and fame in all corners of the world and attract millions of visitors every year.

This garden may remain open throughout the calendar year, but nature will not allow it because the flowers bloom only once a year.

Why is the Tulip Garden famous in all corners of the world?

Every year since 2007, this garden has remained the highlight of electronic media, print media, and social media. The Tulip Garden has a unique identity among tourist destinations, as it is considered the largest tulip garden in Asia.

The Tulip Garden was inaugurated by Ghulam Nabi Azad, the then Chief Minister of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, in the year 2007. This garden is also known as the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden.

The famous and charming garden is nestled between Dal Lake and the Zabarwan Mountains in the heart of the Kashmir Valley.

How does it look?

The Tulip Garden has a vast diversity of different species of tulips. This year, 50,000 tulips were imported from the Netherlands, and hopefully this will enhance its charm to a great extent. There are 74 varieties of tulips, including two new varieties added this year.

About 17.50 lakh tulip bulbs and



other flowers have been planted this year. According to the Global Kashmir newspaper, an online ticket booking system has been introduced this year to facilitate visitors and reduce the rush at ticket counters. A QR code-based ticket booking system is also available at the Tourist Reception Centre and at the airport to avoid overcrowding at the Tulip Garden.

Charm of the Tulip Garden

The Tulip Garden is really charming, beautiful, lavish, and naturally blessed. Nature has bestowed immense beauty upon the whole Kashmir Valley.

The Tulip Garden not only attracts visitors from all corners of the world but also attracts the local people. Locals have been eagerly waiting since the news circulated on different media platforms.

From the 26th onwards, the banks of Dal Lake witness heavy traffic jams, and hopefully the concerned traffic department will make all possible efforts to provide relief to visitors.

The general public should show patience and give a chance to outsiders to visit and create beautiful mem-

ories for a long time.

The Almighty has blessed the Kashmir Valley in all seasons—winter, spring, summer, and autumn.

Attractions in Winter

Winters commonly cast their shadows with snowfall, and every corner of the valley looks white. The lush green pines of the Pir Panjal range look completely covered with snow.

During winters, Gulmarg and Doodhpathri are famous tourist destinations that witness a huge rush of visitors. Gulmarg: The cable car (Gondola ride) and winter sports activities are the main reasons tourists love to visit Gulmarg and create unforgettable memories.

Attractions in Spring

The Tulip Garden and the opening of the famous Mughal Gardens like Nishat Garden, Shalimar Garden, Pari Mahal, and Chashma Shahi attract both locals and visitors from all corners of the world.

Attractions during Summer

Summers are very charming and pleasant in the Kashmir Valley. Summers have an alternative in terms of natural beauty and peaceful atmo-

sphere. This season provides peace of mind and a great opportunity for trekkers.

During summers, the famous mountains of the Pir Panjal range witness a large number of campers and trekkers. The valley has great potential for camping and trekking from June to September.

Attractions during Autumn

Autumn is the season when every leaf turns brown.

It is one of the most pleasant and charming seasons of the Kashmir Valley. The leaves of the plane trees (Chinar trees) look mesmerizing when they start falling on the ground. This provides a great opportunity for visitors to capture beautiful memories with their cameras.

People love to take photographs at Chinar Bagh Srinagar and enjoy every moment with peace of mind while feeling relaxed. The beauty of autumn reminds us that nature has blessed the Kashmir Valley with unmatched charm in every season.

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THE RASH DRIVING: A Growing Threat on Modern Roads



DR. SURINDERPAL SINGH

Rash driving has become one of the most serious problems on roads across the world. Every year, thousands of people lose their lives or suffer serious injuries because of careless and aggressive driving. While modern vehicles are becoming faster and more technologically advanced, human behaviour behind the wheel often remains irresponsible. Among young drivers in particular, rash driving has increasingly become a risky trend rather than an isolated mistake.

Rash driving refers to operating a vehicle in a reckless, careless, or overly aggressive manner without considering the safety of others on the road. It usually includes behaviours such as driving at extremely high speeds, ignoring traffic rules and signals, dangerous overtaking, using mobile phones while driving, racing on public roads, and not maintaining a safe distance between vehicles. Such actions reduce reaction time and increase the likelihood of accidents, putting both the driver and others in danger.

In recent years, rash driving has become increasingly common among youngsters due to several psychological, social, and cultural factors. One of the main reasons is the thrill and adrenaline associated with speed. Many young drivers find excitement in fast driving, which gives them a sense of adventure and power. Peer pressure also plays a significant role, as some youngsters try to impress their friends by driving aggressively or participating in informal street races. The influence of media and movies further contributes to this behaviour. Action films and social media often portray high-speed driving as heroic and glamorous, encouraging young viewers to imitate such actions without understanding the real-life consequences.

Another important factor is overconfidence. New drivers often believe they have full control over their vehicles and underestimate the risks involved in speeding. Modern vehicles, which accelerate



quickly and are equipped with advanced technology, sometimes create a false sense of security among drivers. Lack of awareness and discipline is another reason why rash driving continues to increase. Many youngsters are not properly educated about road safety rules or the legal consequences of reckless driving. Emotional factors such as anger, frustration, and impatience also contribute to aggressive driving, especially in congested traffic conditions.

The negative impacts of rash driving are severe and far-reaching. The most immediate consequence is the increase in road accidents and fatalities. High-speed collisions often result in serious injuries or loss of life. Survivors of such accidents may suffer permanent physical disabilities, including spinal injuries, brain damage, or loss of limbs, which can drastically change their lives. Apart from physical harm, road accidents also cause psychological trauma. Victims, drivers, and their families may experience long-term mental stress, depression, and emotional suffering.

Rash driving also creates significant economic losses. Medical treatments, vehicle repairs, insurance claims, and legal penalties impose a heavy financial burden on individuals and families. The loss of human life has deep social consequences, leaving families without breadwinners and children without parental support. Furthermore, accidents caused by rash driving often lead to traffic congestion and public inconvenience, disrupting daily activities and causing delays for many people.

Some individuals mistakenly believe that rash

driving offers certain advantages. For instance, driving at high speeds may appear to reduce travel time, and the thrill of speed can provide temporary excitement and a sense of adventure. In certain social circles, aggressive driving is sometimes seen as a symbol of confidence or skill. However, these perceived benefits are short-lived and largely illusory.

In reality, the disadvantages of rash driving are far greater. High speed significantly increases the risk of fatal accidents because it reduces reaction time and increases the severity of collisions. Many countries impose strict legal penalties for reckless driving, including heavy fines, suspension of driving licences, and even imprisonment. Accidents also result in costly damage to vehicles and property. Most importantly, rash driving poses a serious threat to public safety, endangering pedestrians, cyclists, and other drivers. The emotional and social impact on families of victims can last for years, causing grief and hardship that cannot easily be overcome.

Preventing rash driving requires collective efforts from individuals, families, and authorities. Road safety education must be strengthened, particularly for young drivers, so that they understand the importance of responsible driving. Strict enforcement of traffic laws is also necessary to discourage reckless behaviour on roads. Public awareness campaigns highlighting the dangers of speeding and careless driving can help change attitudes. Parents and elders should guide young drivers and encourage a culture of patience and responsibility. Additionally, the installation of speed monitoring systems and traffic cameras can help authorities detect and control traffic violations more effectively.

Rash driving is not merely a traffic violation; it is a serious threat to human life and public safety. While the thrill of speed may attract many young drivers, the consequences—injuries, deaths, and emotional suffering—are far too severe to ignore. Developing responsible driving habits, respecting traffic rules, and valuing human life can help create safer roads for everyone. Ultimately, true driving skill is not measured by speed or daring manoeuvres, but by discipline, awareness, and respect for others on the road.

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Cultural Bonding of Iran and India: Poetry of Hafiz and Tagore



■ DR. RATAN BHATTACHARJEE

Hafiz of Shiraz and Rabindranath Tagore of Bengal, separated by centuries and geography, embody a remarkable Indo-Iranian cultural bond that continues to resonate in the shared heritage of poetry, mysticism, and humanism. Hafiz, the fourteenth-century Persian poet, is celebrated for his ghazals that weave together themes of divine love, longing, and the intoxication of spiritual union. Tagore, writing in the early twentieth century, drew upon the Upanishadic tradition and his own creative genius to craft verses that dissolve boundaries and invite humanity into communion with the infinite. Though their languages and contexts differ, their poetry converges in its insistence on the primacy of love, the transcendence of the soul, and the unity of human experience. To explore their bond is to trace the threads of Indo-Iranian cultural dialogue, where Persian mysticism and Indian spirituality meet in a shared vision of beauty and truth. It is believed by many international scholars that Tagore's Gitanjali is influenced by Hafiz's Deewan-e-Hafiz. Hafiz's poetry is steeped in the Sufi tradition, where the metaphor of wine, the tavern, and the beloved are symbols of divine ecstasy. His ghazals are not merely romantic but mystical, expressing the soul's yearning for union with God. The intoxication he describes is not of earthly wine but of spiritual rapture. His verses dissolve the boundaries between sacred and profane, between the mosque and the tavern, between the lover and the divine.

Tagore, centuries later, would echo this dissolution of boundaries in his own way. In Gitanjali, he writes of surrendering the self to the infinite, of finding God in the everyday, of dissolving the ego into the universal. Both poets use metaphor to transcend the limitations of language, pointing to experiences that lie beyond rational comprehension. Hafiz's beloved and Tagore's divine presence are two faces of the same truth: that love is the path to transcendence. The Indo-Iranian bond between Hafiz and Tagore is not merely thematic but historical. Persian poetry had long influenced Indian culture, especially during the Mughal era, when Persian was the language of court and culture. Hafiz's ghazals were read and sung in India, shaping the aesthetic sensibilities of generations.

Tagore, though writing in Bengali, was deeply aware of this Persian legacy. His own translations and adaptations reveal a sensitivity to the rhythms and imagery of Persian verse. The ghazal form, with its couplets of longing and paradox, finds echoes in Tagore's songs, where each line is both complete and part of a larger whole.

The Indo-Iranian bond is thus a dialogue across centuries, where Hafiz's mysticism informs Tagore's humanism, and Tagore's universalism gives new life to Hafiz's metaphors.

Philosophically, Hafiz and Tagore converge in their critique of rigid orthodoxy. Hafiz often mocked the hypocrisy of clerics, preferring the tavern to the mosque, the wine cup to empty ritual. His poetry insists that true spirituality lies in love and sincerity, not in dogma. Tagore, similarly, critiqued narrow nationalism and rigid religiosity. He warned against turning religion into ritual and patriotism into chauvinism. For him, the divine was not confined to temples or scriptures but was present in the human heart and in nature. Both poets dissolve boundaries—Hafiz between sacred and profane, Tagore between nations and creeds. Their poetry unites by insisting that love and sincerity are the true measures of spirituality.

Stylistically, Hafiz's ghazals and Tagore's songs share a musicality that transcends language. Hafiz's verses are meant to be sung, their rhythms carrying the listener into ecstasy. Tagore's Rabindra Sangeet similarly blends poetry and melody, creating an experience that is both aesthetic and spiritual.

The Indo-Iranian bond is thus not only in themes but in form: both poets understood that poetry is not merely words but music, a rhythm that carries the soul beyond itself. Their works continue to be performed, sung, and celebrated, keeping alive a tradition of poetry as song, as prayer, as dialogue with the divine. The cultural bond between Hafiz and Tagore also lies in their shared vision of the poet's role. For Hafiz, the poet is a guide, a lover, a rebel against hypocrisy, a voice of truth in a world of pretense. For Tagore, the poet is a seer, a mediator between the human and the divine, a voice of conscience in a world of division. Both saw poetry as more than art—it was a way of life, a spiritual practice, a means of awakening. Their verses are not passive but active, calling the reader to reflect, to awaken, to love. In this, they embody the Indo-Iranian tradition of poetry as philosophy, as spirituality, as social critique.

In today's world, the Indo-Iranian bond between Hafiz and Tagore offers lessons of unity and transcendence. Hafiz's insistence on love over dogma and Tagore's insistence on universalism over nationalism speak to contemporary challenges of

division and intolerance. Their poetry reminds us that boundaries—whether of religion, nation, or identity—are human constructs, and that the soul's true destiny lies in dissolving them. Hafiz's tavern and Tagore's open sky are metaphors for spaces where humanity can meet beyond boundaries, where love and sincerity prevail. Their Indo-Iranian bond is thus not only historical but timeless, offering a vision of unity that is urgently needed today. The resonance of Hafiz and Tagore continues in literature, music, and philosophy. Hafiz's ghazals are still sung in Iran and India, Tagore's songs are still performed in Bengal and beyond. Scholars continue to explore their philosophies, artists continue to adapt their works, and readers continue to find solace and inspiration in their verses. Poetry of both Rabindranath Tagore and Hafiz beautifully illustrate how their poetry unites around themes of spirit, dignity, and humanity: Rabindranath Tagore writes "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; Where knowledge is free; / Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls..." For Tagore "Faith is the bird that feels the light and sings when the dawn is still dark." Tagore believed, "Love is an endless mystery, for it has nothing else to explain it." These lines show how Tagore's gentle universalism and Iqbal's fiery call to selfhood both point toward transcendence and unity. Tagore dissolves boundaries through love and faith, while Hafiz's poetry is often described as a mirror of the soul, reflecting both the ecstasy of divine love and the complexities of human longing. What makes his work enduring is the way he blends the sacred and the profane, the spiritual and the sensual, into a seamless tapestry that continues to inspire readers across cultures and centuries.

At the heart of Hafiz's poetry lies the metaphor of wine and intoxication. On the surface, his verses speak of taverns, goblets, and drunkenness, but beneath these images lies a deeper mystical meaning. For Hafiz, wine is the symbol of divine love, and intoxication is the state of spiritual ecstasy that comes from union with the beloved, who is often a metaphor for God. The tavern becomes a place of revelation, where the soul sheds its pretenses and encounters truth. This blending of imagery allows Hafiz to critique rigid orthodoxy and hypocrisy, mocking those who cling to empty rituals while missing the essence of love and sincerity.

Hafiz of Shiraz, the fourteenth-century Persian poet, is one of the most luminous voices in the tradition of mystical poetry. His verses, composed in the ghazal form, are celebrated for their exquisite beauty, layered symbolism, and profound spiri-

tual resonance. His poetry insists that true spirituality is not found in dogma but in the heart's surrender to love. Hafiz's ghazals are also remarkable for their musicality. Each couplet is self-contained yet contributes to the overall mood of the poem. The rhythm, rhyme, and imagery create a sense of enchantment, drawing the reader into a world where boundaries dissolve. His verses are meant to be sung, and indeed, they have been performed for centuries in Iran and beyond, becoming part of the cultural fabric of

Persian life. The musical quality of his poetry enhances its mystical power, making it not just a literary experience but an aesthetic and spiritual one.

One of Hafiz's most famous lines declares: "I am in love with every church and mosque and temple, and any kind of shrine, because I know it is there that people say the different names of the One God." This line captures the essence of his universalism.

Though rooted in Islamic Sufism, Hafiz's vision transcends religious boundaries, affirming the unity of all spiritual paths. His poetry dissolves divisions, reminding us that love is the common thread that binds humanity. This universality is what makes Hafiz resonate not only in Iran but across cultures, including India, where Persian poetry deeply influenced literary traditions.

Hafiz's influence extended far beyond his own time. His Divan became a cherished text, consulted for guidance and inspiration. In Persian households, it was common to perform fal-e-Hafiz, a practice of opening his book at random to find a verse that offered wisdom for the moment. This shows how deeply his poetry was woven into everyday life, not as abstract literature but as living counsel. His verses were also admired by poets and thinkers across the world. Goethe, for instance, was profoundly influenced by Hafiz and dedicated his West-Eastern Divan to him, recognizing the universality of his vision.

The themes of Hafiz's poetry—love, longing, ecstasy, and critique of hypocrisy—remain timeless. His insistence that love is the highest truth speaks to the human condition across ages. His playful yet profound style allows him to challenge authority while delighting the reader. His blending of sensual and spiritual imagery reminds us that the divine is not separate from life but present in its beauty and passion.

Hafiz's poetry is thus both mystical and human, both transcendent and earthly.

In the Indo-Iranian context, Hafiz's poetry found a natural home in India, where Persian was the language of culture and administration for centuries. His ghazals were read, sung, and imitated by Indian poets, shaping the development of Urdu poetry. The ghazal tradition in India owes

much to Hafiz, whose mastery of the form set a standard for generations. His influence can be seen in the works of Mir, Ghalib, and countless others who carried forward the tradition of blending love and mysticism. This Indo-Iranian bond highlights the shared cultural heritage of the region, where Persian and Indian traditions enriched one another.

Hafiz's poetry continues to inspire modern readers. Translations have brought his verses to audiences worldwide, though much of the musicality and subtlety of the original Persian is difficult to capture. Still, the essence of his vision shines through: the call to love, the critique of hypocrisy, the celebration of beauty. His lines remind us that poetry is not just art but a way of seeing, a way of living. In a world often divided by dogma and ideology, Hafiz's voice invites us to dissolve boundaries and embrace unity.

To read Hafiz is to enter a world of paradox, where wine is divine, the tavern is holy, and the beloved is both human and transcendent. It is to be reminded that spirituality is not about rigid rules but about the heart's surrender to love. It is to be intoxicated not by alcohol but by beauty, truth, and the divine presence. Hafiz's poetry is a celebration of life in all its complexity, a reminder that joy and sorrow, love and longing, sacred and profane, are all part of the soul's journey. His verses continue to sing across centuries, uniting cultures and hearts in the shared language of love. The Indo-Iranian bond is alive, not as a relic of the past but as a living dialogue. Hafiz and Tagore remind us that poetry is not bound by time or place, but is a universal language of the soul. Hafiz and Tagore, though separated by centuries and cultures, embody an Indo-Iranian cultural bond that unites mysticism and humanism, song and philosophy, love and transcendence. Hafiz dissolves boundaries between sacred and profane, Tagore dissolves boundaries between nations and creeds. Hafiz empowers the soul through love, Tagore empowers humanity through universalism. Together, they offer a vision of poetry as unity, as transcendence, as dialogue. Their Indo-Iranian bond is a testament to the power of poetry to bridge cultures, to dissolve boundaries, and to unite humanity in the pursuit of truth and beauty.

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Restoring Nature, Securing Tomorrow



■ M S NAZKI

Milte Milte Haseen Wadiyon Mein, Dil Kho Gaya Toh Kiya Karoge, Anjaane Mein Jaan e Tamanna Kuch Ho Gaya Toh Kiya Karoge!

We are living on this planet as if we have another one to go to.

Our planet's alarm is going off, and it is time to wake up and take action.

The environment is where we all meet; where we all have a mutual interest.

Going green is not an option; it is a must.....Wco Battalion TA Chinar Corps!

The Chinar Eco Warriors are a dedicated Ecological Battalion of the Territorial Army working on environmental conservation in Jammu and Kashmir. Based in Samba, they focus on massive afforestation, ecological restoration, wetland rejuvenation, and community awareness, often utilizing Miyawaki techniques to boost medicinal plant species and restore local habitats.

Key initiatives include:

Green Initiatives: Partnering with the

Jammu & Kashmir Forest Department for afforestation efforts to increase the green cover.

Innovative Practices: Pioneered the Kokedama method for plant cultivation to reduce plastic use.

Ecological Restoration: Involved in rehabilitating areas like Wular Lake through extensive plantation in catchment areas to combat soil erosion and water pollution.

Community Engagement: Promoting sustainable practices and connecting local communities with ecological restoration efforts.

These efforts are supported by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) to foster environmental sustainability in the region, as observed by the Director General of Territorial Army, Lt Gen Girish Kalia in March 2026.

Kokedama, meaning "moss ball" in Japanese, is a soilless gardening technique where a plant's root system is wrapped in a peat/clay mixture, covered in moss, and bound with string. This sculptural, pot-free method creates hanging or displayed plants (like ferns or pothos) that are watered by soaking the entire moss ball when it feels light.

Prepare the Medium: Combine Akadama (clay soil), peat moss, or potting soil with water to form a sticky, dough-like mixture.

Create the Ball: Remove the plant, prune the roots if necessary, and encase them in the soil mixture, shaping it into a compact

ball.

Apply the Moss: Wrap the ball in wet sheet moss or coconut fiber, ensuring all soil is covered.

Secure: Bind the entire ball tightly with twine or fishing line.

Plants: Best for small, slow-growing plants that thrive in high moisture, such as Ferns, Pothos, Philodendron, Anthurium, and Succulents (like String of Beads).

Watering: When the ball feels light and dry, soak the entire kokedama in water for 5 to 10 minutes.

Maintenance: Hang in appropriate lighting or display on a tray. Fertilize every few weeks with liquid fertilizer.

Key Details of the Territorial Army:

The Territorial Army (TA) in India is a part-time volunteer reserve force consisting of gainfully employed civilians and ex-servicemen who support the regular Indian Army. Serving as the "second line of defence," they assist in national security, maintain essential services, and manage disasters. It is not a full-time profession, but rather a "Terrier" force requiring annual training.

Role & Function: To relieve the regular army of static duties, assist civil administration during natural calamities/essential services, and provide units for the regular army as needed.

Structure: Comprises officers, JCOs, and Other Ranks (OR). It includes Departmental units (e.g., Oil Sector, Railways) and

Non-Departmental units (Infantry Battalions).

Eligibility & Selection: Applicants must be gainfully employed/self-employed civilians or ex-servicemen. Age: 18-42 years. Educational Qualification: Graduate from a recognized university.

Training & Service: Volunteers must attend annual training (roughly 2 months per year) and are embodied for military service during emergencies or operational requirements.

Benefits & Career: While not a full-time career, TA offers pay/allowances equivalent to regular army officers when embodied. It offers opportunities to serve in uniform without leaving current professions.

Key Operations & Distinctions:

The Territorial Army has been active in conflicts like the 1962, 1965, 1971 wars, Operation Pawan (Sri Lanka), and Operation Rakshak (J&K). They are heavily involved in ecological restoration projects (e.g., planting saplings in the Himalayas).

Motto: Savdhani Va Shoorta (Vigilance and Valour).

Greening Jammu and Kashmir focuses on massive afforestation drives, such as planting 60,000+ trees under the "Clean Jammu, Green Jammu" initiative and the "Green Campus Initiative," with over 58 lakh saplings planted in 2025-26. The drive includes using Miyawaki methods, drone monitoring for survival rates, and strengthening forest-based livelihoods under the

"Green India Mission".

Key Initiatives for Greening Jammu & Kashmir:

Massive Plantation Drives: Under the "JK Green Drive" and "Clean Jammu, Green Jammu" initiatives, tens of thousands of trees are planted annually, involving both the forest department and local communities.

Chinar Conservation: Significant efforts are being made to protect and promote the iconic Chinar tree, with special awareness campaigns like "Chinar Day" conducted to maintain the region's natural heritage.

Technological Integration: The government uses Drone Analytics Monitoring Systems and AI to track the survival rates of saplings and monitors green cover along national highways with satellite imagery.

Urban and Institutional Greenery: Initiatives like "Nagar Van Yojana" create urban forests and promote green, sustainable practices in schools, universities, and commercial hotels.

Innovative Conservation: The territorial army and foresters are adopting "Kokedama" (an eco-friendly, plastic-free plant method) and Miyawaki methods to cultivate and plant medicinal trees.

Ecological Restoration: Over 1,700 hectares have been targeted for restoration through CAMPA funds, focusing on revitalizing degraded forest lands.

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THE CRYOPRESERVATION

Preserving Life at Extremely Low Temperatures

■ DR. SURINDERPAL SINGH

Modern science continues to develop new ways to preserve life and biological materials for the future. One such remarkable technology is cryopreservation, a process in which living cells, tissues or even entire organisms are preserved by cooling them to extremely low temperatures. This technique is widely used in medicine, agriculture and scientific research, and it is gradually shaping the future of healthcare and biotechnology.

Cryopreservation allows biological materials to remain viable for many years, making it possible to store reproductive cells, stem cells and other tissues for later use. While the technology offers many benefits, it also raises important ethical, social and financial questions.

Cryopreservation is the process of preserving cells, tissues, organs or biological materials by cooling them to extremely low temperatures, usually around -196°C using liquid nitrogen, so that biological activity including chemical reactions and metabolism is almost completely stopped. At such temperatures, biological materials can remain stable for long periods without significant change. When required, they can be carefully thawed and revived for use in medical treatments or scientific research.

The process of cryopreservation generally involves several important stages. First, the biological sample such as cells or tissues is collected and prepared for freezing. Special chemicals known as cryoprotectants, including substances like glycerol or dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO), are then added to the sample. These chemicals play a crucial role in protecting the cells from damage that could occur due to the formation of ice crystals during freezing. After this preparation, the sample is cooled slowly in a controlled manner to reduce the risk of sudden cellular damage. Once properly frozen, the samples are stored in special containers filled with liquid nitrogen at temperatures as low as -196°C. When the preserved material is required for use,



the sample is carefully thawed and revived under controlled laboratory conditions.

Cryopreservation has many important applications across different fields. In the medical field, it is widely used for storing sperm, eggs and embryos for fertility treatments. It also allows the preservation of stem cells, which are increasingly used in advanced medical therapies. Blood samples, bone marrow and other biological materials can also be stored for future medical needs. In agriculture, cryopreservation helps preserve plant seeds and valuable genetic material, which is essential for crop improvement and protection of plant diversity. It also plays a role in conserving rare and endangered plant species. In wildlife conservation, cryopreservation enables scientists to store genetic material from endangered animals, which may help restore or protect species in the future. Scientific research also benefits greatly from this technology as researchers can store cell cultures and biological samples for long periods and use them in experiments whenever required.

The influence of cryopreservation on

society has been significant. It has improved fertility treatments and provided new hope to couples facing infertility by allowing them to preserve reproductive cells for future use. The technology has also contributed to the idea of delayed parenthood, as many individuals choose to freeze eggs or sperm so they can plan families later in life. Cryopreservation has also become an important tool for protecting biodiversity by preserving the genetic material of endangered species. At the same time, it has sparked ethical discussions. Some organizations now offer services to freeze human bodies or brains after death in the hope that future scientific advancements may revive them. Such possibilities have raised debates related to ethics, religion and philosophy.

The cost of cryopreservation varies depending on the type of biological material being preserved and the duration of storage. Expenses may include medical procedures, specialized storage equipment and long-term maintenance. Due to these costs, cryopreservation services are currently more accessible to individuals with

financial resources or institutions with advanced medical facilities.

Despite these challenges, cryopreservation offers many advantages. It allows long-term storage of biological materials, enabling cells and tissues to remain preserved for decades. It also provides an important option for fertility preservation, particularly for individuals undergoing medical treatments such as chemotherapy that may affect reproductive health. The technology supports medical research by allowing scientists to store biological samples for future study. It also plays a crucial role in conserving endangered plant and animal species by protecting their genetic material. Scientists further believe that cryopreservation could eventually help address the shortage of donor organs if whole organs can be successfully preserved for transplantation.

However, cryopreservation also has certain limitations. The process can be expensive and requires specialized equipment and expertise. During freezing, ice crystal formation can damage delicate cell structures, reducing the chances of sur-

vival after thawing. Ethical concerns also arise, particularly in cases where human bodies are preserved with the hope of future revival. Additionally, the survival of preserved cells is not always guaranteed, as some may not recover successfully during the thawing process. Preserving complex organs such as the heart or brain remains extremely difficult due to their intricate structure.

The future of cryopreservation appears promising as scientific research and technology continue to advance. Researchers are exploring ways to preserve entire organs for transplantation, which could significantly improve organ availability for patients in need. Scientists are also developing improved cryoprotectants that can reduce cellular damage during freezing. Advances in biotechnology and regenerative medicine may allow artificial organs to be grown from preserved cells. Some experts are even working on methods to preserve the genetic material of entire ecosystems to protect biodiversity. Emerging fields such as nanotechnology may also help scientists repair cells or tissues that become damaged during the freezing process.

Cryopreservation is therefore a powerful scientific technique that enables biological materials to be preserved for long periods at extremely low temperatures. It has already transformed fields such as medicine, fertility treatment, agriculture and wildlife conservation. Although it presents certain challenges including high costs, technical limitations and ethical debates, the technology continues to evolve. As scientific progress continues, cryopreservation may become an essential tool for saving lives, protecting biodiversity and expanding the possibilities of modern medicine. In the coming decades, it may play a crucial role in shaping the future of healthcare and preserving life for generations to come.

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

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🕒 8:00PM On January 18th , Sunday

KU VC felicitates 11 CCCP Residential Coaching Programme Qualifiers of JKPSC CCE-2024

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, MAR 16: Vice Chancellor University of Kashmir (KU) Prof Nilofer Khan on Monday felicitated 11 candidates from its Centre for Career Counselling, Coaching and Placement (CCCP) who qualified the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission (JKPSC) Combined Competitive Examination-2024 (CCE-2024).

The ceremony was held at the University Main Campus where Prof. Nilofer Khan, felicitated the successful aspirants for their achievement.

The results of the JKPS CCE-2024 were declared by the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission on March 13, in which 11 candidates from the CCCP Civil Services Residential Coaching Programme of KU secured positions in the merit list.

The programme is a flagship initiative of the University aimed at providing structured coaching and academic support to civil services aspirants, particu-

larly those from economically underprivileged sections and female candidates.

The programme offers a fully residential academic environment with facilities including free accommodation, a 24x7 library, high-speed internet, structured test series and continuous mentorship to help aspirants prepare for competitive examinations.

Congratulating the successful candidates, Vice-Chancellor KU Prof. Nilofer Khan described the achievement as a moment of pride for the University and a testament to the dedication and hard work of the aspirants.

She said the University remains committed to strengthening academic support systems that enable young aspirants to compete successfully in prestigious examinations.

"I have personally monitored the progress of the Civil Services Residential Coaching Programme and have made frequent visits to the Centre to ensure that the vision behind establishing this initiative is imple-

mented effectively," Prof. Khan said while appreciating the determination of the successful candidates.

Prof. Khan also acknowledged the role of the programme's Overseeing Committee headed by Dean Research KU Prof. Mohammad Sultan Bhat and comprising Registrar KU Prof. Naseer Iqbal, Director CCCP Prof. Nazir Ahmad, Special Secretary to the VC KU Dr. Ashfaq Zarri and Chief Accounts Officer/FAKUMS. Zafira for their guidance and supervision.

She also appreciated the efforts of the other members of CCCP team including

Deputy Director CCCP Dr. Yahya Bakhtiyar and Ms Fatima Ali faculty at CCCP for their sustained mentorship and academic support to civil services aspirants.

On the occasion, Dean Academic Affairs KU Prof. Shariefuddin Pirzada, Dean Research KU Prof. Mohammad Sultan Bhat, Registrar KU Prof. Naseer Iqbal and Special Secretary to the VC KU Dr. Ashfaq Zarri also shared their views. They highlighted the consistent academic support and mentorship provided by the University through CCCP and congratulated the successful candidates and

their families for the remarkable achievement.

Earlier Director CCCP KU Prof. Nazir Ahmad, in his remarks, said that the success of the candidates reflects the sustained efforts made by the CCCP team, coordinators, mentors and the Overseeing Committee over the past few years to develop the Centre into a vibrant residential academy dedicated to preparing aspirants for civil services and other competitive examinations.

Deputy Director CCCP Dr. Yahya Bakhtiyar proposed vote of the thanks on the occasion while as Coordinator CCCP Dr. Hakim Yasir Abbas conducted the proceedings of the ceremony.

On the occasion, the successful candidates also shared their experiences at CCCP and acknowledged the guidance, mentorship and academic support they received at the University which helped them successfully clear the JKPS CCE-2024 examination.

Public Notice

This is to inform that I, DAWOOD MOHIDEEN MIR S/O GHULAM MOHIDEEN MIR, R/O KAKOTHAL KREERI, bearing JKBOSE Registration No. 220700000770010, wish to inform that there are some corrections in my name in the JKBOSE school certificates.

I want to correct the details in my school certificates as follows:

Current details: DOWOOD MOHI-DEEN MIR S/O GHULAM MOHIDEEN MIR

Corrected details: DAWOOD MOHIDEEN MIR S/O GHULAM MOHIDEEN MIR, R/O KAKOTHAL KREERI

If anyone has any objection to this correction, they should file their objection in the Office of the Director, JK Board of School Education, Bimma, Srinagar, within 7 days from the date of publication. No objections will be entertained after that.

Public Notice

Notice is hereby given to the general public that an application has been submitted before the Office of the Assistant Regional Transport Officer, Ganderbal for Re-registration / Transfer of Ownership of a Motor Car bearing Registration No. DL3CBQ4112, Chassis No. MALBB51BLBM382026 and Engine No. G4LABM791382

The vehicle was earlier registered in the name of Abdul Majeed Zargar S/O Ghulam Mohammad Zargar, R/O H. No. 3107, Sir Sayeed Ahmed Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi, and is proposed to be transferred in favour of Abdul Majeed Zargar S/O Ghulam Mohammad Zargar, R/O Waripora Safapora, Ganderbal, Kashmir.

Any person having objection or claim regarding the proposed transfer of the said vehicle may submit the same in writing to the Office of Assistant Regional Transport Officer, Ganderbal within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice. No objection will be entertained thereafter.

Contact: +919018909999

Public Notice

It is hereby notified that I Mohammad Akbar Sheikh has applied for the birth certificate of my son namely Saqib Akbar Sheikh DOB 05/11/2009 S/O Mohammad Akbar Sheikh R/o Krumhoora Tehsil Zachaldara now I have applied for his Birth certificate. Born at home if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection at Block Development office Zachaldara within a period of 07 days after that no objection will be accepted.

Name: Saqib Akbar Sheikh DOB 05/11/2009
S/O Mohammad Akbar Sheikh
R/O : Krumhoora Tehsil Zachaldara
District Kupwara

Public Notice

This is to inform the general public that I am intending to applying for the registration of a Tour And Travel license under the name ASTERI Tour And Travel, located at Kalantra Bala Tehsil Kreeri, District Baramulla, at the office of Assistant Director Tourism Gulmarg. If anyone has any objections regarding in this regard, they may file their objection at the Department of Tourism office of the Assistant Director Tourism Gulmarg, within 15 days from the date of publication, of this notice. After this period, no objections will be entertained.

UMAR HABIB THOKER
S/O HABIBULLAH THOKER R/O KALANTRA BALA,
Kreeri, Baramulla.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD(R&B) DIVISION ANANTNAG

NIT NO 174 OF R&B/Anantnag/2025-26 /E-TENDERING/14007-16 DATED 14-03-2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, Union Territory of J&K e-tenders are invited on %age basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K Govt. CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for each of the following works:-

S.No	Name of Work	T.D Cost	E/M	Time
1.	Repair/Renovation of Dak Bunglow Old Building (Room No. 01 earlier occupied by Security)	200	8400/-	10 Days

Estimated Cost (Rs in Lacs): 4.20 Lacs Contract Price exclusive of GST: 3.56 + (18% GST Amount 0.64)

Major Head of Account: MH-2216

Class of Contractor: DEE Class & MSME's Only

Project Authority: PW(R&B) Department South Kashmir.

Position of Authorization: Authorized vide Order No. ARD/CESK/2025-26/131, Dated 11.03.2026.

Position of TS: Accorded Vide Order No. SEA(R&B) 122/2025-26, Dated 12.03.2026.

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

S. No.	Particulars	Dated
1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	14-03-2026
2	Period of Downloading of bidder documents	From 14-03-2026 (01:00 PM) To 23-03-2026 (02:00 PM)
3	Bid submission Start Date	From 14-03-2026 (01:00 PM)
4	Bid Submission End Date	To 23-03-2026 (02:00 PM)
5	Date and time of opening of bid(online)	23-03-2026 (02:30 PM)

1. Bids must be accompanied with cost of tender document in shape of Treasury Challan / receipt (Under MH- 0059 PWD) in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Anantnag [Tender Inviting Authority] (NIT No. Name of Work/Item No. to be mentioned on the Treasury Challan / Receipt) (The Date of Treasury Challan should be between the date of Start of Bid and Bid Submission End Date) and EMD (2% of advertised Cost) in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Division Anantnag (Tender receiving Authority). (The Date of EMD/CDR/FDR/BG) should be between the date of Start of Bid and Bid Submission End Date and validity of EMD at the time of opening of Bids shall be a period of 45 Days beyond Bid Validity of 120 Days). The same EMD should not be used in more than one Tender/Bid.

2. All the Bidders have to submit Earnest Money/Bid Security (EMD@2% of Advertised Cost) in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG. Non submission of Earnest Money/Bid Security shall render the bidder as No-responsive.

3. Note:a. MSME's are required to pay only 50% of Tender Document Cost or Rs5000/- which ever is lower.

b. MSME's are required to pay only 50% of the amount of EMD/ Bid Security or Rs 5000/- whichever is lower

4. The 1st lowest responsive (Successful) Bidder has to produce an amount equal to 5% of contract as Performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Anantnag (Tender receiving authority) within 03 Days before fixation of Contract and shall be released 60 days after successful completion of Defect Liability Period (DLP) of the work. The date of Performance Security (CDR/FDR/BG) should be after the date of issuance of letter/LOI to deposit the performance security. Failure to produce Performance Security shall render the L1 as non-responsive and case for debarment of the Contractor be forwarded to Higher Authorities for a period of 01 Year.

5. The Earnest Money Deposit (EMD@2% of Advertised Cost) in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG of the successful Bidder shall be released after receiving Performance security @5% of the allotted cost in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG and same shall be released 60 Days after successful completion of Defect Liability Period (DLP) of the work.

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

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

8. Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.

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

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

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

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

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

f. Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents including tender document fee in terms of soft copies with technical bid.

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

9. The department will not be responsible for delay in online submission due to any reasons.

10. Scanned copy of cost of tender document in the shape of Treasury Challan / Receipt in favour of Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Division Anantnag (The Date of Treasury Challan should be between the date of Start of Bid and Bid Submission End Date) and EMD in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Division Anantnag must be uploaded with the documents of the bid. The Original Treasury Challan (Cost of Tender Document), EMD and other relevant bid documents shall be obtained from the lowest bidder before the fixation of the Contract.

11. Bidders are advised not to make any change in BOQ (Bill of Quantities) contents. In no case they should attempt to create similar BOQ manually.

12. Price escalation and taxes: The %age quoted by the bidder entirely in Indian Rupees, shall be deemed to include price escalation upto completion of the work. Deduction on account of taxes shall be made from the bills of the contractor on gross amount of the bill as per the rates prevailing at the time of recovery.

Sd/- (Er. Mohammad Waseem) Executive Engineer, R&B Division Anantnag

DIPK: 11931/25 | Dated: 16-03-2026

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD(R&B) DIVISION SOPORE

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

E Tendering NIT No. 80/RnB/Kralpora of 2025-26 Dated: 13-03-2026

For and on behalf of the Expression of Interest (EOI) on percentage bases are invited from approved and eligible Bidders as per Instruction to Bidder (ITB) and Terms of Reference at Annexure-I. The Bidder (Firm/Consultant/Agency/Company) should have the eligibility as per Annexure-II under Eligibility Criteria for each of the following works:-

S.No.	Name of work	Adv. Cost for consultancy	T.D Cost	E/M	MHA
1	Providing Consultancy Services for Design, Consultancy, Geotechnical Investigation and Preparation of DPR, Detailed Estimates, BOQ along with all Architectural, Structural drawings with Design Calculations for approval and providing all working drawings i.e. architectural, structural and service drawings along with digital layout of plan, including vetting of Drawings from IIT/NIT/DIQC for Construction of Retaining Wall at GDC Kralpora	1.45 Lacs	Rs 200/-	Rs 2900/-	Contingencies

Class of Contract: Regd. Consultancy Firm

Position of AAA = Accorded

Position of Funds: Available

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

1.	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	13.03.2026
2.	Period of downloading of bidding documents	13/03/2026 (4:00 PM) to 23/03/2026 (4:00 PM)
3.	Bid submission Start Date	13/03/2026 (4:00 PM)
4.	Bid Submission End Date	23/03/2026 upto (4:00 PM)
5.	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	23.03.2026 (6:00 PM) in the office of Executive Engineer R&B Division Kralpora.

1. Bids must be accompanied with cost of tender document in shape of Treasury Challan / Receipt (Under MH- 0059 PWD) in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Kralpora [Tender Inviting Authority] (Name of Work /NIT No and date to be mentioned on the Treasury Challan / Receipt)(Refer Govt. order No. O.M No. A/24 (2017)-651 Dt 07-06-2018 (The Date of Treasury Challan should be between the date of Start of Bid and Bid Submission End Date) and the bidders residing Outside UT of J&K can submit DD of any nationalized bank in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Kralpora the cost of tender document fee is non refundable.

2. At the time of tendering, all bidders must upload earnest money/bid security equal to 2% of the Advertised Cost in the form of CDR/FDR pledged to the tender receiving authority, i.e. Executive Engineer R&B Division Kralpora. Besides that, the successful bidder will have to provide Performance Security @ 5% at the time of contract award, strictly in accordance with the Government's circular instructions from time to time. The earnest money/bid security of 2% will be released to the successful bidder only after the submission of a Performance Security of 5% of the total cost, which will be released after successful completion of all the formalities including TS.

3. In case of abnormally low bid price the Circular instructions issued by the Finance Department vide No FD-Code/441/2021-02-158 dated 08-08-2025 regarding seeking of additional performance security from the selected bidder for quoting ALB are as

3.1. Where the bid price is below 10% but not below 20% of the project cost put to bid, the additional performance guarantee/ Security percentage shall be incremented by 0.1% for every percentage of bid price below 10% of the project cost put to bid starting at 11% with the additional bid performance guarantee being 0.1% and this additional performance guarantee percentage shall be applied on bid price.

3.2. Where the bid price is below 20% or more below of the project cost put to bid, the additional performance guarantee percentage shall be incremented by 0.2% for every percentage of bid price below 20% of the project cost put to bid in addition to 1% of the bid price and this additional performance guarantee percentage shall be applied on bid price.

3.3. The additional performance guarantee percentage shall be rounded off to the next lower percentage based on whether the decimal point of the percentage of the bid price is below 0.5% or next higher percentage based on whether the decimal point of the percentage of the bid price is 0.5% or more.

3.4. The additional performance security shall be treated as part of the performance security and shall be released after successful completion of DLP.

3. The date and time of opening of Bid shall be notified on Web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Response shall be opened online on same Web Site in the office of Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Division Kralpora.

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

3. Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.

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

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

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

d. Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned above.

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

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

No: Div-KRPL/5189-98 | Dated: 13-03-2026

Sd/- Executive Engineer, R&B Division Kralpora

DIPK: 11927/25 | Dated: 16-03-2026

DC Srinagar reviews health infrastructure projects at JLNH Hospital, UPHC S.R. Gunj

Directs Speedy Completion of 100-Bedded Hospital Block, DIPH Lab, UPHC S.R. Gunj

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR MARCH 16: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo on Monday inspected the progress of ongoing health infrastructure upgradation works at JLNH Hospital Rainawari and reviewed development works at Urban Primary Health Centre S.R. Gunj in the Shahr-e-Khaas area of the city.

The DC was accompanied by Chief Planning Officer Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Superintending Engineer R&B, Shabir Ahmad, Chief Medical Officer Dr Tahir Sajad, Medical Superintendent JLNH Hospital Dr Tariq, Zonal Medical Officer SR Gunj, Dr Shafiq, Executive Engineers R&B, Arif Hazari and other concerned officers.

During the visit to JLNH Hospital, the Deputy Commissioner conducted an on-site inspection of several key projects including the construction of a 100-bedded additional block, the District Integrated Public Health (DIPH)



Laboratory and a biomedical waste shed.

While reviewing the construction of the additional hospital block, the DC directed the executing agency to accelerate the pace of work and ensure timely completion of the project aimed at significantly enhancing patient care services at the hospital.

He also inspected the construction of the District Integrated Public Health Laboratory being established under the PM Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission. The facility is expected to strengthen disease surveillance and public health response mechanisms in the district.

The DC instructed the concerned agency to expedite the remaining work and make the laboratory operational at the earliest.

The Deputy Commissioner also inspected the newly constructed Biomedical Waste Shed developed by the Public Works Department

(R&B) for the safe and scientific disposal of biomedical waste. He directed the concerned agency to handover the facility to the hospital administration promptly to ensure improved sanitation and environmental safety within the hospital premises.

Interacting with hospital staff, the DC stressed the need to maintain high standards of patient care and efficient delivery of healthcare services to ensure that the public does not face inconvenience.

Later, the Deputy Commissioner visited the Urban Primary Health Centre (UPHC) S.R. Gunjat Maharaj Gunj and reviewed the progress of the remaining works at the facility. He directed the executing agency to accelerate the pace of construction so that the project is completed at the earliest for the benefit of the local population.

The DC further instructed officials to ensure that the UPHC S.R. Gunj is made fully operational soon.

DC Budgam chairs District Environmental Plan Committee meeting

HT NEWS NETWORK

BUDGAM, MARCH 16: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan today chaired a meeting of the District Environmental Plan Committee to review the implementation of various environmental measures across the district.

During the meeting, the DC directed all departments to ensure strict prohibition of polythene usage and emphasized the importance of waste segregation and disposal at designated composite sites.



He instructed municipal authorities and rural development department to ensure that no waste accumulates in front of educational institutions, hospitals, public places and along roads.

Furthermore, proper disposal of biomedical waste was stressed to maintain public health and sanitation.

To enhance environmental hygiene, Municipalities, Jal Shakti, Irrigation & Flood Control Departments were directed to undertake massive cleaning drives of nallahs and water channels in both urban and rural areas to prevent blockages and maintain ecological balance.

The DC also called for the installation of dustbins at key locations to facilitate proper waste disposal. Various other environment measures were also discussed for implementation by the concerned departments including the construction of effluent, solid and plastic waste treatment plants across the district.

Besides, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mehraj ud din shah; GM, DIC Budgam; CEO, CMO, DPO, CHO, CAO, DFO, ACP, ARTO, and other concerned were present in the meeting.

Manuscript preservation in J&K gains momentum

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MARCH 16: The Department of Archives, Archaeology & Museums in collaboration with Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA), Regional Centre J&K, today organised a 3 day workshop-cum-Training program on 'GYAN BHARATAM MISSION' and launch of National Survey of Manuscripts at Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (IIIM), Canal Road Jammu.

Principal Secretary, Culture Department, Brij Mohan Sharma, highlighted various aspects of implementation of the central sponsored flagship programme besides importance of this awareness cum training programme regarding survey and conservation of manuscripts.

The Principal Secretary said that this Government of India's flagship programme was launched by the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi in September 2025 at an International Conference in Delhi. The program aims to identify, catalogue and digitize approximately one crore manuscripts across the country and conserve them using scientific technology, making the documents accessible in the public domain for scholars worldwide.

He observed that around 35,000 manuscripts have been identified in Jammu and Kashmir, with cataloguing complete. Besides, digitization is underway at private institutions and Kashmir University's Persian Department, accelerated by a Government of India cluster centre.

Director, Archives, Archeology and Museum, Kuldeep Krishan Sidha highlighted the objectives of launching of GYAN Bharatam and National Manuscripts Survey. He also elucidated the key activities including conservation, capacity building, technology and digitization, linguistic and translation, research, publication and awareness. He highlighted various other aspects regarding National Manuscripts Survey, scope of the Survey, organisational support, survey execution process, role of responsibility, ethical guidelines, monitoring and other important aspects of the programme.

Dr Jahagir Iqbal, HOD and Cluster Head Gyan Bharatam Mission, Department of Persian, Kashmir University, gave comprehensive detail about the roadmap to the concerned officers and participants about how to collect the information about Manuscripts and its conservation during surveys in their respective areas.

Coordinator, Regional Cluster Centre, Gyan Bharatam Shashvat Art Gallery, Museum and Manuscript Library, Upper Bazar Jammu, Dr Suresh Abrol, also spoke and encouraged the participants about the working in the field of survey and conservation, documentation and digitization of Manuscripts under Gyan Bharatam Mission.

Professor and Head (Conservation), IGNC, Professor Achal Pandya, also gave a PowerPoint Presentation regarding how to collect manuscripts and its conservation and gave awareness on other aspects of the survey program.

The participants raised and highlighted queries about different aspects of the survey program.

Among others, Assistant Professor Dr Satyender Kumari, IGNC; Project Managers, IGNC, Jitendra Chauhan and Dr Nitin Kumar; Deputy Director, Archive, Archaeology and Museum, Dr Sangeeta Sharma besides senior officers of concerned departments and other stakeholders were present in the program.

ADC Bandipora chairs meeting on Revision of Panchayat Electoral Roll 2026

HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, MARCH 16: Additional Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Zaffar Huson Shawl, on Monday chaired a meeting to review preparations for the Revision of Panchayat Electoral Roll 2026 at the Mini Secretariat Bandipora.

Deputy District Election Officer Bandipora, Hilal Ahmad briefed the chair about the overall preparedness for the revision exercise and informed

that necessary arrangements are being put in place at the district and block levels. The meeting was attended by Electoral Registration Officers of the three Assembly Constituencies, Assistant Commissioner Panchayat, Block Development Officers (AEROs Panchayat) and other concerned officers. Officials from Gurez and Tulail blocks joined the meeting through virtual mode. During the meeting, various agenda points related to the revision process were discussed in detail,

including integration of supplementary electoral data by NIC, downloading and printing of draft electoral rolls at the district level, and ensuring availability of required forms such as PEB-2A, PEB-2B, PEB-2C and PEB-2D at block offices.

The meeting also discussed printing of electoral rolls in both English and Urdu versions, updating lists of EROs, AEROs and PEBOs on the district website, identification of manpower for data entry and form collection at block level.

Yasha Mudgal outlines major turnaround strategy for BCCB; orders massive credit expansion, NPA recovery drive

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MARCH 16: Commissioner Secretary, Cooperatives Department, Yasha Mudgal, today chaired a high-level review meeting to comprehensively overhaul the operational and financial framework of the Baramulla Central Cooperative Bank (BCCB).

The meeting was attended by senior officials, including Registrar, Cooperative Societies, Mohammed Shafiq Chak; Director Finance, Cooperative Department; Assistant General Manager, NABARD, Ravi Shankar Sharma; other senior officers from the department and branch heads of the bank.

During the meeting, Dr. Khalid Malik, Managing Director (MD) CEO of Baramulla Central Co-operative Bank Ltd. (BCCB) presented a detailed overview of the bank's current financial position, trends in asset quality, progress in deposit mobilisation, branch-wise business performance and achievements against targets set for the current financial year.

Yasha Mudgal observed that the sustainable revival and long-term viability of the bank depend on shifting decisively from passive management



practices to proactive, growth-oriented, and compliance-driven strategies.

She issued firm directions to intensify recovery efforts significantly to reduce Non-Performing Assets (NPAs). Bank officers were instructed to exceed assigned recovery targets by adopting result-oriented and innovative methods, rather than relying solely on conventional approaches.

The Commissioner Secretary emphasised direct engagement with defaulting borrowers and the urgent need to foster a strong repayment culture

among all cooperative members and borrowers, viewing timely repayment as an essential obligation to the institution and the cooperative movement.

For branches operating at or near NPA thresholds, Yasha Mudgal set a non-negotiable timeline of two to three months to restore acceptable levels of asset quality and profitability. In parallel, She directed the bank to launch a purposeful and aggressive credit expansion programme targeting productive and priority sectors—particularly agriculture, allied activities, small-scale industries, micro-

enterprises, and individual entrepreneurs in the region.

The Commissioner Secretary instructed substantial improvement in the Credit-Deposit ratio through diversified and quality lending, enabling the bank to strengthen its balance sheet while contributing meaningfully to employment generation and economic activity in north Kashmir.

Yasha Mudgal laid strong emphasis on institutionalising greater transparency, accountability and operational efficiency at every level. She mandated accelerated

adoption of core banking technology, digital banking channels and paperless processes to eliminate leakages, reduce transaction costs, enhance service standards and enable real-time monitoring of operations.

The Commissioner Secretary underscored that the successful turnaround of BCCB is vital for the financial stability of the cooperative ecosystem and the economic well-being of thousands of farming families, artisans, small traders, and self-help groups in the valley.

Yasha Mudgal urged the employees to contribute towards transforming BCCB into a resilient, transparent, professionally managed and customer-centric institution through aggressive recovery, substantial credit expansion, and by restoring the confidence of depositors and members.

The Commissioner Secretary emphasised that the path ahead is non-negotiable and called upon all stakeholders to work collectively towards building a consistently profitable Baramulla Central Cooperative Bank that serves as a reliable and trusted financial partner for every account holder and cooperative member.

DC Anantnag reviews Shabi-Qadar, Navratra, Eidul-Fitr, Nauroz arrangements

Directs departments to ensure smooth observance of Festive Days

HT NEWS NETWORK

ANANTNAG, MARCH 16: Deputy Commissioner (DC), Anantnag, Dr. Bilal Mohiud Din Bhat today chaired a comprehensive meeting at Dak Bungalow Khanabal, to review and finalise the arrangements for smooth observance of

upcoming holy days and festivals of Shab-i-Qadar, Navratra, Eidul-Fitr, and Nauroz-2026, in the district. The meeting was attended by SP, ADC, SEs PHE & KPDCI; ACR, SDMs, CAHO, DD Fisheries, ARTO, AD FCS&CA, Tehsildars, DSHO, AMO, representatives of Legal Metrology, Food Safety, Traffic,

EOs of MCs and other concerned officers. At the outset, the officers briefed the chair about the necessary arrangements that have been put in place for smooth observance of these holy and festive days.

Addressing the meeting, the DC said it is essential the people of the respective communities

are duly facilitated for their ease and convenience.

On the occasion, the DC called for providing all the requisite facilities to the devotees visiting Khiram Dargah Shareef, Kabamarg, Reshmool, Aishmuqam, Seer Hamdan and other shrines, mosques and Eidgahs on upcoming Shabi-Qadar

and Eidul Fitr.

He directed the concerned departments to ensure adequate supply of water and essential commodities along with uninterrupted electricity during the holy days. Instructions were also issued regarding seamless transport management, medicare, sanitation facilities besides proper

security and deployment of fire and emergency tenders especially near the shrines and mosques.

Underscoring the need for synergy among line departments, the DC said that proper coordination is vital to put in place the necessary arrangements particularly at places of congregation. He stressed that

special market checking drives be conducted by the designated teams in their jurisdiction to ensure that the commodities are available at fair price and quality. Visits to the Food Business Units by joint teams shall also be made to ensure provision of safe and hygienic food items to the consumers, he remarked.

US-Israel offensive on Iran widens; Trump says Washington seeking 'Very Solid' deal

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI/TEHRAN, MARCH 16: The conflict between the United States, Israel and Iran intensified on Sunday as fresh Israeli airstrikes hit Iranian territory while Tehran responded with missile and drone attacks across the region, even as U.S. President Donald Trump said Washington was not yet ready to reach a deal to end the war.

In a media interview, Trump had said Iran had expressed interest in negotiations but the United States would not agree to any settlement unless it met Washington's expectations. "Iran wants to make a deal, and I don't want to make it because the terms aren't good enough yet," he said, adding that any agreement would need to be "very solid."

Earlier, Iranian authorities had outlined three conditions for ending hostilities: recognition of Iran's sovereign rights, payment of reparations for damage caused by the attacks, and guarantees against future military action by the United States or Israel.

Trump also claimed that recent U.S. strikes had severely damaged Kharg Island, Iran's key oil export



hub. According to him, American forces had "totally demolished" much of the island in strikes carried out on Saturday and suggested that further attacks could follow, saying the United States might hit the facility again "just for fun."

The remarks came as Israeli forces carried out a new wave of attacks across Iran, including strikes in the central province of Isfahan

Province, where reports said at least 15 people were killed. The escalating hostilities prompted Iran to launch multiple barrages of missiles towards Israel and claim attacks on U.S. military bases in Iraq and Kuwait.

Meanwhile, Ali Larijani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, alleged that hostile actors were attempting to

frame Tehran through a fabricated terror plot. "I've heard that the remaining members of Epstein's gang have devised a conspiracy to create an incident similar to 9/11 and blame Iran for it," he said, adding that "Iran fundamentally opposes such terrorist schemes and has no war with the American people."

According to reports, Iran's

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi held a phone conversation with Jean-Noël Barrot to discuss the regional fallout of the conflict. Araghchi said the actions of the United States and Israel were the "only factor" driving insecurity in the region and in the Strait of Hormuz, urging countries to adopt a "responsible approach" to avoid further escalation.

He also maintained that Iran's military operations were directed solely at the facilities of the "aggressors" and should not be interpreted as attacks on other states in the region. According to Iranian military statements, its forces carried out "powerful drone attacks" targeting Israel's Lahav 433 headquarters and the Gilat satellite communications centre, though details of the damage or locations were not disclosed.

The widening confrontation has also affected neighbouring countries. Reports said Israeli strikes in Lebanon have pushed the death toll there to 826, while the number of displaced people has risen to more than 831,000, underscoring the growing humanitarian and regional impact of the conflict.

TVK Chief Vijay grilled by CBI for 7 hours in Karur Stampede Case

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 16: Tamil film star and Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) chief Vijay was grilled by the CBI for over seven hours in connection with the Karur stampede case on Sunday.

He left the CBI's headquarters at around 6 pm. This was his third round of questioning. An elite team of the CBI recorded his statement.

Earlier, his statement was recorded on January 12 and January 19 by an elite team of the federal probe agency.

On March 10, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) asked the film star to join the investigation on March 15, while Karur MLA and former Tamil Nadu Minister V. Senthilbalaji has been asked to join the probe on March 17.



Vijay, who has starred in superhit films like "Leo" and "Master", had earlier requested the CBI to exempt him from appearing for questioning on March 10.

On January 12, the questioning lasted for about seven hours, after which he was allowed to leave. Vijay did not speak to the media that day and left for Tamil Nadu.

A key line of inquiry has been the reported seven-hour gap between the event's scheduled start and Vijay's arrival, and whether the delay contributed to overcrowding and the subsequent chaos.

During the first session, the agency questioned him on a range of issues, including his role in planning the rally, his awareness of the expected crowd size and safety arrangements, and the reasons for his delayed arrival.

The CBI took over the investigation from the Tamil Nadu Police in October last year following a directive from the Supreme Court of India. The agency has not released any official statement regarding the findings of the earlier questioning sessions or the specifics of the fresh summons.

Vijay, who leads the Tamil Nadu-based party Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam, had departed without speaking to the media after his previous interrogation.

A stampede broke out on the evening of September 27 during the election rally of Vijay's political party, TVK. 41 people died and hundreds were injured in the incident.

A committee of former judges was also constituted to investigate the matter. At the political level, BJP President J. P. Nadda constituted an eight-member NDA team to examine the issue. Hema Malini, MP from Mathura, was made the convener of the team, which also includes Anurag Thakur and Tejasvi Surya. UNI

LS Speaker Om Birla writes to party leaders urging MPs to uphold dignity of Parliament

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 16: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has written to leaders of all political parties in the Lok Sabha, urging them to ensure discipline and uphold the dignity of Parliament amid concerns over the conduct of some members inside the House and within the Parliament complex.

In a letter sent on Sunday, the Lok Sabha Speaker said recent incidents involving the display of banners and placards, as well as the use of inappropriate language and behaviour, had raised serious concerns about the standards of parliamentary conduct. He called for collective reflection and stronger efforts by party leadership to maintain decorum in the country's highest democratic institution.

"Parliament of India is the supreme democratic institution representing the sovereign aspirations of 1.4 billion citizens of the country. Every voice expressed in Parliament represents the hopes, aspirations and expectations of millions of people," Birla wrote, adding that the Parliament complex should be regarded as "a sacred place" where debate, dialogue and diverse viewpoints are expressed within the framework of dignity and respect.

The Speaker emphasised that members of Parliament carry a greater responsibility to uphold the prestige of democratic institutions. "As members of the country's highest democratic institution, our responsibility to uphold the dignity and prestige of all democratic institutions becomes even greater," he said.

Birla said he was writing the letter not merely as a formal communication but as a reminder of the shared responsibility of all parties towards preserving the values of parliamentary democracy. He noted that the dignity and prestige of the institution had been affected by the conduct of some members both inside the House and elsewhere in the Parliament premises.

"The display of banners, placards and boards inside the House and within the Parliament premises, the kind of language being used, and the manner of conduct and behaviour being witnessed are matters of serious concern for all of us," he wrote. "This situation requires serious reflection and analysis from all of us, both individually and collectively."

Referring to Parliament's traditions, Birla said the House had long maintained a proud legacy of dignified debate and dialogue despite differences of opinion. He recalled that whenever a decline in standards had been noticed in the past, conferences involving political parties and other stakeholders were convened to deliberate on protecting the dignity and prestige of democratic institutions.

The issue has also been discussed in conferences of presiding officers, where resolutions were adopted to preserve decorum in legislative bodies. Birla said he had personally raised the matter several times in meetings of the Business Advisory Committee and discussions with leaders of political parties, urging them to maintain high standards of conduct.

Highlighting the public scrutiny of parliamentary proceedings, the Speaker said the behaviour of MPs was closely watched by citizens and that Parliament sets an example for democratic institutions across the country. "Our conduct and behaviour are watched by the entire country, and messages from the Parliament of India resonate across all democratic institutions of the nation," he wrote.

Calling for renewed efforts to restore and maintain decorum, Birla urged party leaders to take responsibility for ensuring discipline among their members. "The time has now come for serious reflection and introspection to ensure that the high dignity and prestige of our democratic institutions are preserved," he said.

He added that the top leadership of political parties and leaders within the House must make special efforts to ensure "discipline and high ethical standards of conduct and behaviour" among their members both inside the House and across the Parliament complex. UNI

LS Speaker praises PM Modi's commitment to parliamentary democracy in letter shared on X

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 16: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Sunday praised Narendra Modi for his commitment to parliamentary traditions and democratic values, saying the Prime Minister's message reflects the highest ethical standards of public service and will inspire elected representatives across the country to rise above partisan divides.

In a post on X, Birla said he had received a letter from the Prime Minister and expressed appreciation for Modi's long-standing faith in the principles and practices of India's parliamentary system.

"You have always had unwavering faith in the rules, procedures and traditions of India's parliamentary democracy," Birla wrote, adding that the letter reflected the values the Prime

Minister had upheld throughout his public life.

Birla noted that Modi's career in public service—from his tenure as Chief Minister of Gujarat to his current role as Prime Minister—has been marked by adherence to high standards of public responsibility and democratic conduct.

"Your letter reflects the highest ethical values of public service that you have lived by throughout your long public life—currently as the Prime Minister of India and earlier as the Chief Minister of Gujarat," he said.

Highlighting the role of Parliament in India's democratic framework, the Lok Sabha Speaker said the Prime Minister has consistently demonstrated a strong belief in the importance of dialogue and debate within the legislature. "You have always held a deep belief in the fundamental nature

of Parliament—dialogue, debate and deliberation," Birla said.

He further said that the Prime Minister's approach reflects respect for the voices of citizens represented in the legislature.

"You respect every voice raised in Parliament as the voice of millions of Indian citizens. You consistently give the highest priority to parliamentary work and strive to find solutions to every issue raised in Parliament," Birla wrote.

The Speaker also said the message conveyed by the Prime Minister would have a wider impact beyond Parliament, encouraging public representatives at all levels of governance to uphold democratic ideals. According to Birla, the sentiments expressed in the letter would motivate lawmakers to work above party lines in the interest of the nation.

EC announces Poll dates: Assam, Kerala, Puducherry on April 9; Tamil Nadu April 23; West Bengal April 23 & 29; Counting May 4

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 16: The Election Commission on Sunday announced the schedule for Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and the union Territory of Puducherry, setting the stage for the first major round of state elections after the 2025 Assembly polls in Bihar. The poll panel said voting will be conducted over April in different phases, with the counting of votes for all states and the union Territory scheduled for May 4.

According to the schedule, polling will be held in a single phase in Assam, Kerala and Puducherry on April 9, while elections in Tamil Nadu will be conducted on April 23. West Bengal will go to the polls in two phases on April 23 and April 29.

Announcing the dates at a press conference, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar said the Commission had completed extensive consultations and preparations to ensure a smooth, transparent and inclusive electoral process. "We are fully prepared to conduct free, fair and peaceful elections across these states and the union Territory. All necessary arrangements have been made in consultation with state authorities and security agencies," Kumar said.

In West Bengal, voting in the first phase will be held on April 23 for 152 Assembly constituencies, while the remaining 142 seats will vote in the second phase on April 29.

The notification for the first

phase will be issued on March 30, with April 6 as the last date for filing nominations. Scrutiny of nominations will take place on April 7, and the last date for withdrawal of candidature will be April 9. For the second phase, the notification will be issued on April 2, with April 9 as the last date for nominations. Scrutiny will be held on April 10 and candidates will be able to withdraw their nominations until April 13.

For Tamil Nadu, the notification for elections will be issued on March 30, with the last date for filing nominations on April 6. Scrutiny of nominations will take place on April 7 and the last date for withdrawal will be April 9 before polling on April 23.

For Assam, Kerala and the UT of Puducherry, which are going to booths together on April 9, the election process will begin earlier, with the notification scheduled for March 16. The last date for filing nominations will be March 23, followed by scrutiny on March 24 and the final date for withdrawal on March 26. Polling will take place on April 9.

The Chief Election Commissioner said the Model Code of Conduct had come into immediate effect in all poll-bound states and the union Territory following the announcement of the election schedule. "The Model Code of Conduct is effective from this moment. We expect all political parties and candidates to adhere strictly to the guidelines to maintain the integrity of the democratic process," Kumar said.

The upcoming elections are



expected to carry significant political implications at the national level as they represent the first major electoral test for political parties after the Bihar Assembly elections. Several national and regional parties are preparing for intense campaigns across the five regions.

Among the states going to the polls, West Bengal is expected to witness one of the most closely watched contests. The state will see a high-stakes political battle with three-time Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee seeking another term in office while facing a strong challenge from the Bharatiya Janata Party, which has significantly expanded its presence in the state over the past decade.

Political analysts say the contest in the eastern state is likely to be intense, with both sides mobilising large-scale campaigns and high-profile leaders. The BJP has been working to consolidate its support

base after emerging as a major opposition force in the previous Assembly election, while Banerjee's All India Trinamool Congress is seeking to retain its dominance in the state.

In Assam, the BJP is campaigning aggressively to retain power in the northeastern state it has governed since 2016. The party is expected to highlight its governance record and development initiatives as it seeks a renewed mandate from voters.

Meanwhile, in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, traditional political rivalries are expected to dominate the campaign. Kerala's election will likely see another contest between the ruling Communist Party of India (Marxist)-led Left Democratic Front and the opposition Indian National Congress-led United Democratic Front.

In Tamil Nadu, regional parties are expected to lead the contest, with national parties playing

supporting roles in alliances.

The union Territory of Puducherry, a small coastal territory, has often witnessed competitive contests among regional and national parties due to its unique political dynamics.

The Election Commission said it would deploy central security forces and implement strict monitoring mechanisms to ensure peaceful polling in all regions. "Security arrangements have been carefully planned. Adequate deployment of central forces will be ensured wherever necessary to maintain law and order," Kumar said.

He also highlighted measures aimed at increasing voter participation and transparency, including enhanced voter awareness programmes and the use of technology for monitoring the electoral process. "Our focus is on ensuring maximum voter participation while maintaining the highest standards of electoral integrity," he said.

In order to ensure transparency of the process, the CEC said that 100 per cent of the polling stations (approx 2.18 lakh) will have webcasting facility to ensure 17.4 crore electorates participate in the democratic process enthusiastically with pride and responsibility.

With the announcement of the election schedule, political parties are expected to intensify their campaign efforts across the poll-bound states and the union Territory, setting the stage for weeks of intense political activity leading up to polling in April. UNI

Rohit on India's World Cup wins: 'I hope this is just the start'

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

MUMBAI: Two-time ICC trophy-winning captain Rohit Sharma hopes the recent run of India men's and women's teams winning ICC trophies is "just the start". Rohit hailed the two teams after the men's team recently won their third T20 World Cup, and second in a row, on March 8 in Ahmedabad, which came four months after the women's team lifted their maiden ODI World Cup in Navi Mumbai.

"There's no secret to success, it's all about hard work," Rohit said in Mumbai on Saturday. "International cricketers - men's and women's - they work really, really hard to achieve what they have achieved. Of course, it's not just the players who perform

on the field but there's so many people behind the scenes as well who put in so much hard work into that success. So a lot of people and personnel to give credit to.

"I feel very, very happy and proud to see what we've been seeing for the last couple of years now to come out with flying colours and achieve what we have achieved, not just men's team but also women's team to win that World Cup in Mumbai was fantastic to watch. And recently now what the men's team did to win the T20 World Cup, what they did was phenomenal. And I hope this is just the start, there's no looking back from here because once you get the momentum - and we often talk about momentum in cricket - both men's and women's teams have, all I hope is that we carry

ry this momentum."

Rohit himself started this streak of India lifting ICC titles when he led them to the 2024 T20 World Cup glory in June 2024 and then the Champions Trophy title in March 2025. To add to that, India's Under-19 teams, both men and women, also won their last respective World Cups. The Under-19 men's team lifted the trophy only last month under Ayush Mhatre in Zimbabwe whereas the Under-19 women won the trophy in 2025 under Niki Prasad in Malaysia.

The next ICC tournament for India will be the women's T20 World Cup which starts on June 12 in the UK. India have been pooled in Group 1 with Pakistan, Netherlands, Bangladesh, South Africa and Australia.



Chelsea top four push damaged by Newcastle defeat

AGENCIES

LONDON: Newcastle forward Anthony sealed a 1-0 win against Chelsea on Saturday that dealt a major blow to the Blues' bid to qualify for the Champions League.

Gordon netted in the first half at Stamford Bridge to leave Chelsea in fifth place in the Premier League. After crashing to a 5-2 defeat at Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League last-16 first leg in midweek, Chelsea suffered an unwanted hangover with a dis-



jointed display in west London. An evening that started with Chelsea's players bizarrely surrounding referee Paul Tierney during their pre-match huddle ended with the Blues' Champions League hopes in disarray.

Liam Rosenior's side trail third-placed Manchester United and fourth-placed Aston Villa by three points and have played a game more than both their top-four rivals. United and Villa are in action on Sunday when they meet at Old Trafford, while sixth-placed Liverpool -- behind Chelsea on goal difference -- will go above the Blues if they avoid defeat against Tottenham on Sunday. Newcastle were also in Champions League action in midweek, earning a creditable 1-1 draw against Barcelona at St James' Park.

And Eddie Howe's side were more vibrant than Chelsea in the early stages. Tino Livramento's 18th minute pass split their defence, allowing Joe Willock to burst unimpeded through the middle unchecked.

Willock provided the killer pass for Gordon and the England forward applied the finishing touch into the empty net.

Rumbles of discontent from Chelsea supporters were soon audible as every blocked shot or misplayed pass raised the anxiety levels. There was little to reassure the frustrated fans in the first half as Chelsea laboured to make the most of their possession.

Willock's drive was tipped over by Robert Sanchez at his near post, while Jacob Ramsey's shot deflected off Trevoh Chalobah and required a smart save from the Blues keeper.

Sanchez, back in for the injured Filip Jorgensen, nearly produced the latest in a long line of blunders this season, but Wesley Fofana saved the keeper after his wayward pass. Chelsea striker Liam Delap fired woefully over the bar from six yards, then Chalobah headed wide under pressure from Ramsdale.

Reece James came within inches with a late free-kick and Joao Pedro's header landed on the roof of the goal, but Newcastle held firm.

Kimi Antonelli takes his first win in China to extend Mercedes' dominant start to new F1 era

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

SHANGHAI: Kimi Antonelli became Formula 1's second-youngest race winner with a composed drive to victory for Mercedes in an eventful Chinese Grand Prix on Sunday.

The 19-year-old Italian was the youngest pole position starter and briefly lost the lead to Lewis Hamilton of Ferrari at the start but retook it soon after and was in control after that.

"We did it! We did it!" Antonelli shouted to his team over the radio amid laughs and whoops.

It was another 1-2 finish for Mercedes to start the season as Antonelli's teammate George Russell came through a battle with both Ferraris to finish second. Lewis Hamilton was third



for his long-awaited first Grand Prix podium finish for Ferrari.

The only driver younger than Antonelli to win a Grand Prix was Max Verstappen, who was 18 when he took his first victory in 2016. The new regulations again produced a dramatic fight for position between Mercedes and fast-starting Ferrari as Russell

fought his way past Leclerc and Hamilton in a multi-lap battle with numerous changes of position. That allowed Antonelli to build his lead at the front.

Even after Russell had pulled away to secure second place, teammates Leclerc and Hamilton kept up their own fight for third. "This is quite a fun battle," Leclerc

exclaimed over the radio.

Leclerc was fourth with Oliver Bearman fifth for Haas, Pierre Gasly sixth for Alpine and Liam Lawson seventh for Racing Bulls. Isack Hadjar recovered from an early spin to place eighth for Red Bull, ahead of Carlos Sainz, Jr. in ninth for Williams, while Franco Colapinto was 10th for Alpine to score his first point since 2024.

Max Verstappen was running sixth when his car lost power and he had to limp back to the pits in another blow for the four-time champion who has been a leading critic of F1's new cars.

Formula 1 champion Lando Norris and his McLaren teammate Oscar Piastri were both unable to start after hitting technical problems minutes before the race began.

Piastri was due to start fifth

and Norris sixth for Sunday's race. Norris was in his car in the pits but didn't leave for the grid, before Piastri was then withdrawn from the grid following a radio message which indicated an electrical issue.

"Unfortunately we identified separate issues on both cars which prevented them from starting the Chinese GP, with Oscar's being removed from the grid shortly before the formation lap. We will now work to identify each issue," the McLaren team said. It's the second time Piastri has failed to start in 2026 after he crashed before the start of last week's race in Australia.

F1 is racing hours after it announced next month's races in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia will not go ahead because of the war in the Middle East.

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