

Srinagar
Thursday
March 19 | 2026
29 Ramadan 1447 AH
Issue No: 69
Volume: 16
Pages: 12
Price: Rs 02/-

16TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION
HEADLINES TODAY
Voice To The Voiceless

LUBAAB PUBLICATIONS
ONE STOP SOLUTION FOR ALL PRINTING NEEDS
NEWSPAPER | BOOKS | FLYERS | LOGO | FLEX | MAGAZINES
VISITING CARDS | BROCHURES | 3D BOARDS | COVER PAGES
WEDDING CARDS | CALLIGRAPHY | WALL PAINTINGS
9999038812
9419008414
Radio Colony, Gund Hassibhat, Lawaipora Srinagar-190017

LG Calls for Riverbank Aartis Across Jammu to Revive Spiritual Heritage

Manoj Sinha says initiative will connect youth with cultural roots, boost spiritual tourism

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MAR 18: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday called upon people to organise daily or weekly evening aartis in towns and villages along riverbanks across Jammu division, saying the practice would rekindle cultural consciousness and strengthen society's spiritual fabric.

The Lieutenant Governor made the remarks after participating in the Jammu Aarti at Raghunath Temple, where he lauded the initiative as a unique spiritual expression embodying India's timeless reverence for Nari Shakti and Ardhanarishvar while invoking blessings for all.

Turn on Page 2



Winter chill returns as Kashmir sees fresh wet spell

Rain lashes plains, fresh snowfall in upper reaches

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, MAR 18: Intermittent rain in Srinagar and other parts of the Kashmir Valley, coupled with fresh snowfall in the upper reaches, has brought back a pronounced winter chill across the region on Wednesday.

The weather shift comes after a relatively dry spell, with cloudy skies and scattered precipitation lowering day temperatures and reviving cold conditions typically seen earlier in the season.

The renewed spell of rain in the plains and snowfall in higher altitudes has affected normal life in parts of the Valley, with damp and chilly conditions throughout the day. The Meteorological Department had forecast generally cloudy weather with light rain in plains and snowfall over higher reaches around March 17-18.

Turn on Page 2



Tight Security Blanket, New Facilities in Place for Navratri Rush at Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine

HT NEWS NETWORK

KATRA/JAMMU, MAR 18: A multi-layered security grid and elaborate arrangements have been put in place along the pilgrimage route to the revered Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine atop the Trikuta hills ahead of the nine-day Chaitra Navratri festival, officials said on Wednesday.

Chief Executive Officer of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine



Board, Sachin Kumar Vaishya, said the entire shrine, including the Bhawan and adjoining areas,

has been decorated with flowers to welcome devotees for the festival, which will culminate on Ram Navami.

With a heavy rush of pilgrims expected, the Shrine Board has made extensive arrangements to ensure smooth and safe darshan. "The yatra has already recorded a footfall of 15 lakh this year and is likely to increase further in the coming days," Vaishya told reporters at

Turn on Page 2

J&K Police's proactive, innovative strategy paying dividends

Terror-related incidents on decline in Jammu upper reaches

HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, MAR 18: The proactive and innovative strategy devised by J&K Police to counter terror in mountains and forests has led to significant decline in terror-related incidents in the upper reaches of Jammu region.

Sources told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that in 2023-24, the twin border districts of Poonch and Rajouri and upper reaches of Udhampur as well as an area of Kathua witnessed terror attacks, raising serious security concerns.

"It was during this challenging period



that Nalin Prabhat assumed charge as the DGP of Jammu and Kashmir and began restructuring counter-terror operations with a focused approach on difficult ter-

rains," the sources said.

DGP Prabhat soon after assuming charge recognized the unique geographical challenges of the region—dense forests, rugged mountains, and high-altitude areas. "The DGP introduced a specialized operational framework within the Special Operation Group (SOG). Under this strategy, two elite groups were formed within SOG: Snow Leopards and Markhor" sources informed. "The Snow Leopards unit is centrally located and primarily tasked with operations in snow bound and higher mountain tops and ridges.

Turn on Page 2

PM bids farewell to retiring colleagues

HT NEWS NETWORK

NEW DELHI, MAR 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed retiring Members of Rajya Sabha Wednesday.

Expressing heartfelt gratitude for the chance to honor retiring colleagues, the Prime Minister noted that such occasions allow the House to rise above party lines and share a common sentiment.

PM Modi remarked that whether members return or move into broader social service, their accumulated experience remains an asset to the nation. He observed that in the dynamic field of politics, the journey never truly ends as the future always holds new opportunities for seasoned leaders. "In politics, there are no full stops; your experience and contribution will forever remain a part of the nation's life," asserted Modi.

Turn on Page 2

Over 1.11 Crore Grievances Filed in 5 Years, Govt Speeds Up Redressal

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, MAR 18: The Centre on Wednesday said more than 1.11 crore public grievances have been received over the past five years through its online complaint system, with a significant improvement in disposal timelines in recent years.

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh said a total of 1,11,89,384 grievances were registered on the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) between 2021 and February 2026.

Turn on Page 2

Gulmarg Lease Dispute Takes Turn as High Court Closes Case, Parties Seek Govt Solution

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, MAR 18: The High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh on Wednesday disposed of a batch of writ petitions in the contentious Gulmarg hotels' land lease case after petitioners chose to withdraw their pleas to pursue a negotiated settlement with the government.

A bench of Chief Justice Arun Palli and Justice Rajesh Oswal allowed the withdrawal earlier this month, noting that the petitioners intend to approach the administration through formal representations to resolve the dispute.

The case arises from the 2022 rollout of

Turn on Page 2

Navreh Homecoming Call : Pandits Vow Valley Celebrations Next Year

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

JAMMU, MAR 18: In a significant cultural assertion, the Kashmiri Pandit community has resolved to celebrate Navreh in the Kashmir Valley from next year, terming the move a symbolic homecoming and a step towards reconnecting with their ancestral homeland.

Navreh, observed on the first day of Chaitra as per the Saptarshi calendar and dedicated to Goddess Sharika, marks the Kashmiri Hindu New Year and will be celebrated on March 19 this year. The festival carries deep religious, cultural and astronomical importance and has traditionally begun with early morning rituals, including and of the Navreh Thali symbolising prosperity, knowledge and continuity of life.

Turn on Page 2

Govt Committed to Affordable, Inclusive Healthcare: Itoo

HT NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM, MAR 18: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo today inaugurated 50 bedded Integrated AYUSH Hospital at Chawalgam here.

The Hospital, constructed at an estimated cost of around Rs. 7.40

crores, marks a significant milestone in the Government's sustained efforts to promote traditional systems of medicine alongside modern healthcare services.

MLA Kulgam, Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami; Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Shahzad Alam; Director Ayush, ADC Kulgam, CMO Kulgam, Nodal Officer Ayush, CEO Kulgam, senior



officers of district administration and large number of locals were also present on the occasion.

In her address after the inauguration ceremony, Minister Sakeena underscored the Omar Abdullah led Government's commitment to expanding quality healthcare services to the grassroots level.

Turn on Page 2

LG Sinha, CM Omar, Ministers extend Navratri, Navreh greetings

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MAR 18: The Lieutenant Governor, Shri Manoj Sinha has conveyed his greetings to the people on the eve of Navreh, Chaitra Sukladi, Ugadi, Gudi Padava and Cheti Chand.

In a message, the Lieutenant Governor has said, "On the auspicious occasion of Navreh, Chaitra Sukladi, Ugadi, Gudi Padava and Cheti Chand, I extend my greetings and good wishes to all. These festivals, observed throughout the nation, herald the dawn of the New Year and embody the profound renewal of faith and hope.

May these festivals bring prosperity,

Turn on Page 2

REVIVE CARE
Mr. Meer Turab
Audiologist & Speech Therapist
(Avaz Certified & Apraxia Practitioner)

Former Sr. Audiologist & Speech Therapist at MAX Hospital Saket New Delhi
Former Sr. Audiologist at Dr. JM M Hans Center for ENT & Vertigo
RCI No.: A53474

Available Every Wednesday and Sunday From 4PM
Address National Highway Kanispora Baramulla Near Petrol Pump
99062 15683

پیشاپہ

Preserve Your Ideas
We Bring Them to Life

LUBAAB PUBLICATIONS
ONE STOP SOLUTION FOR ALL PRINTING NEEDS

We Publish in
Arabic | Urdu | Hindi | Persian | Kashmiri

Contact us:
9697071471 | 9999038812
lubaabpublications01@gmail.com

CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....

LG Calls for.....

Describing evening aarti as "a discipline of the soul," Sinha said it inspires people to reflect on the source of existence and cultivate gratitude. He said each flame in the aarti symbolises devotion, each prayer represents a dialogue with the infinite, and every moment spent offers a step towards an inner journey.

"In this rapidly changing world, we need meditative moments to rediscover the greatest treasure within us," he said, adding that the Jammu Aarti provides an opportunity for all sections of society to reconnect with their inner selves.

Highlighting efforts to project Jammu as a global spiritual hub, the Lieutenant Governor said the aarti at Raghunath Temple would enrich the experience of pilgrims visiting Vaishno Devi and Amarnath Cave Temple, while also giving a boost to the local economy.

He said such gatherings play a crucial role in enabling self-realisation and helping the younger generation understand and imbibe the values of the region's spiritual legacy. "Youth must realise that they have inherited not material wealth, but a precious inner legacy," he added.

The event was organised by Shri Raghunath Ji Ki Jammu Aarti Sanstha and witnessed the participation of prominent citizens and a large number of devotees.

Winter chill.....

Officials said upper areas including Gulmarg, Sonamarg and other mountainous belts received fresh snowfall, while Srinagar and adjoining districts experienced intermittent drizzle and light rain at intervals.

"The current weather pattern is due to a western disturbance affecting the region, leading to widespread cloud cover and precipitation," an official from the Meteorological Centre Srinagar said.

He said the prevailing conditions are likely to continue, with intermittent rain or snowfall expected at several places over the next couple of days, especially during late evening and night hours.

The sudden return of cold conditions has led to a noticeable dip in temperatures, with maximum temperatures remaining below normal for this time of the month, officials said.

Locals said the weather had turned "unexpectedly cold" after a brief improvement earlier this week.

"It had started feeling like spring, but now it feels like peak winter again," said a Srinagar resident, adding that people have had to take out warm clothing once more.

The fresh precipitation has, however, brought some relief to farmers and orchardists who were concerned about the prolonged dry spell earlier this season. Such wet spells are crucial for soil moisture and upcoming agricultural activity.

According to weather data, March in Kashmir typically marks a transition period with mixed conditions, including rain in plains and occasional snowfall in higher reaches, though snowfall usually decreases compared to peak winter months.

Authorities have advised caution in higher reaches and on mountain roads, where snowfall could lead to slippery conditions and temporary disruptions.

The Meteorological Department said weather is expected to remain generally unstable until around March 20, after which gradual improvement is likely. (KNT)

Tight Security.....

Katra, the base camp for pilgrims. He said security has been significantly tightened with the deployment of personnel from the CRPF, Jammu and Kashmir Police, Shrine Board security staff and the Army. An Integrated Command and Control Centre is functioning round-the-clock, while high-resolution CCTV cameras have been installed to maintain constant surveillance along the route.

To facilitate pilgrims, eight 'May I Help You' desks have been established at key, while special focus has been laid on assisting devotees with disabilities. Free battery car services and pony services will continue to be provided to them, as in previous years.

Vaishya said new facilities, including a 'Sadhana Kaksh' for meditation and a 'Yagyashala' for havan, have been introduced this year to enhance the spiritual experience of visiting devotees.

Authorities expect a sharp rise in pilgrim inflow throughout the Navratri period, with all measures in place to ensure a secure and orderly pilgrimage.

J&K Police's.....

The Markhor units spread across the UT are specially trained and deployed to dominate forest belts and mountainous terrain, the areas that had long been exploited by terrorist groups for infiltration and hideouts."

"To enhance the operational efficiency, selected personnel for these units were sent to Greyhounds, Andhra Pradesh and trained with elite army units for advanced training in jungle warfare, endurance and specialized combat techniques.

This capacity-building initiative significantly strengthened the force's ability to operate in hostile and challenging environments of higher reaches."

The results of this strategic overhaul have been clearly visible.

"By 2025, the number of terror incidents in the region saw a marked reduction, reflecting improved intelligence coordination, better area domination, and swift neutralization of threats," they said.

"This strategy not only disrupted terror networks but also restored a sense of security among the local population in the far flung areas of different districts."

Pertinently, DGP Prabhat while addressing a Passing Out Parade at the STC Talwara recently stated that J&K Police have changed tactics to counter terror. "Over the past two years the J&K Police altered its operational strategy and intensified action in remote forests and mountains where terrorists have attempted to regroup. The battle has shifted to jungles and upper reaches. We are moving upwards into these areas to get them (terrorists) and destroy their hideouts."

He also said that Police were now actively engaging terrorists in forests. "Our operations are aimed at countering terrorists who are sent by our nefarious neighbour. We are not allowing them to succeed in their evil plans," he said.

While recalling last year's "Operation Mahadev," the DGP said security forces eliminated three Pakistani terrorists during the operation. "The terrorists were responsible for the killing of 26 civilians in the Baisaran (Pahalgam) area. Police had pursued them deep inside the forest before neutralising them."—(KNO)

PM bids.....

Highlighting the best contributions of the outgoing members, the Prime Minister suggested that the new generation of MPs should look to veterans like Deve Gowda, Kharge, and Sharad Pawar as role models. He praised Deputy Chairman Hariwansh Ji for his soft-spoken conduct and his ability to maintain the House's trust while handling complex crises.

Modi pointed out that such dedicated service reflects a deep commitment to the responsibilities entrusted by society. "There is much to learn from these senior leaders about staying entirely committed to the responsibilities given by society," noted the Prime Minister.

Reflecting on the changing traditions of the House, PM Modi remarked that while the 24x7 media environment has made everyone more conscious, the legacy of humor and wit remains an essential part of parliamentary life. He highlighted that the departure of a group every two years allows for a continuous exchange of knowledge, ensuring that the House's rich legacy is preserved by the incoming members. Modi observed that this institutional continuity is a significant advantage that strengthens the democratic process. "The legacy here is a continuous process that enriches our parliamentary system," remarked the Prime Minister.

Highlighting the unique institutional value of the Rajya Sabha, PM Modi pointed out that the parliamentary system gains immense strength from the concept of a "second opinion." He noted that the transition of decisions between the two Houses adds a critical new dimension to the legislative process, ensuring more refined outcomes for the country. This democratic heritage, according to him, fosters a sense of openness and thoroughness in national decision-making. "This second opinion is a massive contribution to our democracy that we must cherish," said Modi.

The Prime Minister pointed out that the retiring cohort holds the rare distinction of having served in both the old and the new Parliament buildings during their tenure. He remarked that being part of the historic transition to the new House would serve as a fresh and significant memory in their public service careers.

Modi described the House as a "Great Open University" that provides members with a unique education in the complexities of national life. "The six years spent here are invaluable for shaping one's contribution to the nation and for self-growth," emphasized the Prime Minister.

Concluding the address, Modi expressed confidence that the members' vision and capacity have expanded manifold through their years of parliamentary experience. He noted that their invaluable contributions to nation-building would continue to be felt whether they serve within the formal system or through independent social work. PM Modi once again glorified the long and dedicated service of the retiring representatives, thanking them for their commitment. "I once again salute and glorify the contributions of all the retiring members," emphasized Modi.

Over 1.11 Crore.....

The data showed that 20,00,590 grievances were received in 2021, followed by 19,18,238 in 2022 and 19,53,057 in 2023. The number rose to 26,15,321 in 2024 before slightly declining to 22,78,256 in 2025, while 4,23,922 grievances have been recorded so

far this year.

The minister said the average time taken to dispose of grievances by central ministries and departments stood at 15 days in 2025, with 82.1 per cent resolved within the stipulated 21-day period.

He said the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances regularly reviews performance through monthly meetings and advises ministries, departments, states and Union Territories with higher pendency to take corrective measures.

Singh added that a series of reforms, including comprehensive guidelines issued in August 2024, have streamlined the grievance redressal mechanism by reducing timelines, mandating dedicated grievance cells, focusing on root cause analysis, and strengthening escalation and monitoring systems.

Gulmarg Lease.....

The J&K Land Grant Rules by the Union Territory administration led by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, which discontinued the extension of expired leases and mandated auction of such properties through open bidding.

The policy has had a pronounced impact in Gulmarg, where a majority of hotels stand on leased land. Of the 59 hotels in the resort, 55 leases have already expired, leaving several proprietors facing uncertainty over eviction and reallocation through auction.

The court had heard the matter extensively and arguments on behalf of the petitioners had been completed. However, at the final stage of hearing, senior advocate Z. A. Shah sought permission to withdraw the petitions, stating that stakeholders preferred to first seek redress from the government.

Appearing for the administration, Senior Additional Advocate General Mohsin Qadri informed the court that the government was open to a "fair, reasonable and equitable" resolution and assured that any representations filed within two weeks would be duly considered after hearing the petitioners.

Recording the submissions, the bench said it was not required to examine the merits of the case and disposed of the petitions. Several connected contempt pleas were also closed as infructuous, while some writ petitions were dismissed as withdrawn.

The court, however, observed that considerable judicial time had already been invested in the matter and indicated that proceedings might have concluded but for the change in stance by the parties at the final stage.

Navreh Homecoming.....

Describing the occasion as a "poignant homecoming movement," noted scholar and Padma Shri awardee Kashi Nath Pandita said the Navreh Mahotsav will be observed not only in Jammu but across several cities in India and abroad, reflecting widespread participation of the community. He said displaced members have collectively reaffirmed their resolve to return and celebrate the festival in Kashmir next year.

The second day, March 20, will be observed as Shaurya Divas to honour the valour and leadership of Lalitaditya Muktapada, the 8th-century monarch of the region.

Co-convenor Brij Lal Bhat said the festival reflects the community's aspiration to reconnect with its roots, while also advocating the inclusion of contributions of Acharya Shreya Bhat and Lalitaditya in academic curricula.

Chairman of Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra and chief spokesperson of the organising committee, M K Bharat, said that due to the coincidence of Amavasya and Chaitra Shukla Pratipada this year, the festival will be compressed into two days instead of three, marking a confluence of Tyag Divas and Sankalp Divas.

Organised annually since 2021, the Navreh Mahotsav has emerged as a key cultural event, with community leaders describing it as a vibrant expression of cultural resurgence. Having marked the festival in exile for decades after migrating from the Valley in the early 1990s, Kashmiri Pandits continue to voice a strong desire to return and revive their traditions in their native land.

Govt Committed.....

She emphasized that the integration of AYUSH systems with conventional medicine will not only broaden treatment options but also revive and institutionalize time-tested indigenous healing practices.

"The Government is resolute in its mission to deliver equitable, inclusive, and affordable healthcare to every citizen. The inauguration of this Integrated AYUSH Hospital at Kulgam reflects our vision of a robust and diversified healthcare system that respects tradition while embracing innovation," the Minister stated.

She highlighted that the newly established facility will provide comprehensive and integrated treatment modalities under Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, and Homeopathy (AYUSH), ensuring accessible and affordable healthcare to the people of Kulgam and adjoining areas.

Highlighting the importance of preventive

healthcare, Minister Sakeena remarked that AYUSH plays a crucial role in lifestyle management, chronic disease care and immunity enhancement. She added that this hospital will also serve as a centre for health awareness, community outreach programmes, and capacity-building initiatives.

"This 50-bedded hospital is equipped with well-furnished inpatient wards, specialized outpatient departments, Panchakarma therapy units, diagnostic facilities, Yoga and wellness centres and dedicated consultation chambers to ensure high standards of treatment and patient care", she stated.

The Minister reiterated that strengthening healthcare infrastructure in underserved and rural areas remains a top priority of the Government. She assured the public that necessary resources and manpower would be provided to ensure the smooth and efficient functioning of the hospital.

She also said that the macadamization of approach road to the hospital as well as other works related to landscaping of exteriors of hospital will be taken in due course of time.

The Minister underlined that the Government led by Omar Abdullah in last 18 months has given max priority to Health sector.

MLA Kulgam, Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami in his address lauded the healthcare professionals for their remarkable contribution to Health sector.

Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, while speaking on the occasion, outlined the development of healthcare network in Kulgam district, adding that a robust healthcare infrastructure has been established in the district for the people.

LG Sinha, CM.....

peace and happiness in everyone's life and also promote the spirit of oneness and harmony."

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today extended his warm greetings to the people on the auspicious occasion of Chaitra Navratri.

In a message, the Chief Minister said that Navratri marks the beginning of the New Year and symbolizes the triumph of truth, righteousness and virtue over evil.

"On this auspicious occasion, I extend my warm wishes to everyone for their success, happiness and well-being," he said.

The Chief Minister also extended his felicitations to the Kashmiri Pandit community on the occasion of Navreh.

"May these festivals strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and inspire us to dedicate ourselves to the service of humanity," he added.

Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Information Technology, Transport, Youth Services & Sports, and Science & Technology, Satish Sharma today extended warm and heartfelt greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the auspicious occasion of Navratra.

In his message, the Minister underscored the spiritual and cultural significance of the nine-day festival, which is dedicated to the worship of Goddess Durga and symbolizes the victory of good over evil, light over darkness, and truth over falsehood. He said that Navratri is not merely a religious observance but a celebration of faith, devotion, inner strength, and the enduring values that bind society together.

Satish Sharma noted that the festival serves as a reminder for all to reaffirm their commitment to righteousness, compassion, and self-discipline. He emphasized that such sacred occasions provide an opportunity to strengthen the bonds of communal harmony, brotherhood, and mutual respect among people of all communities across Jammu and Kashmir.

Highlighting the rich cultural diversity of Jammu and Kashmir, the Minister said that festivals like Navratri showcase the region's composite heritage and reinforce the spirit of unity in diversity. He urged people to celebrate the festival with devotion, enthusiasm, and a sense of responsibility, while also ensuring care for the underprivileged and those in need.

The Minister further expressed hope that the auspicious occasion would usher in an era of peace, progress, and prosperity in Jammu and Kashmir. He reiterated the Government's commitment towards ensuring the welfare of the people, strengthening public service delivery, and promoting inclusive growth across all sectors.

Satish Sharma also prayed for the well-being, happiness, and good health of all citizens, and for continued peace and development in the region.

"May the divine blessings of Goddess

Durga inspire us with courage, wisdom, and strength to overcome challenges and work collectively towards building a harmonious, progressive, and prosperous Jammu and Kashmir," he added.

Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo today extended her heartfelt greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the auspicious occasion of Navratra.

In her greetings, the Minister highlighted the spiritual and cultural importance of Navratri, describing it as a festival that symbolizes the triumph of faith, positivity and collective harmony. She underlined that this sacred nine-day festival is dedicated to the worship of Goddess Durga and symbolizes the victory of good over evil and truth over falsehood.

Sakeena Itoo emphasized that festivals like Navratri strengthen the bonds of unity and mutual respect among communities and serve as an opportunity to reaffirm shared values of coexistence and social harmony. She urged people to celebrate the festival with devotion while promoting kindness, inclusiveness and care for the vulnerable sections of society.

The Minister also prayed for the well-being and good health of all citizens, as well as peace, progress and prosperity of entire Jammu and Kashmir.

The Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, today extended his warm greetings to the people on the auspicious occasion of Navratri.

He said that the festival holds immense religious and cultural significance and symbolizes the triumph of truth over falsehood and good over evil. He emphasized that Navratri inspires people to uphold righteousness and strengthen the values of compassion, unity, and devotion.

The Deputy Chief Minister prayed for the wellbeing, happiness, and prosperity of all. He remarked that Jammu and Kashmir has always been a land of rich diversity, standing firmly for coexistence, harmony, and brotherhood among people of all faiths.

He expressed hope that this sacred occasion would bring peace, prosperity, and renewed positivity in the lives of the people, further strengthening the bonds of love and unity across the region.

Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology, Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana has extended warm greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the auspicious occasion of Navratra.

In his message, the Minister conveyed his heartfelt wishes for peace, prosperity, success and well-being of all. He highlighted that Chaitra Navratri, which marks the beginning of the Hindu New Year, is a sacred period of devotion, self-discipline and spiritual reflection. He said that the festival symbolizes the eternal victory of truth, righteousness and virtue over evil forces.

Rana expressed hope that the auspicious days of Navratri would inspire people to strengthen the values of harmony, compassion and unity, and work collectively towards the progress and prosperity of society. He emphasized the importance of preserving the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of the region while fostering mutual respect and brotherhood among all communities.

"May this festival usher in renewed hope, positive energy and may the triumph of good over evil continue to illuminate our hearts and guide society towards peace and harmony," he said.

Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar has extended his warm and heartfelt greetings to the people on the auspicious occasion of Chaitra Navratri 2026.

In his message, the Minister conveyed his best wishes to the people of J&K and praying for joy, peace and prosperity for all. He described the festival as a vibrant celebration of Nari Shakti (women's power), symbolizing strength, resilience and the divine feminine energy embodied in Maa Durga.

Highlighting the spiritual significance of the nine-day festival, Javid Dar stated that Navratri marks a period of devotion, reflection and renewal of faith. He emphasized that the occasion inspires individuals to seek blessings for courage, harmony and a peaceful and prosperous life.

The Minister further expressed hope that the festival would reinforce the spirit of unity, brotherhood and communal harmony among people and serve as a reminder of the enduring values of compassion and righteousness.



Div Com Kashmir reviews arrangements for Forthcoming Religious Festivals

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, MAR 18: To ensure smooth and peaceful celebrations of the forthcoming religious festivals of Eid-ul-Fitr, Navroz and Navratra, the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, today chaired a meeting of officers to review the preparedness and arrangements being put in place across the Kashmir Division.

The meeting was attended by all Deputy Commissioners, Commissioner SMC, SSP Srinagar, Chief Engineer PWD, ARTO Kashmir, Director Sheep Husbandry Kashmir, SSP Traffic Rural Kashmir, Joint Director Information Kashmir, Joint Director FCS&CA and other senior officers of concerned departments.

At the outset, the Deputy Commissioners briefed the Divisional Commissioner about the arrangements being put in place in their respective districts for the smooth celebration of Eid-ul-Fitr, Navroz and Navratra. They also apprised him regarding the availability and stock position of essential commodities, including LPG, petrol and diesel.

While addressing the meeting, the Divisional Commissioner directed all Deputy Commissioners to ensure meticulous arrangements with regard to the availability of basic facilities, deployment of Magistrates, and



effective security and traffic management, particularly at major congregational places where Eid prayers are scheduled to be held.

He directed KPDCL to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply across the Kashmir Division on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr, especially at Aasar-i-Sharief Hazratbal and

other prominent religious places. The Jal Shakti Department was instructed to ensure adequate and uninterrupted supply of safe drinking water during the festive days.

With regard to essential commodities, the Divisional Commissioner emphasized maintaining

adequate stocks and ensuring the availability of all essential items, including LPG, petrol and diesel, across the division so that the public does not face any inconvenience during the celebrations. The FCS&CA Department was directed to ensure sufficient domestic LPG stock in all districts

and to prevent any shortages. He further instructed concerned authorities to conduct comprehensive market inspections to curb hoarding, overpricing and the sale of substandard goods. Stressing close coordination among enforcement agencies, he directed that fair pricing and adequate availability of essential commodities, particularly mutton and poultry, be ensured on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr.

Reviewing traffic management measures, the Divisional Commissioner directed traffic authorities to regulate vehicular movement near major mosques and marketplaces. He also emphasized the arrangement of adequate public transport facilities on key routes leading to Hazratbal to facilitate smooth movement of devotees, especially for Eid prayers.

To ensure safety at congregational venues, he directed the deployment of fire tenders and adequate security personnel to ensure the smooth and peaceful celebration of all the festivals across the Kashmir Division.

The Divisional Commissioner reiterated the need for seamless coordination among all departments to ensure that the upcoming religious festivals are celebrated in a peaceful and orderly manner.

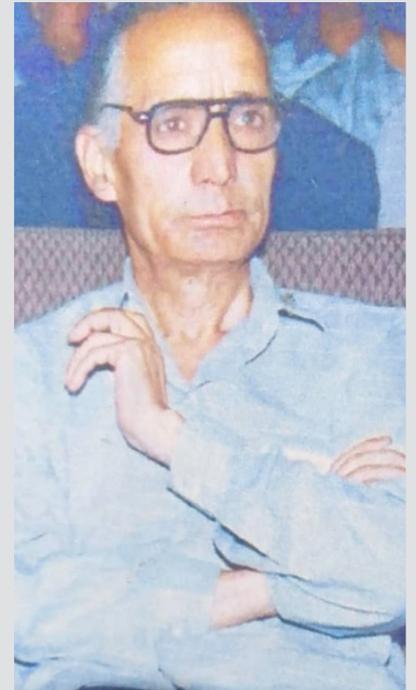
Renowned Calligrapher Mohammad Sadiq Remembered on His 9th Death Anniversary

Kashmir Calligraphy Association Pays Rich Tributes

■ JAMEEL ANSARI

SRINAGAR, MAR 18: The 9th death anniversary of the renowned and distinguished calligrapher of Kashmir, Mohammad Sadiq, was observed today with deep reverence and respect. On the occasion, literary, cultural, and artistic circles fondly remembered his invaluable contributions and paid rich tributes to his legacy.

Late Mohammad Sadiq served with great dedication and sincerity as an instructor in the Calligraphy Section at the Jammu & Kashmir Cultural Academy.



He not only played a vital role in promoting the art of calligraphy but also trained dozens of students, enabling them to pursue respectable livelihoods. Today, his students are excelling in various fields and making a mark with their skills.

Representatives of the Kashmir Calligraphy Association and senior calligraphers, in their message, described Mohammad Sadiq as a visionary artist and an exemplary teacher. They stated that his artistic excellence and commitment to teaching will always be remembered and will continue to inspire future generations.

The statement further highlighted that Mohammad Sadiq, during his association with the daily newspaper Aftab, played a significant role in enhancing its visual presentation through his mastery in calligraphy, thereby leaving a lasting impact on the field of print media.

Calligraphers from across Kashmir, especially those who had the privilege of being directly trained by him, also paid heartfelt tributes to their mentor. They recalled him as not only a great artist but also a compassionate teacher who instilled in them the values of hard work, sincerity, and integrity alongside the art of calligraphy.

The students reaffirmed their commitment to carrying forward their teacher's mission and promoting this noble art form with the same passion and dedication.

The event concluded with special prayers for the eternal peace of the departed soul and for his highest place in Jannat-ul-Firdous.

Langate Witnesses Grand Iftar Hosted by Indian Army, Fosters Goodwill Among Locals

■ DR. AB QAYOOM

LANGATE, MAR 18: In a significant gesture aimed at promoting communal harmony and strengthening ties with the local population, the Indian Army's Langate Army Camp organized a grand Iftar gathering in Langate area of North Kashmir's Kupwara district on Tuesday.

The event witnessed the participation of senior officers from the Army and Jammu and Kashmir Police, members of the civil administration, media fraternity, political representatives, and prominent citizens from the area. The gathering brought together people from different walks of life, reflecting a shared commitment towards peace and unity. The Iftar commenced with collective prayers, where participants prayed for peace, prosperity, and well-being of the nation and its people. The occasion, held during the holy month of Ramadan, symbolized the spirit of compassion, brotherhood, and mutual respect. Speaking on the occasion, attendees appre-



ciated the initiative by the Army, stating that such interactions play a vital role in bridging gaps and fostering trust between security forces and civilians. They emphasized the need for continued engagement to build a peaceful and cooperative environment in the region. The evening was marked by a warm and cordial atmosphere as guests shared traditional Ramadan delicacies and engaged in meaningful interactions. The event also highlighted the rich cultural ethos of the region, where communal harmony and coexistence remain deeply rooted values. The Indian Army, through such outreach programs, continues to make efforts towards strengthening its bond with the local populace, promoting goodwill, and encouraging a collective approach towards peace and development in Jammu and Kashmir.

Poonch Celebrates Girl Achievers; Toppers, NEET & JKAS Qualifiers Felicitated

■ FAROOQ RATHER

POONCH, MAR 18: The Department of Social Welfare Poonch on Tuesday organised a grand felicitation ceremony under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative to honour outstanding girl achievers of the district for their exceptional performance in academics, competitive examinations, sports, and innovation.

The programme began with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by dignitaries, followed by the National Anthem, setting a formal tone for the event.

The ceremony recognised girls who secured top positions in Class 10th and 12th examinations, qualified the prestigious NEET examination, and achieved success in the JKAS examination. Achievers in sports and innovative fields were also honoured.

MLA Haveli Ajaz Ahmed Jan and MLA Surankote Prof. Rani Mughal, GM DIC Naem Ul Nisa, CEO Poonch Mukhtar Manhas, Principal Anjuman Shaheen, besides senior officers, parents, and students. The programme concluded on an inspiring note, reaffirming the district administration's commitment to promoting women empowerment and encouraging young girls to achieve greater heights.



education and equal opportunities, highlighting their key role in building a progressive society.

District Social Welfare Officer Poonch, Khalil A. Banday, delivered the welcome address and highlighted the department's continued commitment towards the upliftment and empowerment of women and girls in the district.

On the occasion, the achievers were felicitated with electronic tablets and Certificates of Appreciation by the District Administration Poonch as a token of recognition for their excellence. Some of the awardees also shared their experiences and expressed gratitude to the Social

Welfare Department and District Administration for recognising their efforts and motivating them to strive for greater success.

Among others present were ACR Muhammad Sayeed, Principal GDC Poonch Dr. Jasbir Singh, Principal GDC Surankote Prof. Rani Mughal, GM DIC Naem Ul Nisa, CEO Poonch Mukhtar Manhas, Principal Anjuman Shaheen, besides senior officers, parents, and students.

The programme concluded on an inspiring note, reaffirming the district administration's commitment to promoting women empowerment and encouraging young girls to achieve greater heights.

Gulzar Ahmad Bhat Calls on Lt Governor Manoj Sinha, Seeks Enhanced Support for J&K Artists

■ GULFAM BARJI

JAMMU, MAR 18: The Chairman of the All Jammu & Kashmir Artists Association, Gulzar Ahmad Bhat, today called on the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, Manoj Sinha, at Lok Bhawan, Jammu. During the meeting, the Chairman apprised the Lieutenant Governor of various issues concerning the artistic community in the Union Territory. He emphasized the need to promote art and culture as a means of fostering peace and social harmony.

Shri Bhat highlighted key demands, including restoration of the pension scheme for senior artists, enhancement

of remuneration for folk artists, and organizing seminars and cultural festivals to ensure dignified livelihoods for artists. He also requested the Lieutenant Governor to visit artists' villages in remote areas.

The Lieutenant Governor gave a patient hearing and assured that all concerns would be addressed. He acknowledged the valuable contribution of artists and stated that necessary steps would be taken in the upcoming financial year to support the artistic community.

Shri Manoj Sinha also expressed his willingness to visit Balpora Wathora, a village known for its artists, in the near future.

Trade Union Leader Bashir Ahmad Nuhami Passes Away; JKCCTU Mourns Loss

■ FAROOQ RATHER

KULGAM, MAR 18: Former District President Health Kulgam and senior trade union leader Bashir Ahmad Nuhami passed away last night at SKIMS Soura, leaving behind a legacy of dedicated service and tireless advocacy for employees' rights.

The Coordination Committee of Trade Unions (JKCCTU) has expressed deep grief and sorrow over his untimely demise. In a statement issued on Tuesday, the committee described Nuhami as a committed leader who devoted his entire life to the welfare of health department employees, workers, and the broader working class.

Late Bashir Ahmad Nuhami, a resident of Nehama in Kulgam district, served in the Health Department and remained actively associated with trade union activities throughout his career. He was wide-

ly respected for his relentless efforts in fighting for the rights and dignity of employees, a contribution that, the committee said, will always be remembered.

The JKCCTU further stated that his passing is an irreparable loss to the trade union movement and the working community at large. "His services and sacrifices for the cause of workers are unforgettable. We pledge to carry forward his mission with the same dedication and commitment," the statement read. Meanwhile, a delegation of JKCCTU led by Abdul Rashid Najar visited the bereaved family at Nehama, Kulgam, and extended heartfelt condolences, expressing solidarity with them in this hour of grief.

Several colleagues, union members, and well-wishers also paid tributes to the departed leader, remembering him as a voice of the voiceless and a staunch advocate for workers' rights.

Deputy CM visits DH Pora Kulgam, pays tributes to former Speaker Shaheed Wali Mohammad Itoo on 32nd death anniversary

HT NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM, MARCH 18: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary today visited DH Pora Kulgam to pay rich tributes to former Speaker of Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly and former Minister, Shaheed Wali Mohammad Itoo on his 32nd death anniversary.

Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Chief Minister described Shaheed Wali Mohammad Itoo as a visionary statesman and a grassroots leader who devoted his life to the welfare and upliftment of the people, particularly those belonging to marginalized and rural communities. He said that the late leader's commitment to inclusive development, communal harmony and democratic values continues to serve as a guiding force for present and future generations.

The Deputy Chief Minister highlighted that Shaheed Wali Mohammad Itoo played a pivotal role in strengthening democratic institutions and maintaining close engagement with the public to address their grievances effectively. He added that the Government



remains committed to carrying forward the legacy of people-centric governance and equitable development envisioned by the late leader. Speaking on the occasion,

Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo paid glowing tributes to the late leader and remembered his invaluable contribution towards the socio-economic development of the region.

She said that Shaheed Wali Mohammad Itoo dedicated his life to empowering people through education, social justice and responsive governance.

Minister for Youth Services and Sports, Satish Sharma; Advisor to Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani and other MLAs also spoke on the occasion and paid rich tributes to the late leader.

MLA Pampore, Justice (Retd) Hasnain Masoodi; MLA Gulmarg, Peerzada Farooq Ahmad Shah; MLA Anantnag West, Abdul Majeed Larmi; MLA Anantnag East-Shangus, Reyaz Ahmad Khan; MLA Devsar, Peerzada Feroze Ahmad; MLA Zainapora, Showkat Hussain Ganie; MLA Rajpora, Ghulam Mohiud-din Mir; MLA Uri, Dr. Sajjad Shafi; MLA Kokernag, Zafar Ali Khatana; senior officers of district administration and large number of locals were also present on the occasion.

3-day Awareness Cum Training Workshop on GYAN BHARATAM MISSION concludes at Jammu

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MARCH 18: The three day Awareness Cum Training program on GYAN BHARATAM MISSION concluded today at Kala Kendra here.

The workshop focused on manuscript preservation, conservation and digitization, and aimed to Search and Scan manuscripts, share knowledge through the Gyan Bharatam Mission App, and create a universal Indian Knowledge System portal.

An Expert Team from IGNC, New Delhi comprising Senior Conservators, Dr Satyendra Kumar and Dr Nitin Kumar gave hand holding practice and knowledge to the participants and briefed them about techniques for conservation of manuscripts besides, digitization, documentation and conservations of Manuscripts during the process of survey in Urban and Rural areas in J&K.



Speaking on the occasion, Director, Archives, Archaeology and Museums, K K Sidha said that the 3 Day Gyan Bharatam Mission workshop focused on manuscript preservation, conservation and digitization with experts from IGNC New Delhi and both Cluster Centre of J&K chapter. He added that the objectives of GYAN BHARATAM MISSION is Search, scan, share manuscripts and how to use Gyan Bharatam Mission App for survey and data collection for line departments to conduct district and sub-division level training workshops.

The Director also highlighted the objectives of GYAN BHARATAM MISSION and its goal to digitize and share India's ancient knowledge and manuscripts. He said that these manuscripts to cover Ayurveda, Agriculture Science, Vedas, and everyday life topics etc.

The Director said that post training program, the line department officer teams will search manuscripts door-to-door, like "Har Ghar Dastak" & Digitize with the custodians' to create a universal Indian Knowledge System portal and make it accessible to scholars, universities and the public nationwide.

During the programme, Senior district officers from Jammu Division received hands-on training from IGNC experts.

Regional Director, Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA), Shruti Awasthi; HOD and Cluster Head Gyan Bharatam Mission, Department of Persian, Kashmir University Dr Jahangir Iqbal; Coordinator, Regional Cluster Centre, Gyan Bharatam Shashvat Art Gallery, Museum and Manuscript Library, Upper Bazar Jammu, Dr Suresh Kumar Abrol; Deputy Director, AA&MJK, Dr Sangeeta Sharma; Secretary Kala Kendra, Dr. Javed Rahi, besides, other concerned senior officers and stakeholders including ADDCs, BDOs, Technical Officers and Private collectors, official from Spiritual Growth Centre Shree Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, Ranbir Sanskrit Library, Dharmarth Trust Jammu, Education Department, Library department also participated in the workshop.

DDC Bandipora reviews District CAPEX Budget 2025-26

HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, MARCH 18: District Development Commissioner (DDC) Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, today chaired a comprehensive review meeting to assess the progress under the District CAPEX Budget 2025-26 at the Mini Secretariat Bandipora.

During the meeting, the DC conducted a detailed review of both financial and physical progress achieved under the CAPEX Budget. It was informed that the district has achieved 70.79% cumulative financial progress, while physical progress stood at 88%, with 2009 works completed so far.

A thorough department-wise review was carried out, covering parameters including outlay, funds released, expenditure incurred, allotted cost of new works, percentage expenditure against releases, and number of bills pending at the treasury for payment.

The DDC reviewed progress across key sectors and departments, including R&B Bandipora, Sumbal and Gurez; I&FC Sumbal; PHE Bandipora and Sopore; PHE Hydraulics Bandipora, and Minor Irrigation Division Shadipora. Sectoral performance of Elementary and Secondary Education (CEO Bandipora), Health (CMO Bandipora), Youth Services & Sports, and Urban Local Bodies including Municipal Committees Bandipora, Sumbal, and Hajin was also assessed.

The DC also took stock of works executed under various funding components including Un-tied Grants, DDC Grants, BDC Grants, PRI Grants, Aspirational Block Development Scheme (ABDS). Departments such as RDD Bandipora, ACP Bandipora, Education Bandipora, Health Bandipora, JAKEDA, Ground Water Srinagar, PDD Bandipora and Sumbal, MID Shadipora, Floriculture, Handicrafts, Sheep Husbandry, Agriculture, and others were reviewed for their performance under these schemes.

Further, the progress under Samridh Seema Yojana was also evaluated, with works executed by PDD Bandipora, Forest Department, and R&B Gurez.

While reviewing the performance, the DDC stressed the need for timely execution of works, optimal utilization of funds, and adherence to quality standards. She emphasized that all departments must ensure that allocated funds are translated into tangible and visible outcomes on the ground.

The DDC expressed concern over delays in some sectors and directed the concerned officers to expedite the pace of work and clear pending liabilities, including bills at the treasury level.

The meeting was attended by Chief Planning Officer Bandipora; Superintending Engineer R&B Circle Bandipora; Assistant Commissioner Development; Assistant Commissioner Panchayat; Chief Medical Officer; Executive Engineers of various departments; and other concerned officers.

393 Cases Approved by DLIC Anantnag under Mission YUVA

DDC directs expeditious processing of approved cases

HT NEWS NETWORK

ANANTNAG, MARCH 18: In a significant step to boost self-employment in the district, Mission YUVA District Level Implementation Committee (DLIC), Anantnag today approved 393 cases during its 27th meeting held at the DC office.

The meeting was chaired by District Development Commissioner (DDC), Chairman DLIC, Dr. Bilal Mohiud Din Bhat and was attended by ADDC (DNO, Mission YUVA), GMDIC, AD Employment, DSWO, District LDM, DNO JKEDI, DDM NABARD, Employment Officer and other concerned officials from Banks and other institutions.

Sector-wise, the approved cases included 185 in Retail, 59 in Transport, 54 in the Service sector and 28 in agricultural and allied sector besides others small business ventures associated with meaningful employment. With these 393 fresh cases, the district's tally of approved cases has reached 5904, out of which 2270 have received bank loans so far.



Notably, 27.5 percent of the applications were submitted by women aspirants, indicating their increasing interest in entrepreneurial initiatives in the district.

Addressing the meeting, the DDC directed the concerned departments and banking institutions to ensure

expeditious processing of loan cases and provide necessary facilitation to the applicants so the benefits of Mission YUVA are accrued by them.

The DDC emphasized the need for close coordination between banks and line departments for smooth implementation of the scheme.

DC Bandipora Chairs Road Safety Meeting, Reviews Measures to Strengthen Traffic Management and Public Safety

Emphasises coordinated action to prevent accidents

HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, MARCH 18: Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, today chaired a comprehensive road safety meeting to review the existing road safety scenario and discuss department-wise measures to minimise accidents across the district at the Mini Secretariat Bandipora. During the meeting, detailed deliberations were held on the roles and responsibilities of various departments in ensuring safer roads.

The Deputy Commissioner stressed the need for a coordinated and proactive approach, with

special focus on awareness generation, infrastructure improvement, and identification of accident-prone areas.

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) informed the meeting that several black spots have been identified across the district. The Deputy Commissioner directed the installation of signboards, road markings, and billboards at vulnerable locations, especially at sharp turns and abrupt road endings.

The Superintending Engineer was directed to formally communicate with all concerned departments regarding necessary interventions.

On the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner directed the Traffic Police Department to submit division-wise data on road accidents, with particular emphasis on infrastructure-related causes. The DC highlighted the importance of data-driven planning to effectively address accident-prone zones.

ARTO, R&B, PMGSY, and Traffic Police departments were directed to submit detailed suggestions for improving road safety, particularly at key junctions such as Nussou Stand Junction, Nowpora Chowk, and Kangri Chowk. Specific areas including SK Bala, Ajas, and Wullar Vantage Park were identified as

highly vulnerable, where installation of crash barriers was strongly recommended.

The Deputy Commissioner further directed that all signboards across the district must be highly reflective and clearly visible to ensure better guidance for commuters, especially during night hours. She also emphasised the role of public participation, urging citizensto inform the administration about locations requiring infrastructure interventions to enhance road safety.

During the meeting, the DC directed Municipal Committees to conduct field inspections of all urban areas and submit detailed

reports on required interventions. The issue of encroachments affecting road safety was also discussed, with directions issued for identification and necessary action.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Zaffar Hussain Shawl; Superintending Engineer, R&B Circle Bandipora; Chief Planning Officer Bandipora; Chief Medical Officer; Executive Engineers of R&B and PMGSY; Deputy Superintendent of Traffic Police; Assistant Regional Transport Officer; representatives of BRO and NHAI, and other concerned officers.

DC Kulgam reviews functioning of Solid Waste Management Site at Liroo

HT NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM, MARCH 18: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, today visited the Solid Waste Management (SWM) site at Liroo and reviewed its functioning.

During the visit, the DC inspected key components of the facility, including compost pits and the Material Recovery Facility (MRF), and took stock of the overall operations.

He directed the concerned officials to ensure that the facility is made fully operational at the earliest.

Emphasizing the importance of efficient waste management, the DC stressed the need for proper segregation of waste at source, timely processing, and expedited clearance of legacy waste.

He instructed for strict adherence to Solid Waste Management rules and called for maintaining proper hygiene and cleanliness at the site.

The DC further instructed the officials to adopt a proactive approach to streamline operations and ensure sustainable waste management practices across the district.

DDC Bandipora reviews District CAPEX Budget 2025-26 Stresses timely execution and accountability

HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, MARCH 18: District Development Commissioner (DDC) Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, today chaired a comprehensive review meeting to assess the progress under the District CAPEX Budget 2025-26 at the Mini Secretariat Bandipora.

During the meeting, the DC conducted a detailed review of both financial and physical progress achieved under the CAPEX Budget. It was informed that the district has achieved 70.79% cumulative

financial progress, while physical progress stood at 88%, with 2009 works completed so far.

A thorough department-wise review was carried out, covering parameters including outlay, funds released, expenditure incurred, allotted cost of new works, percentage expenditure against releases, and number of bills pending at the treasury for payment.

The DDC reviewed progress across key sectors and departments, including R&B Bandipora, Sumbal and Gurez; I&FC Sumbal; PHE

Bandipora and Sopore; PHE Hydraulics Bandipora, and Minor Irrigation Division Shadipora. Sectoral performance of Elementary and Secondary Education (CEO Bandipora), Health (CMO Bandipora), Youth Services & Sports, and Urban Local Bodies including Municipal Committees Bandipora, Sumbal, and Hajin was also assessed.

The DC also took stock of works executed under various funding components including Un-tied Grants, DDC Grants, BDC Grants, PRI Grants, Aspirational Block

Development Scheme (ABDS). Departments such as RDD Bandipora, ACP Bandipora, Education Bandipora, Health Bandipora, JAKEDA, Ground Water Srinagar, PDD Bandipora and Sumbal, MID Shadipora, Floriculture, Handicrafts, Sheep Husbandry, Agriculture, and others were reviewed for their performance under these schemes.

Further, the progress under Samridh Seema Yojana was also evaluated, with works executed by PDD Bandipora, Forest Department, and R&B Gurez.

DC Srinagar conducts Tehsil-wise review of progress on key Revenue matters, also reviews digitisation of revenue records

Directs Revenue teams to complete digitisation of land Records in time bound & transparent manner

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR MARCH 18: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, today chaired a meeting of senior Revenue Officers at the Conference Hall of the DC Office Complex to review tehsil-wise progress on key revenue matters and to further strengthen service delivery systems across the district, with a special focus on the digitization of revenue records. The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Mir Imtiaz Ul Aziz, SDM West, Irfan Bahadur, SDM East, Zubair Ahmad, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Umar Gulzar and all Tehsildars.

At the outset, the Deputy Commissioner conducted a detailed review of tehsil-wise progress in the digitization of revenue records, updation and attestation of mutations, disposal of public grievances, and delivery of other time-bound services by the Revenue Department.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner undertook a comprehensive review of progress across all tehsils, particularly focusing on digitization of revenue records, updation and attestation of mutations, disposal of public grievances and delivery of other time-bound services by the Revenue Department. The progress of verification of cases under PMAY 2.0 was also assessed.



The DC also evaluated the performance of online service delivery platforms highlighting its importance in ensuring transparency and efficiency.

Acknowledging the efforts of the Revenue Officers and field functionaries, the Deputy Commissioner asked them to consistently continue their proactive approach in expediting the freezing of Jamabandies and grievance registers across all Tehsils. Stressing the need for sustained efficiency, the DC called for the adoption of robust and result-oriented mechanisms to enhance overall departmental performance. He directed Officers to ensure prompt and high-quality service delivery to the public, with strict adherence to PSGA timelines, particularly through platforms such as Jansugam and Revenue Plus. He further instructed officials to accelerate the disposal of backlog mutation cases to ensure timely relief to the public.

While reviewing the progress of PMAY 2.0 cases, the Deputy Commissioner emphasized the need for early completion of the verification process.

On the issue of court case compliance, the DC directed Tehsildars to ensure submission of clear, accurate, and timely replies for quality and swift disposal of the court cases including cases and grievances registered under Migrant Act.

Labour Commissioner chairs interactive meeting with stakeholders on Licensing Procedures, Labour Codes

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MARCH 18: The Labour Commissioner J&K Charandeep Singh today chaired an interactive meeting with officers and representatives of various establishments to discuss licensing procedures of various departments and implementation of the New Labour Codes at Shram Bhawan, Jammu.

During the meeting, the Labour Commissioner sought inputs and feedback from industry representatives, HRs and General Managers regarding registration, licensing procedures, inspections and compliance mechanisms under the Labour Codes.

Detailed discussions were held on simplifying processes, enhancing transparency and ensuring better coordination among various departments.



The Labour Commissioner J&K has been nominated as the Nodal Officer for the Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP) in respect of the Labour & Employment Department. In this capacity, the Labour Commissioner will oversee overall coordination and monitoring of reform measures, including inter-departmental coordination, timely submission of reports and compliance documents, monitoring progress against prescribed timelines and facilitating effective implementation of BRAP-related initiatives.

The participants shared their suggestions and highlighted practical issues faced at the ground level, while appreciating the department's consultative approach towards policy implementation.

The Labour Commissioner reiterated the department's commitment to creating a business-friendly environment while ensuring protection of workers' rights and strengthening labour welfare mechanisms across Jammu and Kashmir.

Among others, Deputy Labour Commissioner Jammu, Shukpal Singh; Assistant Labour Commissioner Jammu, Rupali Jasrotia and Assistant Labour Commissioner Central, Roopali Gandotra along with representatives from prominent establishments of Jammu district and Industrial Associations attended the meeting.

District Social Welfare felicitates outstanding girl achievers under BBBP initiative in Poonch

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

POONCH, MARCH 18: Department of Social Welfare, Poonch today organised a grand felicitation ceremony under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative to honour outstanding girl achievers of the district for their exceptional accomplishments in academics, competitive examinations, sports and innovation.

The event celebrated girls who secured top positions in 10th and 12th examinations, qualified the prestigious NEET examination and achieved success in the JKAS examination, along with those excelling in sports and innovative pursuits.

MLA Haveli Ajaz Ahmed Jan and MLA Surankote Choudhary Muhammad Akram graced the occasion. Deputy Commissioner Poonch Ashok Kumar Sharma also attended the programme. The dignitaries addressed the gathering and lauded the achievements of the women achievers, appreciating their hard work, dedication and perseverance. They emphasized the importance of empowering girls through education and equal opportunities, highlighting their vital role in shaping a progressive society.

District Social Welfare Officer Khalil A Bandy presented the welcome address and highlighted the department's continued commitment towards the upliftment and empowerment of women and girls in the district. On the occasion, the achievers were felicitated with tablets (electronic gadgets) and Certificates of Appreciation by the District Administration Poonch as a token of recognition for their excellence.

The awardees also shared their experiences, expressing gratitude to the Department of Social Welfare and the District Administration for recognising their efforts and motivating them to strive for greater success. Among other prominent dignitaries present were ACR Muhammad Sayeed, Principal GDC Poonch Dr. Jasbir Singh, Principal GDC Surankote Prof. Rani Mughal, GM DIC Naeem Ul Nisa, CEO Poonch Mukhtar Manhas, Principal Anjuman Shaheen, besides senior officers of the district administration, parents and students.

DC reviews availability of essential commodities in Poonch

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

POONCH, MARCH 18: Deputy Commissioner Poonch Ashok Kumar Sharma today chaired a meeting to review the availability and stock position of essential commodities across the district.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Tahir Mustafa Malik, District Statistics and Evaluation Officer Javid Ahmed, Assistant Commissioner Food Safety, Tariq Mehmood, Accounts Officer Akshay Sharma, Assistant Controller Legal Metrology besides LPG Distributors and other concerned officers.

The Assistant Director FCS&CA Adil Shabir briefed the Deputy Commissioner on the current stock status of key



commodities including LPG, petrol and diesel. He informed that sufficient

stocks are available in the district and urged the public not to panic.

After a detailed review, the Deputy Commissioner emphasized the need to ensure uninterrupted supply of essential commodities for the general public. He directed all concerned departments to maintain close coordination with supply agencies to avoid any disruption.

The Deputy Commissioner also constituted a District Level Committee and instructed officials to conduct regular monitoring and inspections to prevent hoarding and black marketing of LPG and other essential items.

The Deputy Commissioner also constituted a District Control Room for centralized monitoring, collection and compilation of reports related to essential commodities.

DC Pulwama chairs 30th District NCORD meeting, stresses sustained action against drug menace

Reviews enforcement, rehabilitation measures

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

PULWAMA, MARCH 18: Deputy Commissioner Pulwama, Dr. Basharat Qayoom, today chaired the 30th District-Level Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) meeting to review the ongoing efforts and progress achieved in curbing drug abuse and illicit trafficking in the district.

During the meeting, Additional Deputy Commissioner Pulwama, Dr. S. M. Ashraf, gave a detailed presentation highlighting the initiatives undertaken under Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan, including IEC activities, treatment and rehabilitation measures, enforcement actions, and best practices adopted by various

departments.

Taking stock of enforcement measures, the Deputy Commissioner was informed about the action taken against illicit crop cultivation, with over 194 kanals and 15 marlas of land cleared of illegal cultivation during the previous season.

The DC directed that, with the approaching cultivation season, a comprehensive joint action plan be devised by all concerned departments to effectively eliminate the cultivation of poppy and wild cannabis across the district through coordinated enforcement and preventive measures.

Reviewing the progress made in treatment and rehabilitation, the meeting was informed that the Addiction Treatment Facility

(ATF) Pulwama and the Drug De-Addiction Centre at Tral have been actively providing treatment and counselling services. It was further apprised that the rehabilitated individuals have been successfully reintegrated into society, including those who have taken up self-employment, resumed education, or secured gainful occupations.

The Deputy Commissioner directed that rehabilitated individuals be actively utilised as resource persons and motivators under Nasha Mukh Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan 2.0 to inspire and guide affected youth through their lived experiences.

The meeting also reviewed best practices adopted for drug control, including the implementation of

Computerised Billing Systems (CBS) and installation of CCTV cameras in retail and wholesale outlets dealing with pharmaceutical products to ensure transparency and prevent misuse. The Deputy Commissioner was informed that 100% CCTV coverage has been achieved in both retail and wholesale medical establishments across the district, while computerised billing systems have been implemented in all wholesale units and in nearly all retail shops.

The DC directed the Education and Police Departments to maintain strict vigil over schools and colleges. He further stressed that, with the resumption of academic sessions, educational institutions must intensify IEC (Information,

Education and Communication) activities and ensure enhanced surveillance, including CCTV coverage, particularly in vulnerable and shadow areas within campuses, to prevent the spread of drug abuse among students.

Emphasising community participation, the DC called for enhanced involvement of educational institutions, local bodies, and civil society in spreading awareness and preventing drug abuse at the grassroots level.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner also reviewed the status of NDPS cases in the district, including cases under investigation, prosecution, and trial before the Special NDPS Court, Pulwama.

DC Udhampur inspects progress of ongoing construction at GMC Bailey

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

UDHAMPUR, MARCH 18: Deputy Commissioner Udhampur Minga Sherpa today conducted an extensive visit to inspect the ongoing construction work at the new Government Medical College at Bailey Udhampur.

During the visit, the DC meticulously reviewed various components of the project, assessed the pace of progress and emphasized the need to address any bottlenecks affecting execution.

He urged the executing agency to adopt a double-shift work schedule



with renewed enthusiasm and better coordination to ensure completion of the project within the stipulated time frame.

Executing agencies were directed to expedite the construction work,

including the development and maintenance of approach roads and ensure timely completion as per the set timeline. Stressing the importance of efficient resource mobilization, the DC instructed all concerned agencies to work in a coordinated and result-oriented manner to achieve optimal outcomes.

The DC also directed the Principal GMC to maintain close coordination with the executing agency to further accelerate the pace of construction and ensure smooth progress of the project.

ADC Baderwah reviews preparedness for Navratras

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BHADERWAH, MARCH 18: Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Baderwah, Sunil Kumar Bhatnagar today chaired a review meeting to finalize preparations for Navratras, with a focus on ensuring seamless arrangements across the sub-division.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on key aspects including security, sanitation and availability of essential services.

The ADC emphasized the need for heightened market surveillance to maintain quality standards and curb any malpractice during the festive period. He directed all concerned



departments to ensure uninterrupted power and water supply to facilitate

hassle-free celebrations.

Highlighting the importance of cleanliness, the ADC instructed the concerned to carry out special sanitation drives in and around temples and other religious places.

He further stressed the implementation of enhanced security measures and called for a well-coordinated traffic management plan to effectively handle increased footfall and ensure smooth movement during the festivities.

The proceedings were conducted in both offline and online modes to ensure broader participation and effective inter-departmental coordination.

HT EDITORIAL

Education minister's statement about staff creates flutters in education circles

Education minister Sakeena Itoo's statement that the government teachers are better qualified than their counterparts in the private sector created flutters in the education sector. The education minister in a recent interview said that teachers in the private schools were either matriculates or only 12th pass, while as the government school teachers were comparatively more qualified and recruited through a proper system. The statement did not go well with the higher-ups of the private schools.

The private schools' association has said that the private schools have complemented the government's efforts by educating lakhs of students across Jammu & Kashmir and played a key role in maintaining continuity in education during challenging times. The association said that more than half of the student population in the union territory is currently enrolled in private institutions. The association said that private schools were not competing with the government but supporting its mandate of providing quality education.

The association said that the assertion about the qualification was misleading as the supporting staff are graduates in private schools. The statement of the education minister about the qualification of teachers may be to some extent correct but the same has to be compared with the end result. Once the results of the board examinations are out it comes out that students of the private schools' shine brightly as compared to those who receive education in the government sector. The toppers of these examinations are students of the private schools.

It is an established fact that most of the government teachers are well qualified and in some cases their qualification is more than that of the private schools' teachers. Mere qualification is not enough and the same has to be complemented by results in the board examinations. If a less qualified teacher is able to produce wonderful results than a higher qualified teacher then it is clear that there are some flaws in the system. The same needs to be looked into by the people running the system.

In the past many cases of fraudulent certificates being produced by government teachers have come to the fore and these people were suspended by the government. The education minister should delve into the reasons responsible for the poor show of the government schools in the board examinations. At the same time reforms should be carried out so that common people are motivated to enroll their children in the government schools.

EID-AL-FITR A Message of Gratitude, Harmony, Peace, and Unity



■ GULFAM BARJI

Eid al-Fitr, one of the most significant and joyous festivals in Islam marks the culmination of the holy month of Ramadan. It is a day of immense spiritual fulfillment, gratitude, and celebration for Muslims around the world. Beyond its religious essence, Eid al-Fitr serves as a powerful reminder of social harmony, compassion and collective well-being.

Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, is a period of deep reflection, self-discipline, and devotion. During this sacred time, Muslims observe fasting from dawn to dusk, engage in increased prayers, recite the Holy Quran, and strive to cultivate virtues such as patience, humility, and generosity. It is a month that strengthens the bond between the alford and the Creator while encouraging empathy for the less fortunate.

The arrival of Eid al-Fitr is, in essence, a divine reward for a month of steadfast "Ibadat" and moral refinement. The day begins early in the morning as Muslims perform ritual "Guseel" wear new or clean clothes and apply fragrance. They then proceed to mosques, Imam Bargah's, Eid Gah's and community spaces to offer the special Eid prayer in congregation symbolizing unity and equality.

An essential aspect of Eid is the giving of Zakat al-Fitr (charity before the Eid prayer) which ensures that underprivileged members of society can also partake in the festivities. This act reflects the core Islamic principle of social justice and inclusivity reinforcing the idea that joy should be shared by all regardless of economic status.

Following the prayer people greet one another



with warm embraces and the phrase "Eid Mubarak," spreading happiness and goodwill. Families and communities come together to celebrate with a variety of traditional delicacies, among which Sheer Khurma holds a special place. Visits to relatives, friends and neighbors create an atmosphere of warmth and strengthen social bonds.

However Eid al-Fitr is not merely a celebration of festivity it is also a profound moral reminder. It teaches us to extend our happiness to those in need—the orphans, widows, and the underprivileged. True joy lies in sharing, caring and uplifting others. In a world often marked by inequality and division this message holds greater relevance than ever.

In today's challenging times when societies across the globe face social, economic and moral complexities the spirit of Eid al-Fitr offers a guiding

light. It calls for patience, tolerance, honesty, unity and mutual respect. It encourages individuals to cleanse their hearts of resentment and work collectively towards building a peaceful and inclusive society.

Ultimately, Eid al-Fitr is a celebration of faith, humanity, and renewal. It provides an opportunity to reconnect with divine blessings, express gratitude and commit to the service of humanity. It is not just an end to Ramadan but the beginning of a renewed journey towards righteousness and compassion.

Let us embrace this Eid with sincerity, love and a spirit of togetherness. May this blessed occasion bring peace, prosperity and success to all.

EID MUBARAK.

The author from Harwan Srinagar

Workplace, women's health and menstrual leave

Does a mandatory leave policy empower women or risk limiting their professional opportunities?



■ DR. PRIYANKA SAURABH

Menstruation is a natural biological process in women's lives, but for a long time, it was shrouded in social embarrassment, silence, and neglect. In modern times, as discussions about gender equality, inclusiveness, and sensitive workplace policies have intensified, the concept of "compulsory menstrual leave" has also become central to the discussion. Many countries and institutions have adopted policies to provide women with special leave during menstruation, allowing them to rest during times of physical discomfort and mental stress. However, the important question is whether such mandatory policies actually promote equality in the workplace, or inadvertently reinforce gender discrimination in employment. In this context, a critical analysis of this issue is necessary.

First, it's important to understand that many women experience physical pain, fatigue, dizziness, or even mental stress due to hormonal changes during menstruation. This can make it difficult for them to continue working at the workplace. The primary objective of the mandatory menstrual leave policy is to protect the health and dignity of women. This policy recognizes that women have different biological needs and should be accommodated accordingly in the workplace. In this regard, this policy embodies gender sensitivity and promotes empathy and respect for women.

Additionally, mandatory menstrual leave is an attempt to break the long-standing silence in workplaces, where menstruation was

considered something to be hidden or shamed. When organizations formally acknowledge this topic, it also sends a positive message at the social level that menstruation is not a weakness but a natural process. This gives women the courage to speak openly about their problems and can create a more humane and sensitive workplace environment.

Some experts also believe that such policies can indirectly increase productivity in the workplace. When employees get the rest they need, they recover and work better. If a woman experiences severe pain or discomfort during menstruation and still has to work, her performance may be affected. In such cases, short-term leave can help her regain physical and mental balance. Thus, health-sensitive policies can also prove beneficial for organizations in the long run.

However, it's important to consider these arguments in favor of this policy as well as its potential negative impacts. Many critics believe that mandatory menstrual leave policies may inadvertently promote gender discrimination in employment. If an organization feels that female employees will have to take extra leave each month, it may prioritize male candidates when hiring. Especially in the private sector, where productivity and time management are highly valued, employers may begin to view women as an "additional liability."

This perspective also argues that mandatory leave policies may portray women as "less competent" or "less reliable" employees. It may create the impression that women will be unavailable for work for a certain number of days each month, which could negatively impact employers' perceptions of them. As a result, women may have fewer opportunities for higher positions, leadership roles, or important projects. Thus, a policy designed to benefit women may inadvertently hinder their professional development.

Another important criticism is that not all women experience menstruation in the same way. Some women experience extreme pain during this time, while others can function normally. If leave were made mandatory, it would apply even to women who don't need it. This could send the message that every woman is unable to work during menstruation, which is not true. Therefore, many experts believe that the term "mandatory" itself could be problematic.

Furthermore, it is argued that providing special leave only for women in workplaces could contradict the principle of equality. The fundamental idea of gender equality is that all employees receive equal opportunities and equal respect. Privileging one group could lead to resentment or a sense of inequality among others. While this argument may not be entirely justified, as equality does not always mean "equal treatment" but also "just treatment," it is still important to consider this perspective in policymaking.

Experiences from several countries also complicate this debate. In some places, despite having a menstrual leave policy in place, women have reduced their use because they fear it may create negative stereotypes. This illustrates that simply having a policy isn't enough; the culture and mindset of the workplace are equally important. If the organization's environment isn't sensitive and supportive, employees may hesitate to take advantage of the available benefits.

In this context, some experts advocate for a "flexible and optional policy" rather than "mandatory menstrual leave." They believe that employees should be given the freedom to take leave according to their physical condition. For example, general medical leave or flexible work schedules could allow female employees to work from home or take time off when needed. Such arrangements respect individual needs and can also

mitigate the problems arising from mandatory leave.

Additionally, the availability of basic menstrual care facilities in workplaces is crucial. Clean toilets, the availability of sanitary products, and a sensitive work environment can be extremely helpful for women. Sometimes, even more important than time off is a workplace where women can freely discuss their needs and receive the support they need.

In fact, the core question of this entire debate is what equality means. Does equality mean treating all employees exactly the same, or does it mean providing equitable accommodations to employees, recognizing their different needs? Modern feminist perspectives hold that true equality is possible only when policies are formulated to account for biological and social differences. From this perspective, the idea of menstrual leave is not entirely unreasonable. But it must be implemented in a way that strengthens women's dignity and rights, rather than making them appear weak or less capable.

Ultimately, mandatory menstrual leave policies present a complex and multifaceted issue. While they recognize women's health, dignity, and vulnerability, they may also risk inadvertently perpetuating gender discrimination in employment. Therefore, a balanced and pragmatic approach to policymaking is essential. Flexible policies, awareness, and a sensitive workplace culture may be more effective solutions than mandatory ones.

Society and institutions must recognize that menstruation is not a hindrance but a natural process of life. Only if workplaces develop policies that respect women's health while maintaining confidence in their professional abilities will meaningful steps toward true gender equality be taken.

Dr. Priyanka Saurabh, PhD (Political Science), is a poet and social thinker

Significance of Indian Secularism: More Misunderstood Than Understood



■ DR. RATAN BHATTACHARJEE

India's secularism has often been misunderstood, both by its critics and its defenders. In public debates and political rhetoric, the word "secular" is sometimes mistakenly equated with hostility to religion or with the promotion of atheism. Such an interpretation, however, runs contrary to the historical foundations of Indian civilization as well as the philosophical vision of the Constitution of India. The idea of secularism in India was never meant to deny religion or to encourage atheism. Rather, it emerged from a long civilizational tradition that respects religious diversity and seeks to ensure that the state remains neutral while allowing individuals full freedom of faith. Indian secularism is therefore not a doctrine of irreligion but a framework for harmonious coexistence among many religions.

The Constitution of India reflects this balanced vision. Although the word "secular" was explicitly inserted into the Preamble by the Forty-second Amendment in 1976, the spirit of secularism was already embedded in the original document adopted in 1950. Several fundamental rights guarantee freedom of religion. Article 25 provides every individual the freedom to profess, practice, and propagate religion, subject to public order, morality, and health. Articles 26 to 28 further protect the rights of religious denominations and ensure that the state does not impose any religious instruction in publicly funded institutions. These provisions demonstrate that Indian secularism is fundamentally about protecting religious freedom rather than discouraging religious belief. Unlike the Western model of secularism, which often emphasizes a strict separation between church and state, the Indian model is more accommodative. In countries such as France, secularism sometimes involves excluding religion from public life altogether. India, by contrast, recognizes that religion plays a significant role in society and therefore seeks to maintain a principled distance rather than a rigid wall between religion and the state. The state may intervene in religious institutions when necessary to ensure social justice or reform discriminatory practices, but it does not attempt to eradicate religion from the public sphere.

To understand this principle, one must first look at the historical roots of religious tolerance in India. For centuries, the Indian subcontinent has been home to a remarkable plurality of faiths, cultures, and philosophical traditions. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism originated in this land, while Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism found a welcoming space here over time. The ancient Indian philosophical outlook recognized multiple paths to truth. The Rig

Veda's famous dictum "Ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti," meaning "Truth is one, the wise call it by many names," illustrates the inclusive spirit that has shaped Indian thought. This pluralistic worldview created a social environment in which religious diversity could flourish without necessarily leading to conflict.

During the medieval period, this ethos of coexistence found expression in the Bhakti and Sufi movements. Saints and mystics such as Kabir, Guru Nanak, and Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti emphasized the unity of humanity beyond sectarian divisions. Their teachings did not advocate atheism; instead, they sought to transcend rigid religious boundaries while affirming a deep spiritual faith. The emphasis was on devotion, compassion, and the equality of human beings before the divine. These movements played a crucial role in shaping India's cultural identity as a land where different religious traditions could interact and influence one another. The modern concept of secularism in India emerged during the freedom struggle against colonial rule. Leaders of the independence movement understood that India's diversity required a political framework that could protect all communities equally. Mahatma Gandhi, for example, was deeply religious but firmly believed that the state should not privilege any particular religion. For Gandhi, secularism did not mean rejection of religion; rather, it meant equal respect for all religions. He frequently used the expression "sarva dharma sambhava," which conveys the idea that all faiths deserve equal regard. Gandhi's approach illustrates the distinctive character of Indian secularism: a respect for spirituality combined with political neutrality.

Jawaharlal Nehru, another principal architect of modern India, emphasized the importance of separating religion from state power. However, Nehru's vision was also not based on the promotion of atheism. While he personally leaned toward scientific rationalism, he recognized the cultural and emotional significance of religion in the lives of millions of Indians. His concern was to prevent religious identity from becoming a tool of political domination. Nehru believed that a secular state would create the conditions for individuals to practice their faith freely while ensuring that public policy remained guided by reason and constitutional values rather than by sectarian interests.

One example of this distinctive approach can be seen in the state's involvement in managing certain religious institutions. In several Indian states, governments oversee the administration of temples to ensure transparency and prevent misuse of funds. Similarly, the state has enacted laws aimed at reforming social practices associated with religion, such as untouchability or gender discrimination. These interventions do not represent hostility toward religion; rather, they reflect the constitutional commitment to equality and human dignity. The goal is to harmonize religious traditions with the broader principles of justice and social progress. Another important dimension of Indian secularism is the recognition



of minority rights. The Constitution provides special protections for cultural and religious minorities, allowing them to establish and manage their own educational institutions. This provision reflects the understanding that equality sometimes requires safeguarding the unique identities of smaller communities. Far from promoting atheism, such measures acknowledge the importance of religious and cultural heritage in shaping individual and collective identities.

Yet despite these constitutional safeguards, debates about secularism in India have often been marked by misunderstanding and political polarization. Some critics argue that secularism has been used selectively or inconsistently in practice, leading to accusations of "pseudo-secularism." Others fear that emphasizing religious identity in politics may weaken the secular foundations of the state. These debates highlight the challenges of maintaining a delicate balance in a society as diverse as India. At the heart of these controversies lies the misconception that secularism implies indifference or hostility toward religion. In reality, the Indian tradition

recognizes religion as a vital aspect of human life while insisting that the state must remain impartial among different faiths. Secularism does not require individuals to abandon their beliefs or adopt atheism. Instead, it ensures that the state does not impose a particular religious doctrine on its citizens. This distinction is crucial for understanding the philosophical basis of the Indian model.

The role of education and public discourse is particularly important in clarifying this concept. When secularism is portrayed as anti-religious, it can create unnecessary anxiety among believers. Conversely, when religion is used as a tool of political mobilization, it can undermine the secular framework that protects the rights of all communities. A balanced understanding of secularism recognizes that faith and constitutional values can coexist without conflict. Citizens may be deeply religious, moderately spiritual, or entirely non-religious, but the state must treat them all with equal respect. The idea that secularism promotes atheism is also contradicted by everyday life in India. Religious festivals, rituals, and traditions

continue to play a vibrant role in public culture. National holidays include celebrations of major religious festivals such as Diwali, Eid, Christmas, and Guru Nanak Jayanti. Political leaders often participate in religious ceremonies as expressions of cultural solidarity rather than as endorsements of a particular faith. These practices illustrate that Indian secularism allows religion to remain visible in public life while ensuring that no single tradition dominates the political sphere.

Furthermore, India's secular framework has enabled diverse communities to contribute to the nation's cultural richness. Literature, music, architecture, and philosophy in India reflect the interactions of multiple religious traditions. The Taj Mahal, the Golden Temple, the temples of South India, and the churches of Goa all form part of the shared heritage of the country. Secularism, in this sense, protects not only individual freedom but also the collective cultural landscape shaped by centuries of pluralism. In contemporary times, the challenge for India is not merely to preserve secularism as a constitutional principle but also to nurture it as a social ethic. Laws and institutions alone cannot guarantee harmony; they must be supported by a culture of mutual respect and dialogue. Citizens must recognize that diversity is not a threat but a strength. The spirit of secularism encourages people to appreciate the beliefs of others even while remaining committed to their own traditions.

The future of Indian secularism therefore depends on a deeper understanding of its true meaning. It is neither an imported ideology nor a rejection of spirituality. Rather, it is a political and moral framework designed to safeguard the dignity and freedom of every individual in a diverse society. By ensuring that the state remains neutral among religions, secularism allows faith to flourish without becoming a source of conflict. In conclusion, India's secularism was never intended to promote atheism or to undermine religion. It arose from a historical tradition of pluralism and was institutionalized through the Constitution to protect the rights of all citizens. The essence of this idea lies in equal respect for all faiths and the impartiality of the state. When properly understood, secularism strengthens rather than weakens the spiritual and cultural fabric of the nation. It enables people of different beliefs to live together in peace, guided not by uniformity but by a shared commitment to justice, freedom, and human dignity. In a world often divided by religious intolerance, the Indian model of secularism offers an enduring reminder that diversity and harmony can coexist within the framework of a democratic society.

International Dickens Medal Winner Multilingual writer of Fiction and a renowned poet Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee is a former Affiliate Faculty of Virginia Commonwealth University & Retd. Head Post Graduate English Dept Dum Dum Motijheel College . He may be mailed at prof.ratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com

Birds Fly They Left No Debris In My Garden



■ MOOLRAJ

Periods of forced stillness – whether imposed by circumstance or chosen by design – often sharpen our ability to observe. When life slows down enough to notice the unnoticed, even the most ordinary spaces can turn into classrooms of quiet wisdom. During one such phase, my small urban lawn became an unlikely teacher.

Regular pauses in the garden of an otherwise unremarkable middle-class home gradually familiarized me with the movements of pigeons, sparrows, and mynahs – routine visitors whose presence quietly lifts the human spirit.

One afternoon, a roughly one-square-meter patch of turf on the northern side of the lawn caught my attention. Despite

adequate sunlight and regular watering, the grass there appeared pale, sparse, and unhealthy. A cursory inspection revealed no obvious cause, and the matter soon slipped from memory.

A few days later, unfamiliar sounds interrupted the usual avian chorus. A small flock of birds, accompanied by a pair of hoopoes, descended into the garden. Curiously, they ignored readily available food elsewhere and took complete possession of the very patch that had earlier appeared problematic.

At first glance, the birds resembled mynahs, but they were smaller, more agile, and uniformly dark brown, with striking yellow bills and legs. Closer observation revealed fine white speckling across their plumage. Photographs later confirmed them to be starlings – locally known as Tsini Yangur – seasonal insectivores that often go unnoticed unless one watches patiently.

What followed was a lesson in silent efficiency. Maintaining deliberate distance from one another, the birds repeatedly thrust their beaks deep into the soil and withdrew them sharply. Every few probes yielded an insect prey, which was swal-

lowed whole. Occasionally dropped, the prey was swiftly recovered, prodded, and consumed. This operation continued twice daily for three consecutive days, each session lasting over an hour.

When the birds finally departed, they left behind no visible debris – only tiny perforations in the soil, giving the surface a sieve-like appearance. Their task complete, they never returned. Within a week, the lawn began to respond. The pale turf regained colour, and fresh grass steadily reclaimed the barren patch. A fortnight later, even our gardener – unaware of the avian intervention – confirmed that the area had recovered from a pest infestation.

This seemingly minor episode carried a powerful message. It was a flawless demonstration of biological pest control – precise, chemical-free, energy-efficient, and perfectly timed. While humans often struggle to manage ecosystems without causing collateral damage, these small creatures performed their role silently and departed without leaving a footprint.

Nature has always been offering such lessons. Let me talk about the account of Habel and Qabeel, the sons of Hazrat

Adam (A.S.), is well documented in the Holy Quran. When Qabeel stood confused after killing his brother Habel – the first human murder on earth – it was a crow that taught him how to bury the dead, perhaps the earliest recorded instance of one species instructing another in moral conduct.

Almost six years have passed since that quiet intervention in my lawn. During this period, hoopoes and starlings have become rare sights in the neighborhood. Several other beautiful birds – Katij (Barn Swallow), Sheene Pipin (Streaked Laughing Thrush), Poshenool (Golden Oriole), Hazar Dastan (Blue Whistling Thrush), Bil-i-Bechur (Himalayan Bulbul), and Shoug (Slaty-headed Parakeet) – once commonly seen individually and in flocks across the valley, are now scarcely spotted at all.

These losses are not merely aesthetic. They are silent, cumulative, and potentially irreversible. Each missing bird represents an unperformed ecological service – uncontrolled insect populations, disrupted pollination, altered food chains – and an erosion of Kashmir's cultural memory, where birds have long been woven

into poetry, folklore, and seasonal rhythms.

Urbanization, encroachment on wetlands and orchards, depletion of water bodies, air and noise pollution, indiscriminate use of chemical pesticides, food scarcity, unregulated tourism, poaching, climate change, and even electromagnetic radiation are steadily squeezing avian life out of our landscape. The disappearance is gradual enough to escape daily notice, yet profound enough to threaten ecological balance.

What vanished from my lawn was not merely an insect problem – it was a reminder. When birds disappear, ecosystems whisper warnings long before they collapse. The real question is whether we, in our hurried and human-centred world, are still willing to pause, observe, and learn from those who once worked silently to keep our surroundings alive. Unlike Qabeel, the modern humans rarely pause long enough to feel either remorse or responsibility for the damage inflicted upon the shared fabric of life.

THE AUTHOR IS A REGULAR COLUMNIST AND FREELANCE WRITER

How To Lighten Your Dark Underarms?



SHAHNAZ HUSAIN

Are dark underarms making you feel conscious and stopping you from wearing your favourite sleeveless outfits?

Dark underarms are extremely common and usually harmless, but they can make you feel self-conscious.

Dark underarms can be a source of embarrassment and insecurity for many individuals.

Underarm darkening is commonly linked to friction, hair-removal methods, or skin irritation, not hygiene.

While it could just be your genetics or the products you use, dark underarms can also be a sign that something else is going on with your health.

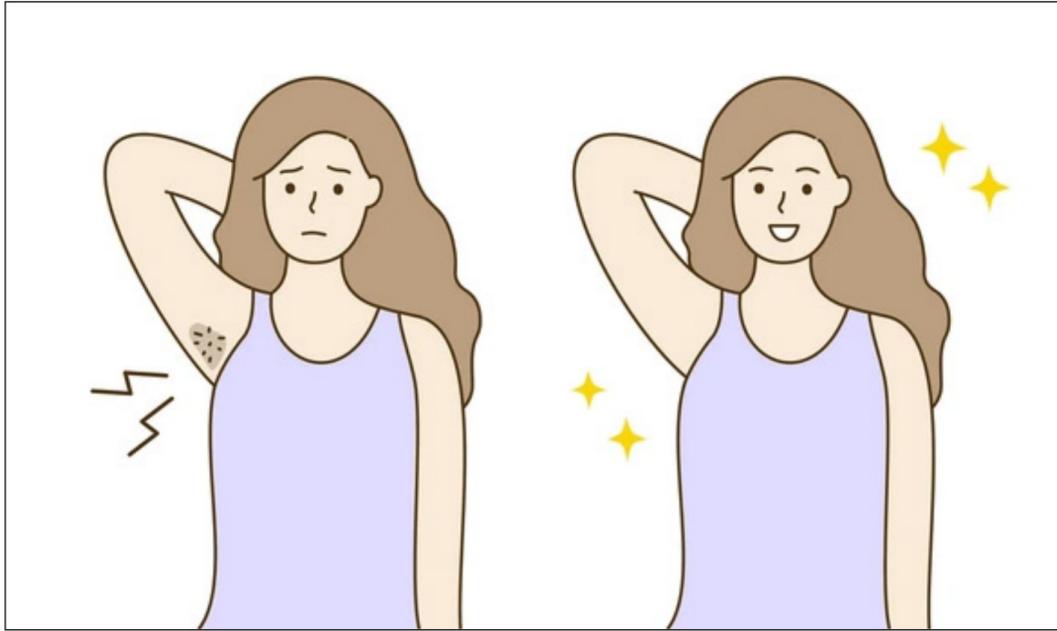
Dark underarms often trigger insecurity, particularly while wearing sleeveless clothes or during warm weather.

If you're searching for a dark underarms remedy or safe underarm whitening ideas that actually work, you're not alone.

The good news: simple, consistent home care can often help more than aggressive shortcuts.

Lemon

Lemon is a natural bleaching agent that can brighten the skin, including that in the armpits. Lemon also contains antiseptic properties that can help eliminate foul



underarm odour.

Lemon contains vitamin C and citric acid, making it a natural brightening powerhouse.

You can rub lemon slices under your arms. Wait 10 minutes and then rinse the area with cool water and let it dry.

Apply fresh lemon juice to the affected area. Wait 10 minutes and then rinse the area with cool water and let it dry.

Mix lemon juice with turmeric to make

a paste for your underarms. Apply to your underarms and wait 30 minutes before washing off with cold water.

Baking Soda

One of the best home remedies for dark underarms is baking soda. Baking soda contains exfoliating and bleaching agents that help lighten the dark underarms.

Mix 2 tablespoons with water to make a paste, and apply the thick paste on the

armpit for 5 minutes. Apply it twice a week.

Add 1 tablespoon of baking soda to the rosewater, and stir this mixture evenly. Then, apply this solution to your armpit area and wait for about 10 minutes before rinsing it off with lukewarm water. You can practice this trick twice a week for lighter underarms. However, its high alkalinity may cause skin irritation, burns, or increased sensitivity.

Coconut Oil

Coconut oil is one of the most sought-after ingredients used as a dark underarm remedy. Coconut oil has Vitamin E, which is known to lighten skin. It moisturises while gently lightening dark areas. This moisturising approach is particularly beneficial if dryness contributes to your underarm concerns. Massage a few drops of coconut oil onto your underarms. Gently massage it, and leave it on for 10-15 minutes. Rinse it off with lukewarm water. You can try this 2-3 times a week. The lauric acid in coconut oil also has antimicrobial properties, helping to keep bacteria at bay.

Aloe Vera Gel

Aloe vera is infused with aloin and aloesin. While aloin is a natural depigmenting component that helps in lightening the dark patches, aloesin helps in preventing the production of excess melanin, thereby reducing skin hyperpigmentation. Aloe vera gel has skin-soothing properties and may aid in skin lightening. Fresh aloe vera gel is incredibly gentle yet effective for sensitive underarm skin. It contains antibacterial properties which help soothe and lighten your skin. Cut into a fresh leaf of aloe vera and extract the gel. Apply a thin layer to clean underarms and let it absorb naturally. Then, rinse it off with lukewarm water. You can apply it daily for better results. Apply aloe vera over the pigmented areas before bedtime and wash it off with lukewarm water the next morning daily.

The author is an internationally famous beauty expert and is called the herbal queen of India

REVIVE CARE+

Dr. Pervaiz Majeed Zunga
CONSULTANT PHYSICIAN SPECIALIST

- ✓ MBBS, MD (MEDICINE) SKIMS
- ✓ EX REGISTRAR SMHS HOSPITAL
- ✓ Fellowship Diabetes
- ✓ Fellowship Gastroenterology, Hepatology

• Expert in Thyroid Disorder
Diabetes, and Diabetic Neuropathy

Available Every
Tuesday, Wednesday Thursday Friday

🕒 Morning 9AM to 10 AM

🕒 Evening 5:30 PM onwards

📍 Near Petrol Pump National Highway Kanispora Baramulla

📞 9906215683

MS. JAASINDAH MIR

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

TRAUMA-FOCUSED PSYCHOLOGIST

MA Applied Psychology (Clinical)-Jamia Millia Islamia Air 4-NIPCCD (RCI-Licensed)

SPECIALIZATIONS

- ☉ Anxiety & Depression
- ☉ Trauma & PTSD
- ☉ Emotional Dysregulation
- ☉ Chronic Stress
- ☉ Psychosomatic & Pain Disorders
- ☉ Parent-child Counselling
- ☉ Adolescent & Young Adult Mental Health

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

2000+ Therapy Sessions Delivered
20+ Workshops Conducted
Former Lead Psychologist At K.R. MANGALAM UNIVERSITY, GURUGRAM
Founder - Redeemer Heals Counselling & Wellness

THERAPY FOR

- ☉ Children And Adolescents
- ☉ Adults
- ☉ Individuals & Couples
- ☉ Parent-child Counselling
- ☉ People Requiring Subtle Help With Emotional Regulation

THERAPEUTIC EXPERTISE
EFT | REBT | CBT | FLOWER ESSENCE TREATMENTS I
MR | ART & PLAY THERAPY

Available Post

9TH JANUARY AT REVIVE CARE

📍 NATIONAL HIGHWAY KANISPORA NEAR PETROL PUMP

SATURDAY & SUNDAY

BOOK YOUR APPOINTMENT
A Day Prior To Your Visit

Contact Us At
📞 9906215683

Bringing Better Health Closer To Home

Revive Care

Complete Approach to your Well being

Chemists & Druggists , Polyclinic , Clinical Lab

AVAILABLE SERVICES

- ✓ Minor Surgical Procedures Including,
 - ➔ Post Operative Dressing
 - ➔ All Types Of Wound Dressing
 - ➔ Immediate First Aid

Lab Facilities (Collection Centre of Global Diagnostic & Imaging centre)

AVAILABLE CONSULTATIONS

✓ General Medicine	✓ Orthopedics
✓ Chest Medicine	✓ Paediatrics
✓ Braces & Dental Care	✓ Clinical Psychology
✓ Speech Therapy & Audiology	✓ Neurosurgery

Contact Us At 📞 9906215683

BOOK YOUR APPOINTMENT

A day prior to your visit : (First Come, First Served)

📍 NATIONAL HIGHWAY KANISPORA NEAR PETROL PUMP

REVIVE CARE+

DR. GURDEV SINGH BALI
(BDS, MDS ORTHODONTICS)
(Govt. Dental College Srinagar)

BOOK APPOINTMENT

Call To Schedule Your Visit

REVIVE CARE

NATIONAL HIGHWAY KANISPORA NEAR PETROL PUMP

📞 9906215683

Contact us :
9906215683

REVIVE CARE x MAX HOSPITALS

BRINGING WORLD-CLASS ENT CARE TO BARAMULLA!

Dr. SUMIT MRIG

Director & Head, ENT & Cochlear implant surgery
Max Smart super speciality hospital Saket & Max Hospital Dwarka . NEW DELHI

Director Sankalp ENT & Cochlear Implant Centre NEW DELHI

@kifayatkifi

JOIN FACEBOOK LIVE WITH Dr.SUMIT , Mr.TURAB, Former Sr. Audiologist at Max Hospital Saket ,Delhi

@ Kifayatkifi

🕒 8:00PM On January 18th, Sunday

Asiya Iqbal Felicitates Aqib Nabi Dar for Historic Ranji Trophy 2026 Performance

HT NEWS NETWORK

BARAMULLA, MAR 18: On behalf of Affarwat-XI Sports Club Baramulla, Asiya Iqbal felicitated Aqib Nabi Dar for his splendid performance in the Ranji

vital role in helping Jammu & Kashmir lift their maiden Ranji Trophy title. A grand welcome programme was organized by the Baramulla Cricket Forum at Dak Bungalow Baramulla to honor the

Asiya Iqbal, District President of Womens Wing JKECC Baramulla and newly nominated Executive Member of Affarwat-XI Sports Club Baramulla expressed her sincere gratitude to the management of Affarwat-XI and the Baramulla Cricket Forum (BCF) for providing her the opportunity to present a memento to Aqib Nabi Dar.

She praised Aqib's dedication, hard work, and consistency, further highlighting his achievement of being picked by Delhi Capitals in the IPL auction for an impressive ₹8.40 crores. She termed his success as a moment of pride for whole Jammu & Kashmir especially Baramulla and an inspiration for the budding cricketers of the region.



Trophy 2026, where he emerged as the highest wicket-taker and played a young achiever for his remarkable contribution to the team's success.

Baramulla Cricket Forum Felicitates its Star Cricketers in Baramulla

HT NEWS NETWORK

BARAMULLA, MAR 18: The Baramulla Cricket Forum (BCF) on Wednesday organised a grand felicitation ceremony to honour outstanding contributors to cricket in the region. The event was graced by Manoj Joshi, VSM, General Officer Commanding (GOC), 19 Infantry Division, who attended as the Chief Guest.

Among the awardees was Aqib Nabi Dar, a promising cricketer from Baramulla who has earned national recognition through his consistent performances. Notably, he was honoured for being named Man of the Series in the prestigious Ranji Trophy, marking a significant milestone in his cricketing career.

Hilal Ahmed Zargar and Muzaffar Mattoo were also felicitated for their invaluable contributions to the development and promotion of cricket in the region.

In a major boost to women's sports, certificates were distributed among members of the Women's Cricket Team, recognising their participation and growing presence in the game.

During the ceremony, Zubair Bashir Dar, General Secretary of BCF, put forth a visionary proposal before the Chief Guest. He requested support for the upgradation of sports infrastructure in Baramulla,



emphasizing the need to develop modern facilities for budding athletes. He further expressed the Forum's ambition to establish Baramulla as a "Sports Town", highlighting its growing potential in nurturing talent. He also stressed the importance of boosting sports tourism in the region and announced plans to organise a mega All-India level cricket tournament, which would provide a larger platform for local players and bring national attention to Baramulla.

The Chief Guest appreciated the efforts of BCF in nurturing local talent, providing a strong platform for youth, and promoting the spirit of sportsmanship across the district.

The ceremony also featured the unveiling of the BCF Cup Trophy, symbolising the Forum's continued commitment to fostering competitive cricket. The event concluded with a vote of thanks.

Public Notice

My Parentage has been wrongly written in my J&K Police Service Book records as Manzoor Ahmad Dar S/o Abdul Ahad Dar, While my actual Name is Manzoor Ahmad Dar S/o Haji Ab Ahad Dar Now I want to correct It.

If anyone has any objection regarding this change of My Parentage they may submit their objection in writing to the concerned authority within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. After that, no objection shall be entertained.

**Name: Manzoor Ahmad Dar
S/o: Haji Ab Ahad Dar
R/O: Rahmoo Pulwama
Pincode: 192301**

Public Notice

I, Ashiq Hussain Khan S/o Mohammad Sultan Khan R/o Usman Abad, lane no.02 Shalteng HMT Srinagar, most respectfully submit this application for your kind consideration.

That the electric power connection bearing Consumer ID No. 0203050000568 and Installation No. 13829-R1 is presently registered in the name of my father Late Mohammad Sultan Khan S/o Mohd Ismail Khan R/o Usman Abad lane no.02 Shalteng HMT Srinagar.

That my father passed away about three years ago, and after his demise I am the legal heir and presently residing in the said house and using the above mentioned electricity connection.

That I have been regularly paying all the electricity bills and there are no outstanding dues against the said connection. That for record purposes and for future correspondence with the department, it has become necessary to transfer the said power connection in my own name.

That I hereby undertake that I shall abide by all the rules and regulations of the department and will be responsible for the payment of all future electricity bills and liabilities.

I therefore humbly request your good self to kindly transfer the above mentioned electricity connection in my name at the earliest. I shall be highly thankful for your kind consideration and necessary action.

**Ashiq Hussain Khan
S/o Late Mohammad Sultan Khan
R/o Usman Abad Shalteng HMT Srinagar
Contact No: 9906815420
Date: 14/03/2026**

Public Notice

I, Abdul Karim Lone, S/o Ab Ahad Lone, R/o Kultoor, Langate, Kupwara, Jammu and Kashmir, 193302, hereby declare that I am the husband of Shah Begum. This is to inform the general public and concerned authorities that I am applying for the issuance/registration of the Date of Birth certificate of my wife, Shah Begum, at the Block Office Langate.

Her Date of Birth is 05/04/1956, and as per our knowledge and records, she was born at home in Kultoor, Langate.

If any person has any objection regarding the above mentioned particulars, he/she may submit the same before the concerned Block Office Langate within the stipulated period. Otherwise, no objection shall be entertained.

**Abdul Karim Lone
S/o Abdul Ahad Lone
R/o Kultoor
Phone: 8899375764**

Public Notice

This is to inform that I, DAWOOD MOHIDEEN MIR S/O GHULAM MOHIDEEN MIR, R/O KAKOTHAL KREERI, bearing JKBOSE Registration No. 2207000000770010, 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: DAWOOD 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, Bimna, Srinagar, within 7 days from the date of publication. No objections will be entertained after that.

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

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.**

Public Notice

Notice is hereby given that I, NAZIR AHMAD MIR, intending to apply for a Pesticides Licence name under style "MS MIR TRADERS KACHWA MUQAM" situated at Kachwa Muqam, Wagoora, Baramulla. The application will be submitted to the Office of the Plant Protection Officer Lal Mandi Srinagar, Any person having any objection in this regard he/she may file their objections in writing to the Office of the Plant Protection Officer Lal Mandi Sri-nagar, within 7 (seven) days from the date of publication of this notice. Objections received after this period will not be entertained.

**NAZIR AHMAD MIR, Son of HABIBULLAH MIR
Residen Of Kachwa Muqam, Wagoora Baramulla.**

Public Notice

This is to inform the general public that I am intending to applying for the registration of a fertilizer license under the name MS MIR TRADERS KACHWA MUQAM, located at Kachwa Muqam, Tehsil Wagoora, District Baramulla, at the Chief Agriculture Office, Baramulla. If anyone has any objections regarding this matter, they may file their objection at the office of the Chief Agriculture Office, Baramulla, within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. After this period, no objections will be entertained.

**NAZIR AHMAD MIR, S/O HABIBULLAH MIR
R/O KACHWA MUQAM, WAGOORA, Baramulla**

Public Notice

It is here by notified that my name & parentage has been incorrectly mentioned on my Aadhaar card as SYED BILAL AHMAD HAMDINA S/O SYED MOHAMMAD SHARIEF bearing aadhar no 7553 5081 1010 while my correct name & parentage is BILAL AHMAD S /O. SYED MOHAMMAD SHARIEF R/O KREERI as per service record / school record which needs to be corrected if anybody having any objection in this regard he /she may file his /her objection in the office concerned Aadhaar authority of India within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained.

Name...BILAL AHMAD, S/O ... SYED MOHAMMAD SHARIEF, R/O KREERI

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir Office Of The Tehsildar Kreeri (Executive Magistrate 1st Class)

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

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Registrar Births and Deaths (Block Development Officer Wagoora) / chokedar has submitted case file pertaining to Birth of NASEER AHMAD PARRAY S/O TARIQ AHMAD PARRAY R/O. HAIL JAGIR Tehsil KREERI Distt. Baramulla having verified the date of Birth as 24/03/1994 and event has been shown to be occurred at HOME for issuance of delay order .In this connection .

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

Sd/- Executive Magistrate 1st Class Kreeri

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir Office Of The Tehsildar Kreeri (Executive Magistrate 1st Class)

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

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Registrar Births and Deaths (Block Development Officer Wagoora) / chokedar has submitted case file pertaining to Birth of NASEER AHMAD PARRAY S/O TARIQ AHMAD PARRAY R/O. HAIL JAGIR Tehsil KREERI Distt. Baramulla having verified the date of Birth as 24/03/1994 and event has been shown to be occurred at HOME for issuance of delay order .In this connection .

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

Sd/- Executive Magistrate 1st Class Kreeri

UNION TERRITORY JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUIVE ENGINEER R&B DIVISION SOPORE.

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

NIT No: 182 of RnB-Sopore of 2025-2026 e-tendering | Dated: 16.03.2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K, e-tenders (in Single Cover System) are invited on Percentage rate basis from approved and eligible contractors registered with J&K State Govt. CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:

S.No.	Name of Work	Adv. Cost	T.D Cost In Rupees	E/ Money
1	Upgradation of Horticulture Development office Duroo (Balance part)	11.80	600/-	23600/-

Time for completion of work: 60 Days

Time & Date of Opening of Bid: 07-04-2026

Class of Contractor: BEE / CEE / DEE

M. H of Account: Capex Budget 2025-26

Position of TS: 192/TS of 2025-26 dated: 16.03.2026

Project Authority: Director Horticulture

Position of funds: Available

Position of AA: Accorded by Director Horticulture vide his order No:253 /Plan of 2025 dated: 20.06.2025

1. The Bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other detail's 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	16.03.2026		
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	16.03.2026	06.04.2026(upto 4.PM)	
3	Bid Submission start date	16.03.2026		
4	Bid submission End date	06.04.2026 (4.00 PM)		
5	Date and time of opening of bides (online)	07.04.2026(1.00 PM) in the office of Ex. Engineer R&B Division. Sopore		

2. Bids must be accompanied by a Treasury Challan (dated between the bid start date and the Bid Submission End date) with NIT No. Name of work and S.No. deposited in M.H. 0059 in the name of Executive Engineer R&B Division Sopore (tender inviting authority) as the cost of the tender document.

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/BG pledged to the tender receiving authority, i.e. Executive Engineer R&B Division Sopore. 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 after submission of a performance security of 5% of the quoted cost which will be released after completion of the DLP/Maintenance Period.

3(b). Geotag Photographs Minimum 03 sets (01 set Comprising of Photograph before, during and after execution of work) of size 26 cm x21 cm to be provided.

Unbalanced Bid:- In case bid of the successful bidder is unbalanced, the Successful bidder will have to provide additional performance security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Sopore (tender receiving authority) vide Principal

Secretary to Government Finance department's circular issued under endorsement No: DF-Code/ 441/ 2021-02-158 dated 8.8.20025.

a. 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 the bid price.

b. Where the bid price is 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 the bid price.

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

d. The additional performance security shall be treated as part of the performance security. Additional performance security shall be taken only after approval of next higher authority.

The additional performance security shall be released only after successful completion of work.

4. 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 the Tender receiving authority).

5. The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of technical Bids.

6. Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.

6.1. 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 acquaint bid submission process.

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

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

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

6.5. 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.

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of J&K UT,

No: 11895-11904 | Dated: 16-03-2026

Sd/- Executive Engineer, R&B Division Sopore

DIPK: 11981/25 | Dated: 18-03-2026

DDC Anantnag visits TRSP Trust Lok Bhawan, Kabamarg Shrine; Takes stock of Arrangements For Navratra, Eidul-Fitr.

Reviews status of RRP&MAH scheme

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

ANANTNAG, MARCH 18: In order to give final shape to the necessary arrangements for smooth observance of upcoming festivals of Navratra and Eidul-Fitr and to review the status of works under Scheme for Revival, Restoration, Preservation and Maintenance Of Architecture and Heritage (RRP&MAH), the District Development Commissioner (DDC) Anantnag, Dr. Bilal Mohiud Din Bhat, today visited Teerath Raj Sidlakshmi Peeth Trust, Lok Bhawan and Kabamarg Shrine, Larkipora.

ADC, SDM Dooru, Exen R&B Dooru, Tehsildar Anantnag, BDO, BMO Verinag and other officers and officials from concerned departments accompanied the DDC during his visit.

The visit aimed to review the arrangements, put in place by various departments ahead of the auspicious occasions and also review the status of renovation and restoration works at these holy places.

Taking stock of the renovation works at TRSP Trust Lok Bhawan, the DDC directed the Executing Agency (R&B Department) to expedite the pace of work while ensuring the quality and durability of the structures. The purpose of the renovation scheme is to preserve



the heritage besides enhancing and devotees' experience, he remarked.

Executive Engineer R&B Dooru informed the DDC that 30% of renovation works coming at an allotted cost of Rs. 2.6 Crore have

been completed physically and 25% financial expenditure has been made so far.

Expressing satisfaction on completion of allied works including tile path and spring rejuvenation

executed by Rural Development Department, the DDC instructed the BDO to take up other such necessary works in the next financial year.

The DDC also enquired about the availability of necessary facilities and services required by the community for smooth observance of auspicious Navratra and Ramanavami festivities.

At the Kabamarg Shrine, the DDC took a detailed stock of the arrangements made for congregational prayers and attendance by the devotees during the holy occasion of upcoming Eidul-Fitr.

Directions were issued to ensure uninterrupted power and water supply besides proper sanitation and traffic management during the festival days.

Regarding the renovation of Kabamarg Shrine under RRP&MAH Scheme, the DDC was briefed that the DPR prepared at an allotted cost of Rs. 4.5 Crore has been accorded Administrative Approval.

At both religious places, the DDC interacted with the respective management committees and assured them of the administration's full support in proper renovation and maintenance of these holy sites.

JKAACL organizes book release, literary interaction in Jammu

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MARCH 18: The Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages organized a literary programme featuring the release of two books authored by noted writer O. P. Sharma Vidyarthi at K.L. Saigal Hall Jammu today.

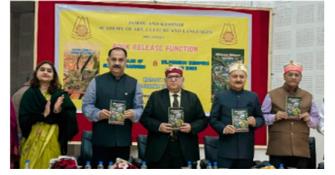
The event witnessed the participation of eminent academicians, scholars and literary enthusiasts. The programme was presided over by B. R. Sharma, Former Chief Secretary J&K while Dr. Pawan Kotwal, Former Chief Secretary Ladakh attended as the Chief Guest. On the occasion, the books Golden Glee of Glades & Gardens and Wilderness Whispers and Woes by O. P. Sharma Vidyarthi were formally released by the dignitaries.

The programme began with a welcome address by Secretary JKAACL Harvinder Kour who highlighted the importance of literary dialogue and research in strengthening the cultural and intellectual environment of society. She reiterated the Academy's commitment to promoting literary activities and providing a platform for writers and scholars.

Speaking on the occasion, B. R. Sharma appreciated the literary contribution of the author and emphasized the importance of nurturing creative writing and intellectual discourse in society.

Dr. Pawan Kotwal shared his remarks on the books and lauded the author's effort in presenting reflections on nature, culture and human experiences through his writings.

Principal Secretary, Department of Culture, B. M. Sharma, who attended as a



special invitee, also addressed the gathering and spoke about the author's literary journey and his valuable contribution to literature.

Dean Faculty of Arts, Cluster University Jammu, Dr. Monika Sharma, who was the guest of honour appreciated the author's literary contribution and emphasized the importance of literature in preserving cultural values and encouraging critical literary engagement.

As part of the programme, two research scholars from Cluster University Jammu presented scholarly papers on the books. Shubam Sharma presented a paper on Golden Glee of Glades & Gardens, discussing the thematic richness and literary nuances of the work, while Ravinder K. Rao presented a paper on Wilderness Whispers and Woes, highlighting the author's reflections on nature and environmental consciousness.

The author, O. P. Sharma Vidyarthi, also shared his thoughts on the creative inspiration behind the books, interacted with the audience and appreciated the Academy's efforts in promoting literature and cultural activities.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks presented by Additional Secretary, JKAACL Lal Chand.

Commissioner JMC conducts extensive inspection of Wards 26, 39 & 66, assures time-bound redressal of civic issues

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MARCH 18: Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) Dr. Devansh Yadav today undertook an extensive inspection tour of Wards 26, 39 and 66, covering the areas of Top Sherkhania, Subash Nagar, Suryavanshi Nagar, Lower Roopnagar and Muthi, to take firsthand stock of the civic issues and challenges being faced by the residents.

During the visit, Dr. Yadav interacted with locals, who apprised him of a range of pressing concerns affecting their day-to-day lives. Prominent among these were demand for a comprehensive improvement in the drinking water supply system, immediate repair and maintenance of drainage networks to prevent waterlogging and black-topping of dilapidated roads.

Residents also emphasized the need for tiling work in inner lanes



to enhance accessibility and cleanliness.

In addition, the locals raised

serious concerns regarding sanitation conditions in various pockets of the locality and

highlighted the issue of non-functional streetlights, which pose safety risks, especially during night hours.

Taking prompt cognizance of these issues, Dr. Yadav issued on-the-spot directions to the concerned officials to ensure swift and effective action. Health Officer, Dr. Vinod Sharma was directed to intensify sanitation measures in the area and to carry out regular inspections, including daily monitoring of the attendance and performance of sanitary workers to ensure accountability and efficiency.

Further, officials from the Electrical Division were instructed to conduct a comprehensive survey of streetlights in the area and ensure immediate repair or replacement of all non-functional units. Directions were also issued to the engineering wings to assess the requirements for drainage repairs, road black-topping and lane tiling work and initiate necessary action

at the earliest.

Reaffirming the commitment of the Jammu Municipal Corporation towards improving civic amenities, Dr. Yadav assured the residents that all genuine demands would be addressed on priority and within a stipulated time frame. He emphasized that coordinated efforts among various departments of JMC would be ensured to deliver tangible results on the ground.

Dr. Yadav further stated that such field visits are part of the Corporation's ongoing efforts to directly engage with citizens, understand their concerns and implement need-based solutions in a transparent and efficient manner.

The visit underscores the proactive and responsive approach of the Jammu Municipal Corporation in strengthening urban infrastructure and enhancing the quality of life for the citizens of Jammu.

One-day skill development, awareness programme on Agroforestry held at Kathua

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KATHUA, MARCH 18: One day Skill Development and Awareness Campaign under the Sub Mission on Agroforestry (SMAF), a Centrally Sponsored Scheme was organized today at newly established Agroforestry Nursery at Burmal in Kathua.

The programme aimed to generate awareness among farmers and stakeholders on the importance, benefits and scientific practices of agroforestry for sustainable agriculture and enhanced income generation. Participants were sensitized on integrating trees with crops and livestock to improve soil health, biodiversity and climate resilience.

Former Additional Mission Director (HADP) Satish Sharma attended as the Resource Person and shared valuable insights on the scope and future potential of agroforestry in the region. He emphasized the adoption of modern agroforestry practices for long-term sustainability and economic



benefits to farmers.

Joint Director Agriculture (SLUB/Farms) Jammu Amanjyoti Sharma highlighted the role of departmental initiatives in promoting agroforestry and encouraged farmers to avail benefits under various government schemes. Assistant Agrostologist Jammu N. P. Singh and Agriculture Extension Officer Hiranagar also addressed the participants and provided technical guidance on nursery management and plantation techniques.

Nursery Incharge Manohar Sharma coordinated the programme and briefed the participants about the functioning and objectives of the newly established agroforestry nursery at Burmal.

The programme witnessed active participation of farmers and field functionaries, who appreciated the initiative and expressed keen interest in adopting agroforestry practices.

MC Kathua organises AMRUT 2.0 awareness programme on water conservation

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KATHUA, MARCH 18: Municipal Council Kathua today organised an awareness programme under AMRUT 2.0 on the theme "Jal Hai Kal - Save Water, Save Life" to sensitise the public about the importance of water conservation.

The programme was conducted under the aegis of the Directorate of Urban Local Bodies Jammu in collaboration with Red FM, aimed at generating awareness among the masses about the essence of water and its judicious use.

Deputy Commissioner Kathua Rajesh Sharma while speaking on the occasion appreciated Red FM for its proactive role in educating people on key issues like cleanliness, elimination of single-use plastic and water conservation.

He said that participants of such awareness programmes act as ambassadors and multipliers of the message, helping society remain proactive in preserving vital natural resources.

The DC emphasised that judicious use of water by all stakeholders is essential and stressed the need to maintain cleanliness in homes, surroundings and public places with equal responsibility.

He added that such initiatives will be extended across both rural and urban areas of the district to transform them into a sustained mass movement.

Earlier, R] Sarang along with his team from Red FM engaged the participants through informative and entertaining activities including skits, mimicry, tongue twisters and shayari, while also rewarding



winners with T-shirts.

CEO MC Kathua, Prithvi Sangra, EO MC Billawar Varinder Pal Singh and PAO along with a large number of people including students and staff of GHSS Girls Kathua were present on the occasion.

A mass pledge on water conservation was also administered by the Deputy Commissioner. A special water testing counter was also set up by the Jal Shakti Department Kathua for the benefit of the public.

On the occasion, CEO MC Kathua, EO MC Billawar and PAO were felicitated for their cooperation and support.

DC Pulwama chairs District Road Safety Committee Meeting

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

PULWAMA, MARCH 18: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Pulwama, Dr. Basharat Qayoom, today chaired a comprehensive meeting of the District Road Safety Committee (DRSC) at the Administrative Complex here to review the road safety scenario and strategise measures for reducing road accidents across the district.

At the outset, the Member Secretary DRSC presented a detailed presentation highlighting the road safety scenario in the district. The presentation covered year-wise road accident data, analysis based on eDAR, Police inputs, and status of black spots identified within the District.

The meeting was also apprised about the implementation and significance of the Integrated Road Accident Database (iRAD) portal, which enables real-time data collection and scientific analysis of accidents. It was informed that the portal facilitates identification of accident-prone locations, analysis of causes, and formulation of targeted interventions for minimizing fatalities and injuries.

While reviewing the action taken on decisions of the previous meeting, it was informed that a series of awareness programmes have been conducted across the district by ARTO Pulwama, Traffic Police, and the Education Department. Over 35 awareness camps and 16 medical camps were organised, with more than 650 commercial drivers examined for fitness and eye check-ups.

The Assistant Regional Transport Officer

(ARTO) Pulwama informed the meeting that strict enforcement measures have been undertaken, including suspension of driving licenses for violations such as over-speeding and overloading, and blacklisting of vehicles with pending challans.

The DC reviewed the traffic management measures being implemented across key routes and stressed the need for sustained enforcement on busy roads, particularly near hospitals, educational institutions, and market areas.

While taking stock of infrastructure-related issues, the meeting was informed about the road safety audit conducted on identified roads and bridges, as per the directions of the Supreme Court Committee on Road Safety (SCCoRS).

The Deputy Commissioner issued a series of directions to further strengthen road safety mechanisms in the district. He directed all concerned departments to ensure effective utilisation of the iRAD portal for data-driven decision-making and called for close coordination among Police, Transport, Health, and Engineering departments.

Emphasising preventive measures, the DC instructed ARTO and Traffic Police to intensify enforcement drives against rash driving, overloading, and non-compliance with safety norms.

The Deputy Commissioner reiterated that reduction in road accidents requires a multi-pronged approach involving enforcement, engineering interventions, awareness, and data-driven planning, and called upon all stakeholders to work in close coordination to achieve tangible results.

Last-mile electrification key to India's EV transition: Report

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MAR 18: Electrification of last-mile delivery fleets could emerge as the fastest and most impactful pathway for India to accelerate its electric mobility transition, according to a sustainability white paper released by the Flipkart Group here on Tuesday.

The report highlighted that while India is targeting 30 per cent electric vehicle (EV) penetration by 2030, current adoption remains at around 8 per cent of new vehicle sales as of 2025, indicating the need for a more focused and strategic approach.

It identified last-mile delivery—dominated by two- and three-wheelers—as a highly viable segment for rapid electrification due to its high vehicle utilisation, short travel distances and concentrated urban presence.

Based on a survey of over 6,000 delivery partners across Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities, the study found that nearly 46 per cent of respondents are willing to shift to EVs, with most daily travel ranging between 40–80 km—well within the operational capacity of existing electric two-wheelers.

However, the report noted that the gap between intent and adoption is driven largely by structural challenges rather than behavioural resistance. High upfront costs, limited access to charging infrastructure, concerns around vehicle performance and battery life, and inadequate financing options remain key barriers.

The findings align with broader national assessments that highlight financing risks, charging viability and awareness gaps as major constraints in scaling EV adoption.



The white paper emphasised that electrifying last-mile delivery fleets offers significant climate and economic benefits. Electric two-wheelers deliver higher carbon emission reductions per rupee of incentive compared to passenger vehicles, making them a cost-effective decarbonisation strategy.

From an economic perspective, the transition could substantially improve earnings for delivery partners. The report noted that EVs can reduce fuel and energy costs by 70–80 per cent, with potential net income gains of 15–20 per cent due to lower operating and maintenance expenses.

Nearly 90 per cent of surveyed

delivery workers currently spend between 2,000 and Rs5,000 per month on petrol, underlining the potential for recurring savings through electrification.

On the environmental front, the report said last-mile delivery vehicles contribute disproportionately to urban air pollution, particularly in densely populated areas. Large-scale electrification could significantly reduce emissions of PM2.5, nitrogen oxides and carbon dioxide, improving urban air quality.

The study also highlighted that last-mile fleets, due to their high daily usage, offer greater near-term emissions reduction compared to low-utilisation private vehicles.

Operationally, EV adoption could improve efficiency and resilience in delivery networks by reducing dependence on volatile fuel prices, enabling better route planning and lowering downtime due to fewer mechanical issues.

At a systemic level, the report noted that successful electrification of last-mile delivery can demonstrate that EV adoption is viable even among small operators and independent delivery partners, paving the way for inclusive and large-scale clean mobility adoption.

The white paper underscored that scaling EV adoption in this segment will require a coordinated ecosystem approach, including affordable financing models such as leasing and battery-as-a-service, expansion of charging-as-a-service infrastructure, development of delivery-optimised EVs, and improved servicing and lifecycle support.

It also pointed to supportive policy signals in the union Budget 2026–27, which prioritised ecosystem development, battery manufacturing, and supply chain resilience, along with continued support for commercial EV segments under government programmes.

Concluding that technology readiness and user willingness are already in place, the report stressed that aligning financing, infrastructure and operational support systems will be critical to unlocking large-scale adoption.

"Last-mile electrification is not just an operational shift but a strategic lever for India's clean mobility future," the report said, adding that it holds the potential to drive climate action, economic gains and inclusive growth simultaneously. UNI

India-EFTA TEPA emerges as strategic boost for electronics, semicon ecosystem

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 18 : Two years after its finalisation, the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) between India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is increasingly emerging as a strategic catalyst for India's electronics and semiconductor sectors, driving technology collaboration, investment and supply chain integration.

The agreement, which came into force in October last year, is now facilitating deeper engagement between Indian companies and European deep-tech firms, particularly in design, research and development (R&D) and advanced manufacturing.

Marking two years of this historical deal earlier this month, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said the pact is part of India's expanding global trade architecture, opening new opportunities across sectors while strengthening industrial capabilities.

"Today, we are celebrating our EFTA Agreement, the agreement with Switzerland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland. Today it is two years from the day we finalised the agreement and all of these opportunities are coupled with New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Korea, the ASEAN region, Oman, UAE and Mauritius," he said.

"We are now finalising an agreement with Canada and have just launched discussions with the six GCC countries in the Middle East," he added.

According to an official statement, with USD 100 billion investment commitment and preferential access to high-income European countries, TEPA offers a strategic springboard for India's electronics sector.

Sharing the current industrial perspective, Rajesh M Revankar, Vice Chairman of Electronics and Computer Software Export Promotion Council (ESC), said the impact of the agreement on the electronics and semiconductor space has so far been "more strategic than transactional," with the focus on building long-term capabilities rather than immediate trade gains.

"The agreement has opened pathways

for European deep-tech firms to expand design, R&D, and advanced manufacturing partnerships in India, particularly in industrial electronics, sensors and power semiconductors," he said.

He noted that the current phase reflects the creation of a strong foundation for technology collaboration, supply-chain integration and targeted investments within India's electronics manufacturing ecosystem.

With a committed investment pipeline of USD 100 billion over 15 years under the agreement, the sector is expected to witness a significant scale-up in capabilities. As these investments begin to materialise, India could strengthen its position as a key design and engineering hub for European semiconductor and industrial electronics companies.

This shift is likely to accelerate high-value manufacturing, innovation and employment generation in advanced technology segments.

Early signals of this transformation are already visible, with an Icelandic technology company reportedly preparing to invest USD 30 million in a Maharashtra-based firm. The development points to emerging opportunities in segments such as medical electronics, smart sensors, embedded systems, electric vehicle components and marine electronics.

Collaborations with technology ecosystems in Switzerland and Norway are also expected to play a critical role in enabling innovation-led growth and expanding India's footprint in the global electronics value chain.

In addition, improved access to specialised components, precision equipment and advanced industrial inputs under the agreement is expected to enhance manufacturing efficiency, support quality upgrades and strengthen India's competitiveness in semiconductor and electronics production.

As global supply chains increasingly shift towards diversification and resilience, the India-EFTA TEPA is positioning India as a preferred destination for technology partnerships and advanced electronics manufacturing. UNI

AI Can Transform Kerala's MSMEs,' says CII at Annual Meet

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

KOCHI, MARCH 18 : The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Kerala has highlighted the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for small and medium enterprises in the state during its Annual Members Meeting 2025–26. The discussion formed part of the flagship Application & Digi-Tech Series 2026, which featured a seminar titled "AI for MSMEs: Driving Productivity, Profitability, and Growth." The session focused on how businesses in Kerala can leverage emerging technologies to enhance competitiveness and efficiency. Speaking on the occasion, Saji Gopinath, Vice Chancellor of Kerala University of Digital Sciences, Innovation and Technology, described AI as a "general-purpose technology" and a "great equalizer." Entrepreneurs were urged to go beyond simply applying AI to existing processes and instead rethink business models to fully harness its capabilities. The seminar explored how AI can boost productivity by automating routine and repetitive tasks, enabling human resources to shift toward higher-value activities such as innovation, strategy and customer engagement. Thomas John Muthoot, Chairman of CII Southern Region and Chairman of Muthoot Fincorp Ltd, said MSMEs can use AI to free up time for purpose-driven work and meaningful human interaction. Joseph M. Kallivayalil, Chairman of CII Kerala and Managing Director of Glenrock Rubber Products Ltd, called for the immediate adoption of advanced AI tools, describing them as crucial for MSMEs to maintain a competitive edge in a rapidly evolving market. VKC Razak, Immediate Past Chairman of CII Kerala and Managing Director of VKC Footgear Pvt Ltd, noted that while AI would not replace humans, businesses that effectively use AI would replace those that fail to adopt it. UNI

Over 1 lakh startups in India have at least one woman director: Govt

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 18 : More than one lakh startups in India have at least one woman director or partner, reflecting the growing participation of women in the country's entrepreneurial ecosystem, the government informed Parliament.

Out of 2,12,283 startups recognised by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) as of January 31, 2026, a total of 1,02,054 startups have at least one woman director or partner, Minister of State for

Commerce and Industry Jitin Prasada said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

The government said the Startup India initiative, launched in 2016, continues to play a crucial role in strengthening the innovation ecosystem by promoting investments and supporting startups across various stages of their growth.

To boost the startup ecosystem, several schemes have been implemented, including the Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS), Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS) and the Credit Guarantee Scheme



for Startups (CGSS).

Under the Fund of Funds for Startups, investments of around Rs 25,859 crore have been committed through SEBI-registered Alternative Investment Funds, of which approximately Rs 2,995

crore has been directed towards women-led startups.

Similarly, under the Startup India Seed Fund Scheme, funding of about Rs 592 crore has been approved through incubators, with nearly Rs 294 crore allocated to women-led startups, indicating targeted support for women entrepreneurs.

The Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups has facilitated loans worth around Rs 925 crore, including approximately Rs 39 crore extended to women-led startups, improving access to credit.

The government also highlighted that a relatively small proportion of recognised startups have ceased operations. As per data from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, 6,789 startups have been categorised as closed, of which 2,950 had at least one woman director or partner.

These measures, the government said, are aimed at promoting inclusive growth, strengthening the startup ecosystem and encouraging greater participation of women in entrepreneurship across the country. UNI

BHIM Payments App appoints Mahendra Singh Dhoni as Brand Ambassador

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

HYDERABAD, MAR 18 : NPCI BHIM Services Limited (NBSL) on Tuesday announced the appointment of former India cricket captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni as the brand ambassador for the BHIM Payments App.

The company said the partnership marks a strategic step in its next phase of growth focused on scale, inclusion and strengthening long-term user confidence.

BHIM, built on the infrastructure of the National Payments Corporation

of India (NPCI), has played a key role in India's digital payments ecosystem and is nearing a decade of operations.

Commenting on the development, Lalitha Nataraj, MD and CEO of NBSL, said the association aims to position BHIM as a preferred digital payments platform for households across the country, with trust at the core of its growth strategy.

Dhoni said the app's focus on simplicity and accessibility aligns with the need to make digital payments easy and reliable for users across India, especially as adoption continues to

expand.

Following its repositioning as "Bharat Ka Apna Payments App", BHIM has expanded its presence across Tier 1, 2 and 3 cities, with a focus on accessibility, regional language support and ease of use.

The app supports over 15 regional languages and is optimised for low-connectivity environments to drive adoption in rural and semi-urban areas.

The platform is also leveraging reward-led initiatives and merchant partnerships to expand its user base and engagement. UNI

Middle East conflict key risk for FY27, potential impacts on exports, remittances: Report

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 18: India's merchandise trade showed mixed trends in February 2026, with exports remaining largely stable while imports surged sharply, widening the trade deficit and raising concerns over the impact of the ongoing Middle East conflict, according to a research report by ICICI Bank.

Looking ahead, the report flagged the Middle East conflict as a key risk for FY27, with potential impacts on exports, remittances and oil prices if tensions persist.

Assuming average crude prices of USD 80 per barrel, the goods

deficit could rise to USD 383 billion, with the current account deficit widening to 1.4pc of GDP.

Additionally, heightened global uncertainty is expected to keep foreign portfolio investment flows subdued, putting pressure on the rupee, which is projected to trade in the range of 91.5–93.5 per US dollar in the near term.

Goods exports stood at USD 36.6 billion in February, marginally down 0.8pc year-on-year, as a steep decline in oil exports offset gains in non-oil segments.

Oil exports dropped sharply by 40pc to USD 3.4 billion, while non-oil exports rose 6.4pc to USD 33 billion, supported by strong performance in engineering goods



and electronics.

However, goods imports rose significantly by 25pc year-on-year to USD 63.7 billion, driven by a sharp increase in gold imports, which surged 219pc, along with

higher non-oil, non-gold imports and oil purchases. As a result, India's trade deficit widened to USD 27.1 billion in February.

On a cumulative basis, the goods trade deficit expanded to USD 311 billion during April–February FY26, compared to around USD 262 billion in the same period last year, reflecting stronger import growth relative to exports.

Exports to the United States declined by 13pc year-on-year during the month, even as shipments to other markets remained steady. While easing US tariffs may support future exports, the report warned that escalating tensions in the Middle East could disrupt shipments to the region,

which accounts for nearly 15pc of India's exports.

The geopolitical situation is also pushing up global crude oil prices, which have climbed to around USD 100 per barrel. This poses upside risks to India's import bill and could further pressure the current account. India's heavy dependence on energy imports, particularly from the Middle East, makes it vulnerable to such shocks.

Despite the widening goods deficit, strong growth in services exports, up 18pc so far this fiscal, has helped keep the current account deficit relatively modest, estimated at about USD 33 billion or 0.8pc of GDP. UNI

Stock market extends previous gains, Nifty closes above 23,550

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 18: Indian stock market extended the previous session's gain amid buying across the sectors barring FMCG, IT names. Nifty 50 closing above 23,550 level, and the Sensex was up 567.99 points. At close, the Sensex was up 567.99 points or 0.75 per cent at 76,070.84, and the Nifty was up 172.35 points or 0.74 per cent at 23,581.15.

Among the sectors, Nifty Auto and Nifty Metal were leading while Nifty IT and Nifty FMCG lost the most. FMCG was down 0.7 per cent, IT down by 1 per cent while all other indices ended in the green. Capital goods, telecom, auto, infra, media, metal, realty, private bank were up in the range of 1–2 per cent.

On Nifty, the key gainers were Eterna, Tata Steel, M&M, HDFC Life and Bharat Electronics. On the losing side were Wipro, Tata Consumer, Infosys, Cipla, ITC. More than 340 stocks touched their 52-week low on BSE. These included Cello World, Tata Elxsi, Relaxo Footwear, Jyothy Labs, Wipro, CE Info Systems, AAVAS Financier, Newgen Software, Infosys, Cipla, Gujarat State Petro, Oracle Financial Services, Coforge, TCS, Bata India, Tata Technologies, Mastek, Sonata Software, SBI Card, among others.

In the broader indices, Nifty Midcap 100 rose 1% while the Nifty Smallcap 100 added nearly 0.65 per cent.

In terms of some of the key performers, Lloyds Metals & Energy surged 7.8%, Nalco, SAIL, and Tata Steel gained 6.2 per cent, 6.1 per cent and 4.5 per cent respectively.

APL Apollo Tubes, Hindustan Copper, and Jindal Stainless also closed higher by over 3%.

In the Asian market, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 erased early gains to slip 0.1 per cent to 53,700.39, while South Korea's Kospi surged 1.6 per cent to 5,640.48.

Further, Hong Kong's Hang Seng edged up 0.1 per cent to 25,668.54, whereas the Shanghai Composite declined 0.9 per cent to 4,049.91. UNI

KKR Blow: Harshit Rana Faces Long IPL Injury Layoff



■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

KOLKATA: Kolkata Knight Riders pacer Harshit Rana is likely to miss a significant part of the upcoming IPL as he continues to recover from a knee surgery he underwent last month.

According to a report, the BCCI is yet to fix a timeline for his return.

Rana, who sustained a ligament strain in his right knee injury during India's T20 World Cup warm-up match against South Africa, is currently undergoing rehabilitation, with "no firm date of return earmarked by the BCCI medical team yet".

The pacer had pulled up after delivering just one over in that game and was subsequently ruled out of the T20 World Cup following surgery. He was replaced by Mohammed Siraj, who played one match (against the USA) during India's title-winning campaign.

Rana was on Sunday awarded the Best International Debutant award at the BCCI Naman Awards.

His absence would come as a major setback for three-time IPL champions KKR, who are already grappling with multiple fitness concerns.

Sri Lanka pacer Matheesha Pathirana has been nursing a calf strain sustained during the T20 World Cup, which had initially not been expected to affect his IPL availability.

KKR are also without left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman after the BCCI instructed it to release the Bangladeshi player amid strained geopolitical relations between India and Bangladesh earlier this year.

The franchise has since signed Zimbabwe quick Blessing Muzarabani as a replacement. He opted out of his Pakistan Super League stint with Islamabad United as he is set to join the squad here Tuesday.

The KKR will begin their pre-season training here from Wednesday.

KKR's other pace options include Vaibhav Arora, Akash Deep, Umran Malik, Kartik Tyagi, and all-rounders Cameron Green and Ramandeep Singh.

KKR will begin their campaign against Mumbai Indians in an away fixture on March 29, before hosting Sunrisers Hyderabad, Punjab Kings and Lucknow Super Giants in the opening phase of the tournament.

Devon Conway, bowlers star as New Zealand make it 1-1

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

HAMILTON: New Zealand levelled the five-match T20I series against South Africa with a dominant performance in Hamilton. After being put in to bat on a surface the women's sides praised for its batter friendliness, New Zealand relied on Devon Conway's experience to post a challenging target.

They may even have felt they left a few runs out there as few stayed with Conway with the 48-run opening stand their highest. South Africa's spinners were particularly expensive as Keshav Maharaj and George Linde conceded 78 runs in the six overs they bowled.

In the end, New Zealand scored exactly the same number of runs as they posted just over a month ago against South Africa, in the group game of the T20 World Cup. Then, South Africa eased to the target with 17 balls to spare. This time, they were bowled out for their 10th lowest score in the format: an exact mirror of what New Zealand's line-up did in the first match. Only Linde scored more than 30 as Ben Sears and Lockie Ferguson took six wickets between them in an incisive display of quick bowling. With South Africa women winning earlier in the day, both the men's and women's series are locked at 1-1.

Conway didn't get any games at the T20 World Cup but showed he still has plenty to offer with an innings that provided a solid foundation for New Zealand to build on. He was productive on the leg-side from the get-go, when he flicked the first ball of the match through mid-wicket for four and scored 80% of his runs in that half of the field. That included both his sixes: the slog-sweep off Keshav Maharaj in the over after the Powerplay and his launch over long-on off Wiaan Mulder which brought up his fifty off 39 balls. Conway has not scored this many runs in 20 T20I innings, since February 2024. He was ready to up the ante as New Zealand entered the last five overs and tried to pull Wiaan Mulder but was cramped for room and top-edged. New Zealand were 124 for 4 with 27 deliveries remaining.

With Conway dismissed, and New Zealand 126 for 5 after 16 overs, South Africa had the opportunity to keep the hosts under 160 but their death bowling plans faltered. Ngobani Mokeona, the 19-year old, bowled a good 17th over that cost only seven runs and finished with excellent figures of 0 for 22 in four overs. Gerald Coetzee's final over went for eight runs and brought the wicket of Jimmy Neesham before Ottneil Baartman's last over cost 10 runs. Keshav Maharaj came on to bowl at the end, and it went awry. Cole McConchie advanced on him to hit the first ball for six and then Josh Clarkson plundered 16 runs off the four deliveries. Maharaj's plan to go wide of the stumps didn't work as Clarkson chased it and finished unbeaten on 26* off nine balls. What may irk Maharaj most is that he had another option. Wiaan Mulder, playing a T20I for the first time since September 2024, bowled two overs for 14 runs and could have had one towards the end of the innings. South Africa conceded 42 runs in the last three overs.

Former tennis world number 39 banned for doping

■ AGENCIES

SYDNEY: Australian tennis player turned coach Marinko Matosevic was slapped with a four-year ban on Tuesday for breaching anti-doping rules between 2018 and 2020.

The former world number 39, who most recently helped coach current Australian players Chris O'Connell and Jordan Thompson, initially denied all charges. But he admitted to blood doping in comments shortly before the hearing was scheduled to take place, the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) said.

An independent tribunal found he committed five anti-doping rule violations. They included "use of a prohibited method through blood doping and facilitating another player



to blood dope". He also "provided advice to others on how to avoid positive tests, and use and possession of the prohibited substance clenbuterol".

Clenbuterol, a medication prescribed for treating asthma and other breathing difficulties, is sometimes misused by body-builders and athletes as an off-label performance enhancer.

Matosevic, who played at all four Grand Slams, is banned from any tennis event or activity authorised or sanctioned by the ITIA, such as ATP, WTA or Tennis Australia tournaments, until 2030. The 40-year-old is likewise prohibited from coaching or working with any players.

There is no suggestion that O'Connell or Thompson have breached any rules.

LUBAAB PUBLICATIONS
 ONE STOP SOLUTION FOR ALL PRINTING NEEDS

NEWSPAPER | BOOKS | FLYERS | LOGO | FLEX | MAGAZINES
 VISITING CARDS | BROCHURES | 3D BOARDS | COVER PAGES
 WEDDING CARDS | CALLIGRAPHY | WALL PAINTINGS

9999038812
 9419008414

Radio Colony,
 Gund Hassibhat, Lawaipora Srinagar-190017

HEADLINES TODAY INVITES CONTRIBUTIONS

Are you a writer, poet, storyteller, columnist, or feature writer with a passion for literature or health writings? Headlines Today offers a platform to share:

Literature Section: Well-crafted essays, literary articles, reflections, and creative writings.

Health Section: Well-researched articles, expert columns, and in-depth feature reports from professionals and specialists.

Send your contributions to:
 Dr Basharat Khan
 Honorary Editor: Literature & Health Sections (HT) at
 chogalwriter76@gmail.com

YOUR WORDS CAN INSPIRE, INFORM, AND IGNITE; LET THEM BE HEARD.