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## No Bias in Delimitation, Women's Quota a Right : PM Modi in Lok Sabha

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

**NEW DELHI, APR 16:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday assured the Lok Sabha that no state—irrespective of size or region—will face discrimination in the proposed delimitation exercise linked to the implementation of the women's reservation law, even as he underlined that such reservation is a right, not a favour.

Intervening during a debate on key legislations, including the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, and the Delimitation Bill, 2026, the Prime Minister sought to dispel apprehensions, particularly among southern and eastern states, over a possible reduction in their parliamentary representation.

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**No State, Be It North Or South Will Be Discriminated Against In Delimitation Exercise: PM In LS**

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

**NEW DELHI, APR 16:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday asserted that no state—big or small, north or south, or east or west—will be discriminated against in the delimitation of constituencies linked with the implementation of women quota law and warned that those

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## Women Farmers Anchor Food Security, Deserve Priority in Policy: LG Sinha

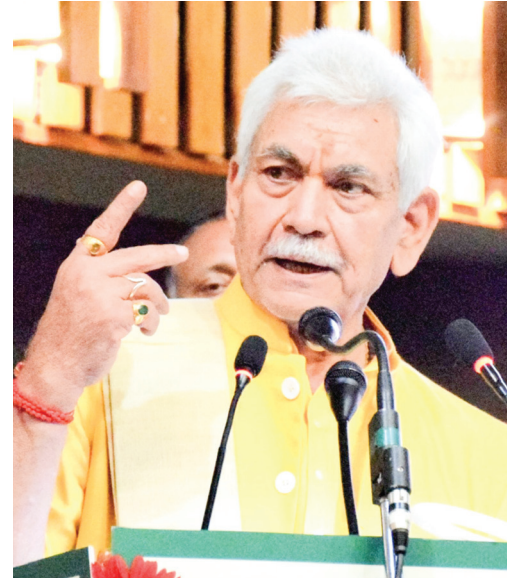
HT NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR, APRIL 16:** Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday said women farmers are the backbone of global food security and must be prioritised across all policies and schemes, asserting that their contribution remains undervalued despite sustaining the world's food systems.

Addressing the Women Farmers Conference organised by Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Limited in Srinagar, the Lieutenant Governor remarked that without women farmers "every plate would be empty," emphasising that they work harder than their male counterparts and play a decisive role in ensuring prosperity for families and society.

He said the declaration of 2026 as the International Year of Women Farmers by the United Nations General Assembly presents a historic opportunity to recognise women as key drivers of agricultural growth rather than mere labourers, and called for their inclusion and prioritisation in every government initiative.

Highlighting the gaps in access to resources,



Sinha urged agriculture and allied departments to allocate dedicated funds for women farmers and called upon financial institutions to design

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## No Religion-Based Quota for Muslims, Says Shah Amid Lok Sabha Debate

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

**NEW DELHI, APR 16:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday ruled out any reservation for Muslims on the basis of religion, asserting in the Lok



Sabha that such a provision would be unconstitutional.

Intervening during a charged debate on key legislative proposals, Shah said the Constitution does not permit religion-based quotas and made it clear that the government would not

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## Revenue Cadre Shake-Up Proposed in J&K

Govt floats draft rules with 10,000+ posts, invites public feedback within 15 days

HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APR 16:** The Jammu and Kashmir government on Thursday proposed a major overhaul of the Revenue (Subordinate) Service Recruitment Rules, 2009, placing a draft notification in the public domain to restructure the cadre in the wake of the Union Territory's reorganisation.

Officials said the revision follows the bifurcation of the erstwhile state into the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, necessitating a fresh distribution of sanctioned strength under the existing SRO-74 of 2009.

According to the draft Schedule-I, the proposed sanctioned strength exceeds 10,000

posts, including 507 Naib Tehsildars, 1,207 Girdawar/Saddar Qanungo, 4,809 Patwaris, 28 Section Officers, 29 Geo Spatial Specialists, 74 Geo Spatial Analysts, 163 Junior Scale Stenographers and 2,694 multi-tasking staff, among others.

The draft provides for a five per cent deputation reserve and a five per cent leave reserve, with 324 posts from the Registration Department earmarked for the deputation pool.

As per the proposed rules, 40 per cent of Naib Tehsildar posts will be filled through direct recruitment, while 60 per cent will be filled by promotion from Girdawars with at least three years of service. The post of Patwari is

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## Sewage Curbs Reach Dal Lake as 95% Houseboats Linked to Treatment Systems

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

**SRINAGAR, APR 16:** In a major step towards improving the ecological health of Dal Lake, authorities on Thursday said that nearly 95 per cent of houseboats operating on the waterbody have been connected to sewage treatment systems, significantly curbing the discharge of untreated waste.

Vice Chairman of the Lake Conservation and Management Authority (LCMA), Manzoor Qadri, said the move has addressed a long-persisting issue that had contributed to the lake's degradation over the years. "Untreated sewage should not enter



the lake under any circumstances," he said, adding that all wastewater generated within the lake and its catchment is now being diverted to Sewage Treatment

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## CAG Warns of Hokersar Lake's Ecological Decline, Flags Large-Scale Encroachment

HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APR 16:** The CAG has expressed serious concerns about the large-scale encroachment of over 2,500 kanals and ecological degradation of Hokersar Lake, warning that the wetland is facing rapid deterioration, and its "pristine glory" is at risk of extinction.

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) pulled up authorities for the failure of conservation and management of Hok-

ersar lake, warning that the ecologically significant wetland is facing degradation due to pollution, encroachment and lack of scientific planning.

The CAG report on conservation of lakes in the Union territory for the year 2023-24, said the lack of proper survey and demarcation has led to the encroachment.

"Around 2,528.10 kanals of lake area has been encroached upon for construction, plantations and agricultural

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## India, Austria condemn Pahalgam attack, call for global anti-terror push

HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

**NEW DELHI, APR 16:** India and Austria on Thursday strongly condemned the Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 tourists last year in Kashmir and called for coordinated global efforts to counter terrorism, including cross-border networks and radicalisation.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) the issue figured prominently during talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Austrian Chancellor Christian Stocker,

marking the first visit by an Austrian leader to India in nearly four decades.

Briefing reporters, MEA Secretary (West) Sibi George said both sides "categorically and unequivocally" denounced terrorism in all its forms and stressed the need for sustained international cooperation to tackle the threat. The two countries also referred to the Pahalgam attack and a terror incident near Delhi's Red Fort, condemning them in strong terms and calling for a comprehensive response to such acts.

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## CS reviews preparations for Shri Amarnathji Yatra (SANJY)-2026

57-Day Yatra to be held from July 3 to August 28, 2026

HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APR 16:** Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo today chaired a high-level meeting of the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB), attended by senior officers from the Civil Administration and Police department to review the comprehensive arrangements being made for the smooth, safe, and successful conduct of the Shri Amarnathji Yatra (SANJY)-2026, scheduled to commence on July 3, 2026.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary undertook a detailed review

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## CS assesses the impact & implementation of PMIS in J&K

HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 16:** Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo today convened a meeting to assess the implementation status of the Prime Minister's Internship Scheme (PMIS) in Jammu

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## J&K drops CUET for UG admissions in 2026-27

HT News Network / KNO

**SRINAGAR, APR 16:** Higher Education Department Thursday decided to discontinue Common University Entrance Test (CUET) based admission for

Undergraduate (UG) admissions for the academic session 2026-27 in all Government Degree Colleges (GDCs) of J&K.

The department further decided to revert to a merit-based system on Class 12 scores.

In the previous academic session, the department had exempted 64 Government Degree Colleges from making admissions through CUET score

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جموں و کشمیر

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**CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....**

**No Bias in....**

He made it clear that the proportion of Lok Sabha seats allotted to each state would remain intact, even as the total strength of the House is proposed to be increased to 815. "There will be no change in that proportion, and any increase will also follow the same ratio," he said.

Asserting that women's reservation in legislatures is their rightful entitlement, Modi cautioned political parties against opposing the move, saying women voters would judge both decisions and intent. He noted that those who resisted similar reforms in the past had faced consequences.

In a conciliatory gesture, the Prime Minister said the government was not keen on claiming credit for the implementation of the women's quota law in 2029 and was willing to let the opposition take the lead. "We do not want credit. If the intention is clear, there is no need to play with words," he said.

Urging members to rise above political considerations, Modi described the reform as a matter of national importance and said women across the country and the world were closely watching the proceedings.

The House on Thursday took up the bills for discussion and passage, with the proposed framework envisaging 33 per cent reservation for women—272 seats—in an expanded Lok Sabha of 815 members.

**No State, Be....**

who oppose this reform will not be forgiven by the women of the country.

Intervening the debate in Lok Sabha on the three bills introduced for amendment of the women's quota law and to set up a delimitation commission, Modi also made it clear that the proportion of Lok Sabha seats in any state will not come down as a result of the delimitation exercise.

"There will be no change in that proportion (of Lok Sabha seats) either, and the increase will also be in the same proportion," he said.

The prime minister said no one should remain under the illusion that they are giving something to the women of this country as reservation in legislatures is their right.

He said if any political party opposes the women quota law, it is quite natural that he (Modi) would be politically benefited. "If you oppose it, it is natural that I will gain political benefit, but if you walk along, no one will gain any political advantage," he said.

Modi said the ruling dispensation does not want credit for implementation of the women reservation law in 2029 and offered to give credit to the opposition.

"We don't want credit. If you want me to use the word 'guarantee', I use the word 'guarantee'. If you want me to make a promise, I use the word 'promise'. Because if the intention is clear, there is no need to play games with words," he said.

Allaying fear of some states over the delimitation exercise, particularly those from the southern and eastern regions, the prime minister said no state will be discriminated against under the move.

"I want to say from this House today with a great sense of responsibility that whether it is the south, the north, the east, the west, small states or big states, this decision making process will not discriminate against any state or do injustice to anyone," he said.

Modi said those who had opposed in giving this right to women in the past have not been forgiven by the women of this country, they have faced the consequences.

"Today, I have come to appeal to you that do not weigh this on political scales. This is a decision in the national interest. The women across the country and the world are watching us, will see our decisions. But more than the decision itself, they will judge our intent. If there is any flaw in our intent, the women of this country will never forgive," he said.

The prime minister said when the Parliament was discussing the women reservation legislation in 2023, people were saying, "hurry up". "But it couldn't happen in 2024, because it can't be done in such a short time. Now in 2029, we have time. If we don't do it even in 2029, we can imagine what the situation will be like. The demand of the time is that we should not delay any further now," he said.

Lok Sabha on Thursday took up the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, and the Delimitation Bill, 2026, for debate and passage.

According to the proposal, the strength of Lok Sabha will be increased to 815, of which 272 seats will be reserved for women—a total of 33 per cent. (Agencies)

**Women Farmers....**

inclusive loan products for landless women to access credit in their own names. He also stressed the need for technology innovators to develop tools tailored specifically to their requirements.

Advocating a women-led development model in Jammu and Kashmir, the Lieutenant Governor said the progress made in women empowerment since 2020 has set a national benchmark, adding that empowered women farmers are central to building climate-resilient and sustainable agricultural ecosystems through better seeds, digital integration and cooperative market linkages.

He said lakhs of women farmers have been brought under various schemes across agriculture and allied sectors, including horticulture, dairy, fisheries and natural farming, while urging unregistered women to enrol in government programmes to benefit from institutional support.

Calling for strengthened infrastructure, Sinha urged IFFCO to establish farmers' training and service centres, introduce mobile soil testing facilities and set up a sheep production unit in the Union Territory.

The Lieutenant Governor also announced that a mass movement for a drug-free Jammu and Kashmir will be launched in the Kashmir division from Srinagar on May 3, 2026, and appealed to women, youth and all sections of society to actively participate in eliminat-

ing the menace.

He felicitated women agri-entrepreneurs and interacted with participants, while senior officials, public representatives and members of women self-help groups attended the conference.

**No Religion....**

consider any such demand. His remarks came after Samajwadi Party leaders, including Akhilesh Yadav and Dharmendra Yadav, argued in favour of extending reservation benefits to Muslims, particularly women.

"The question of providing reservation to Muslim women on the basis of religion does not even arise. Our Constitution does not allow it," Shah said, in a combative response to the opposition.

The Home Minister also announced that a caste census would be carried out alongside the upcoming population enumeration, stating that the government had already taken a decision on the matter. He noted that the ongoing house listing phase of the census does not capture caste data but assured that provisions would be made during the population count.

The Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, had earlier approved the inclusion of caste enumeration in the next census, marking a significant policy shift as caste data has not been collected in national censuses since Independence.

Taking a swipe at the Samajwadi Party, Shah said it was free to allocate tickets to Muslim women if it wished, adding that his party had no objection to such a move.

The Lok Sabha on Thursday took up for discussion the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, and the Delimitation Bill, 2026. The proposals include increasing the strength of the House to 815 members, with 272 seats reserved for women, ensuring 33 per cent representation.

**Revenue Cadre....**

proposed to be filled entirely through promotion, subject to a minimum of five years' service.

For Girdawar/Saddar Qanungo, 100 per cent direct recruitment has been proposed, with graduation as the minimum qualification. Selected candidates will be required to qualify an examination in computer applications, revenue laws and GIS conducted by the Revenue Training Institute during probation.

Other posts, including Section Officer, Senior Scale Stenographer and Geo Spatial Specialist, are proposed to be filled entirely through promotion from feeder cadres.

Officials said the restructuring reflects the replacement of obsolete posts and the increasing use of information technology in revenue administration.

The Revenue Department has invited objections and suggestions from stakeholders within 15 days, asking the public to submit feedback via email.

**Sewage Curbs....**

Plants and treated in accordance with norms set by the Central Pollution Control Board.

Qadri said six Sewage Treatment Plants are currently operational in the Dal Lake area, including five under LCMA and one managed by the Urban Environmental Engineering Department. He maintained that even treated discharge complies with prescribed environmental standards.

While highlighting progress in sewage management, he cautioned that maintaining the health of Dal Lake requires continuous and sustained intervention. Authorities are using mechanical means to remove lily pads in open waters, while manual de-weeding is being undertaken in narrow channels where machines cannot operate.

He said a system for regular collection of solid waste from the lake surface is also in place to prevent accumulation and protect water quality.

On the issue of encroachment, Qadri said there are currently no active violations, with enforcement teams responding promptly to any complaints to prevent illegal activity.

Referring to the surge in tourist inflow, particularly during the Tulip Garden season, he said the increase in movement of houseboats and motorboats has boosted the local economy but also poses regulatory challenges. "The challenge is to ensure that tourism growth does not translate into ecological stress," he said.

Qadri added that communities residing within the lake are being involved in conservation efforts through outreach programmes, while legal safeguards, including a 200-meter buffer zone under court directions, are being enforced to regulate construction and protect the fragile ecosystem.

Describing Dal Lake as a heritage asset, he said its future hinges on responsible use and sustained conservation efforts. (KNS)

**CAG Warns....**

activities. Despite issuance of notices, authorities were unable to ensure eviction of encroachers," it said.

The report noted that in the absence of a comprehensive conservation and management programme, significant changes in land use have occurred, resulting in deterioration of the lake's health.

The CAG observed that the failure to identify point and non-point sources of pollution, absence of measures to prevent silt inflow, lack of dredging and construction of a flood spill channel through the lake area contributed to a decline in open water area.

Highlighting land-use changes between 2014 and 2020, the report recorded a seven per cent decrease in open water area, while scrub area (transitional habitat along the shoreline) increased by over 1,100 per cent and aquatic vegetation by 42 per cent, largely attributed to anthropogenic pressures and inflow of untreated sewage.

"Between 2014 and 2020, the open water area decreased by seven per cent, while scrub area increased by 1,157 per cent, siltation by 104 per cent, river area by 103 per cent, built-up area by 102 per cent and aquatic vegetation by 42 per cent," it added, attributing it again to anthropogenic pressure, as well as inadequate

conservation efforts.

The CAG observed that no comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan had been prepared for the lake. "Instead, the Wildlife Protection Department relied on annual plans which failed to address core issues such as changes in hydrological regimes, pollution and loss of biodiversity," it said.

Analysis of satellite imagery and Google Earth Pro data from 2005 to 2022 revealed a substantial increase in built-up areas in the lake's catchments, including Haji Bagh, Soibug and HMT (Zainakot), which lack sewage treatment facilities. "The lake continues to receive inflows from these areas, aggravating pollution levels," the report said.

It also highlighted inefficiencies in flood management infrastructure. "The flood spill channel at Padshahi Bagh, designed to carry 17,000 cusecs of water, has seen its capacity reduced to 6,000 cusecs due to siltation and accumulation of debris." While Rs 46.29 crore was spent between 2018 and 2022 on channel construction, dredging and slope protection, key components such as hydraulic gates, silt retention basins and sewage treatment plants were not executed, affecting water regulation and quality.

Responding to the audit, the forest department said a policy to maintain the ecological character of wetlands was under consideration and efforts were underway to remove unwanted vegetation and retrieve built-up areas.

Research studies cited in the report also indicated disappearance of native aquatic species and invasion of non-native plants, along with declining dissolved oxygen levels due to nutrient loading, it said.

The CAG, meanwhile, has recommended urgent identification and treatment of pollution sources, scientific dredging to restore open water area and comprehensive survey and demarcation to prevent further encroachments and reclaim the affected 2,528.10 kanals of lake area.

The audit pointed out deficiencies in key conservation activities such as weeding and dredging. "Expenditure on these works lacked scientific basis, with no vegetation mapping, bathymetric surveys or impact assessments conducted," the CAG report said.

It also flagged gaps in flood management works under the Comprehensive Flood Management Programme, noting that critical components such as hydraulic gates, silt retention basins and sewage treatment plants were not executed, affecting regulation of water flow and quality.

Recommending urgent corrective measures, the audit called for identification and treatment of pollution sources, scientific dredging to restore open water area and comprehensive survey and demarcation to prevent further encroachment.

It also stressed the need for a holistic conservation plan addressing hydrology, biodiversity and pollution to safeguard the wetland's ecological balance and livelihood value.

The Hokersar lake is located in Srinagar and Budgam districts and is fed by the Doodhganga stream in the east and Sukhnag Nallah in the west.

The lake was notified in July 1945 and later declared a Conservation Reserve under the Jammu and Kashmir Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1978. (AGENCIES)

**India, Austria....**

According to officials, India and Austria agreed to enhance cooperation on counter-terrorism, including efforts to curb terror financing, prevent misuse of emerging technologies, and check recruitment by extremist groups.

A Letter of Intent was signed to establish a joint working group on counter-terrorism, aimed at facilitating information sharing, capacity building and coordination in multilateral forums, particularly in the context of India's engagement with the European Union.

Both sides reiterated their commitment to disrupting financial channels linked to terrorism and strengthening mechanisms under global frameworks such as the United Nations and the Financial Action Task Force.

The visit also saw the conclusion of 15 agreements and outcomes across sectors including defence, trade, innovation and skills development.

Among the key initiatives, the two countries agreed to set up a fast-track mechanism to address concerns of businesses and boost investment flows. An agreement on audiovisual co-production was also signed to promote collaboration between the film industries of India and Austria.

Officials said the discussions also touched upon broader economic cooperation, with both sides noting the potential of the India-European Union free trade agreement to expand trade and investment opportunities. The engagements, they added, are expected to strengthen bilateral ties and deepen cooperation across strategic and economic sectors—(KNO)

**CS reviews....**

of the preparedness across all sectors, with a particular focus on ensuring the safe and seamless movement of pilgrims along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, as well as the two primary routes to the holy cave via Baltal and Chandanwari. Emphasizing the anticipated increase in pilgrim footfall this year, he directed all concerned departments to augment infrastructure and services accordingly.

Dr. Mandeep K. Bhandari, Principal Secretary to the Lieutenant Governor and Chief Executive Officer, SASB, delivered a comprehensive presentation outlining key aspects of SANJY-2026. These included registration processes, service provider arrangements, establishment of Yatra camps, langar services, and provisioning of essential facilities.

It was informed that registration for the Yatra commenced on April 15, 2026, through both offline (bank branches) and online modes, with 19,402 pilgrims registering on the very first day. The Pratham Puja is scheduled to take place on June 29, 2026.

The Chief Secretary directed the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) to ensure timely snow clearance on all Yatra tracks by May 15, 2026. He also emphasized the need for proper road maintenance, installation of signages and crash barriers, slope stabilization, bridge

maintenance, and restoration of shelter sheds along the Yatra routes.

The Public Works Department (PWD) was instructed to complete macadamization of roads around base camps and undertake necessary repairs of helipads at Neelgrath, Baltal, and Pahalgam.

The Department of Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation & Reconstruction (DMRR&R) was tasked with identifying and demarcating flood- and disaster-prone areas to prevent the installation of facilities in vulnerable zones. Additionally, it was directed to ensure early debris clearance of nallahs near the holy cave and operationalize the Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) in Srinagar by June 10, 2026.

The Department of Rural Sanitation was asked to ensure high standards of sanitation before, during, and after the Yatra, particularly along both routes during the 57-day pilgrimage period. Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and Development Authorities at Pahalgam and Sonamarg were directed to implement scientific waste disposal systems.

The Labour Department and Animal and Sheep Husbandry Department, in coordination with the concerned district administrations were instructed to ensure registration of all service providers and ponies in collaboration with district administrations of Anantnag and Ganderbal. Deputy Commissioners were directed to implement a digital prepaid system and notify standardized service rates for the convenience of pilgrims and service providers.

The Jal Shakti Department and Power Development Department were tasked with ensuring adequate water supply and uninterrupted power through necessary pipeline and cable networks, along with installation of RO filters and backup generators and illumination of tracks and base camps too.

The Health Department was directed to operationalize 100-bedded hospitals at Chandanwari and Baltal by June 20, 2026, and ensure deployment of sufficient medical and paramedical staff, along with critical care ambulances at all base camps and along both routes.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) will provide Doppler-based weather forecasting services and install LED display screens at base camps for real-time updates. Telecom service providers have been directed to ensure robust mobile and internet connectivity along the Yatra routes by May 15, 2026.

The Food & Civil Supplies Department will enhance the quota of essential commodities such as ration, LPG, and kerosene and ensure their uninterrupted availability throughout the Yatra.

The Chief Secretary also directed the Information Department to install an adequate number of public address systems, hoardings, and banners at Yatra camps, lodgement centres, and key locations along the route to facilitate dissemination of information to pilgrims.

The Fire & Emergency Services Department was instructed to deploy sufficient firefighting equipment at all camps, lodgement centres, langar sites, tents, and commercial establishments, and to conduct fire safety audits well in advance. Training and capacity building of service providers and langar operators were also emphasized to enable them to act as first responders during emergencies.

The Chief Secretary reiterated the importance of coordinated efforts among all departments and directed officials to ensure that all arrangements are put in place well ahead of time. He stressed that the overarching objective is to provide pilgrims with a safe, comfortable, and spiritually fulfilling journey, ensuring the successful and smooth conduct of SANJY-2026.

**CS assesses....**

and Kashmir and outlined a comprehensive strategy to enhance its outreach and impact across the Union Territory.

Those who attended this meeting includes Commissioner Secretary, School Education Department; Secretary, Employment and Skill Development Departments; MD, Skill Development Mission along with other concerned officers. Director, PMIS in Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Gol attended the meeting through video link.

The Chief Secretary underscored the importance of the scheme in improving youth employability by providing structured internship opportunities in reputed companies. He noted that PMIS, launched under the Union Budget 2024-25, offers internships of 6 to 9 months with a monthly stipend of Rs. 9,000 and an additional one-time grant of Rs. 6,000, thereby enabling young individuals to gain valuable industry exposure.

Reviewing the progress, it was informed that Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed encouraging response in terms of registrations, with over 4,400 youth registered on the portal and more than 2,800 profiles completed so far. However, only 68 internship opportunities are currently available in the UT, despite J&K ranking among the top states in registrations.

The Chief Secretary took this occasion to impress upon the concerned to bridge the gap between registrations and available opportunities, he also emphasized the need for aggressive industry engagement with the active role of the Ministry in doing the same for J&K. He observed that increasing participation of companies is crucial to ensuring that the registered youth are meaningfully absorbed under the scheme.

The Chief Secretary directed the department to significantly scale up registration efforts and set an ambitious target of achieving at least 2 lakh registrations from across the districts of Jammu and Kashmir. He emphasized that this can be

achieved through a mission-mode approach involving educational institutions, employment centres, and grassroots-level outreach mechanisms.

Highlighting the constraints posed by the limited presence of large corporate houses in the UT, he stressed the need to scale up internship opportunities manifold for the youth across the States/UTs of the country. He called for proactive engagement with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs to enhance the number of internship opportunities to at least 1,000 in the coming days, so as to bridge the existing gap between demand and availability.

The Chief Secretary directed that PMIS registration be integrated with institutional mechanisms, including ITIs, polytechnics, and colleges, to ensure maximum coverage of eligible youth. He also called for active involvement of District Employment & Counselling Centres, Common Service Centres, and placement cells in facilitating registrations.

The Secretary, SDD, Kumar Rajeev Ranjan apprised the meeting of a 100-day road map aimed at significantly scaling up registrations and improving outcomes. The plan targets 20,000 registrations in the initial phase, with a structured approach involving campus drives, establishment of help desks, mass awareness campaigns, and deployment of mobile registration units in remote areas.

A key focus of the strategy, he revealed, pivots on the convergence with Mission YUVA to leverage its extensive youth database and grassroots network. He further divulged that over 4.73 lakh "willing to work" youth have already been identified under Mission YUVA, and around 2,000 YUVA Doots will be mobilized to carry out door-to-door awareness and registration drives across all districts.

Stressing the need for effective monitoring, he instructed departments to conduct regular reviews and ensure real-time tracking of progress through digital platforms. He further directed that bottlenecks, if any, be promptly escalated for timely resolution.

Highlighting the transformative potential of the scheme, the Chief Secretary said that PMIS can play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between education and employment and in preparing the youth of Jammu and Kashmir for the demands of the modern job market.

**J&K drops....**

for academic session 2024-25 in wake of low CUET based admissions in many degree colleges of Jammu and Kashmir.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Higher Education Department in a fresh notice said, "All undergraduate admissions for the session 2026-27 across all GDCs in J&K shall be granted on Non-CUET basis as per 10+2 scores and merit."

It also said that all students shall be required to register and apply through a centralised admission portal. "The allotment of colleges shall be made on the basis of 10+2 merit and the preferences submitted by the candidates."

The department further said that the information is being issued in advance to enable students and parents to prepare for the upcoming admission cycle. "Students are advised to note the following important changes and updates for the session 2026-27."

As already reported by KNO, that there are 'no takers' of the government colleges of J&K that are facing dismal student enrolment.

Till the March-2026, the government had informed that GDC Baghi Dilawar Khan and GDC Chattisinghpura have no active student enrolment, as the previous enrolment levels were not adequate to sustain a viable academic environment and the institutions have not attracted sufficient student admissions," the government said. It also said "GDC Chattisinghpura and GDC Baghi Dilawar Khan are presently placed under the charge of Government Degree College, Anantnag and S.P College, Srinagar, respectively, for administrative oversight."

The Higher Education Department had also informed the house that less than 30 students were enrolled in each of the 13 colleges of Jammu and Kashmir.

The government figures also said that at least five colleges of Jammu and Kashmir were functioning with an enrolment of less than twenty students in 2025 and eight colleges were functioning with less than 30 students respectively.

The figures further reveal that in 14 colleges in Jammu and Kashmir, fewer than 50 students were enrolled in each college. Furthermore, 24 government colleges were having less than 100 students enrolled in each college.

The government figures also reveal that in 13 colleges of Jammu and Kashmir, only 100-300 students were enrolled in each college.

Pertinently, in April-2025, KNO reported that in wake of low CUET based admissions in many degree colleges of Jammu and Kashmir, Higher Education Department had exempted 64 Government Degree Colleges from making admissions through CUET score for academic session 2024-25. The department had further said that many other students did not prefer to seek admission through the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) mode keeping in view their geographical locations, topography and availability of the infrastructure.

The government in the respective communique had said that among the colleges that have been exempted from making admissions through CUET score for academic session 2024-25 includes 35 government colleges of Jammu division and 29 of Kashmir region respectively.



## Javid Dar reviews functioning of education department in Baramulla

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**BARAMULLA, APR 16:** Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar, today chaired a comprehensive review meeting to assess the functioning and key challenges facing the Education Department in district Baramulla and Rafiabad.

The meeting was attended by the Director School Education Kashmir, Chief Education Officer (CEO) Baramulla, District Education Planning Officer (DEPO) Baramulla and Zonal Education Officers (ZEOs). They presented a detailed overview of the current status of educational institutions,



infrastructure, staffing and ongoing developmental initiatives in the district.

During the meeting, the Minister emphasized the need for strengthening the education system through effective planning,

better coordination among the stakeholder departments and timely resolution of issues. He directed the concerned officers to ensure quality education, optimal utilization of resources and enhanced monitoring mecha-

nisms to achieve the desired outcomes.

Javid Dar stressed the importance of providing a conducive learning environment in schools, addressing infrastructure gaps, ensuring availability of teaching

staff and promoting student enrolment and retention, particularly in rural and far-flung areas.

He also called for adopting innovative teaching methods and leveraging technology to improve the learning outcomes. He asked the officers to work with dedication and accountability to ensure that the government schools deliver quality education comparable to the best standards.

The officers apprised the Minister of various challenges facing the sector and sought necessary support for their resolution.

The Minister assured that all their genuine issues will be addressed on priority to further strengthen the education system in the district.

## Awareness programme on Anti-Ragging Laws held at GDC Ganderbal

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR, APR 16:** The District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), in collaboration with Government Degree College (GDC) Ganderbal, successfully organized an awareness programme on Anti-Ragging Laws and Complaint Mechanisms on 16 April 2026 in the college conference hall.

The programme was moderated by Dr. Jamsheeda Akhter, Head of the Department of Urdu and NSS Programme Officer, who ensured the smooth flow of the session. Prof Fouzia Fatima, principal of the college, in her address, emphasized the importance of maintaining discipline, fostering mutual respect, and creating a safe and inclusive academic environ-



ment. She encouraged students to uphold ethical values and contribute positively to campus life.

The resource persons for the programme, Asima Khalis and Shaheena Ali, serving as Assistant Legal Aid Defence Counsels, delivered detailed and insightful lectures on various aspects of anti-ragging laws. They highlighted the legal framework governing ragging, the rights and responsibilities of students, and the institutional and legal mechanisms available for filing complaints and seeking redressal. Their sessions were informative, interactive, and well-received, with students actively engaging in discussions and gaining a clearer understanding of the subject.

Dr. Ravinder Kour, Convenor of the Discipline Committee and Head of the Department of Physical Education and Sports, played a significant role in the seamless execution of the programme. She also delivered the formal vote of thanks, expressing sincere gratitude to the resource persons for their valuable contributions, the organizing bodies for their support, and the students for their enthusiastic participation.

The programme was jointly coordinated by Dr. Jamsheeda Akhter and Dr. Ravinder Kour, whose dedicated efforts ensured its successful organization. The event served as an important initiative in sensitizing students about the legal and ethical implications of ragging, while reinforcing the commitment of the institution towards maintaining a safe, respectful, and disciplined campus environment.

## Secretary Election Held Successfully at PM Shri Govt Boys High School Mandigam

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**KUPWARA, APR 16:** The election for the post of Secretary at PM Shri Govt Boys High School Mandigam was conducted with great enthusiasm, discipline, and a strong sense of responsibility. The main objective of the election was to promote leadership qualities, democratic values, and active participation among students.

Three candidates contested for the post: Muntazir Hassan, Junaid Mohiudin, and Moomin Ahmad. The election process witnessed impressive participation, with students casting their votes in a peaceful,



orderly, and disciplined manner.

The polling was conducted smoothly, and a total of 137 votes were cast, reflecting the students' keen interest in democratic practices.

After the completion of polling, the votes were counted carefully and transparently. The results were declared as follows:

Junaid Mohiudin secured 54 votes  
Muntazir Hassan secured 47 votes  
Moomin Ahmad secured 35 votes  
Rejected Votes: 1

Based on these results, Junaid Mohiudin was declared elected as Secretary, having secured the highest number of votes. Muntazir Hassan, as the runner-up, was appointed as Deputy Secretary.

The entire election process was conducted under the chairmanship of Headmistress Mir Mahmooda Ji, whose guidance and supervision ensured fairness, transparency, and discipline throughout the event.

The successful conduct of the election reflects the spirit of democracy, cooperation, and unity among the students. Such activities play a vital role in developing leadership skills, confidence, and a sense of responsibility among young learners.

If you want, I can shorten this for Facebook or make it more formal for a newspaper submission.

## Ayesha Ali Academy Achieves 100% Pass Rate in Class 10th Exams in Kulgam

■ FAROOQ RATHER

**KULGAM, APR 16:** Ayesha Ali Academy, Kanipora, has recorded an outstanding performance in the Class 10 examinations this year, achieving a remarkable 100 percent pass rate and reinforcing its reputation as a center of academic excellence in the region.

According to official details, a total of 52 students appeared in the examination, and all of them successfully qualified, marking a significant milestone for the institution. The achievement reflects the school's consistent focus on quality education, disciplined academic environment, and the collective dedication of both students and faculty members.

The management of the academy expressed immense satisfaction over the results and commended the teaching staff for their tireless efforts, commitment, and effective mentor-



ing, which played a crucial role in shaping the students' success. They stated that such achievements are the result of a well-coordinated approach between teachers, students, and parents. A special note of appreciation was extended to the Headmaster of the Middle and High School, Mr. Javid Ahmad Bhat, along with his team, for their continuous guidance,

leadership, and support, which significantly contributed to the exceptional performance of the students. The institution reiterated its commitment to maintaining high academic standards and striving for even greater accomplishments in the coming years, while continuing to provide a nurturing environment for holistic student development.

## Book Launch Ceremony of Poetry Collections by Ashraf Adil and Dr. Ahmad Manzoor Held at Tagore Hall

Prominent Writers, Poets, and Scholars Attend Literary Event

■ JAMEEL ANSARI

**SRINAGAR, APR 16:** A dignified literary event was organised at the Conference Hall of Tagore Hall under the auspices of the Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, where the poetry collections of noted writers and poets Ashraf Adil and Dr. Ahmad Manzoor were formally released.

The event was presided over by eminent writer and intellectual Ayaz Rasool Nazki, while renowned poet Nazir Azad graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. The dais was also shared by Editor Urdu of the Cultural Academy, Mohammad Saleem Salik, along with the authors Ashraf Adil and Dr. Ahmad Manzoor.

On the occasion, two significant poetry collections "Jahan-e-Lashaoor" by Ashraf Adil and "Barg-e-Sukoot" by Dr. Ahmad Manzoor, were officially unveiled. At the outset, Mohammad Sal-



eem Salik, in his welcome address, emphasized that literature forms the intellectual foundation of any civilized society, and poetry serves as a powerful medium for expressing human emotions and

experiences. He added that the Cultural Academy remains committed to the promotion of language and literature, and such events are an important part of that mission.

Dr. Kausar Rasool presented a detailed paper on "Jahan-e-Lashaoor", describing it as a reflection of deep intellectual insight and inner consciousness. Meanwhile, Mushtaq Haider, speaking on "Barg-e-Sukoot", highlighted its effective portrayal of contemporary sensibilities and human emotions.

In his presidential address, Ayaz Rasool Nazki remarked that poetry mirrors human consciousness and emotions, and both collections presented on the occasion vividly reflect the intellectual and emotional landscape of our times. He noted that such literary gatherings play a vital role in fostering intellectual awareness in society.

Chief Guest Nazir Azad, in his address, stated that literature particularly poetry serves as a meaningful bridge connecting individuals with themselves and society. He appreciated both works as significant literary con-

tributions that open new avenues of thought and feeling for readers.

Author Ashraf Adil shared that his collection "Jahan-e-Lashaoor" reflects his inner experiences and observations, while Dr. Ahmad Manzoor stated that "Barg-e-Sukoot" embodies his emotions and life experiences expressed through poetry. Shabir Ahmad Shabir also spoke on the occasion, sharing his views about the event.

The second session of the program featured a Mushaira (poetic symposium), presided over by Rukhsana Jabeen, with Shabir Ahmad Shabir and Hasan Anzar on the dais. More than a dozen poets recited their verses, earning appreciation from the audience.

The proceedings were conducted by Mohammad Iqbal Lone, Research Assistant, Urdu of the Cultural Academy. The event witnessed participation from a large number of writers, poets, and scholars from different parts of the region.

## Kulgam Police Intensify Anti-Drug Checks Under Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan

■ FAROOQ RATHER

**KULGAM, APR 16:** In a continued effort to curb drug abuse, Kulgam Police on Thursday intensified checking and inspection drives across key locations in the district under the ongoing 100-day campaign of Nasha

Mukht Bharat Abhiyan.

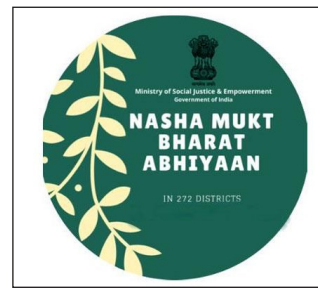
Acting on the directions of the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Kulgam Anayat Ali Choudhary (IPS) special checking operations were carried out in sensitive areas, particularly around Government Degree College Kulgam and medical shops operating

within the premises of District Hospital Kulgam.

The drive aimed at ensuring strict compliance with regulations and preventing the misuse and illegal sale of drugs and narcotic substances. During the inspections, police teams closely monitored pharmacies and

surrounding areas to detect any irregularities or violations.

The operation was led by SHO Kulgam Kushab Michael, along with other police personnel, who conducted thorough checks and interacted with shopkeepers to sensitize them about legal



provisions and responsibilities.

Kulgam Police reiterated its firm commitment to combating the growing menace of drug abuse and maintaining law and order in the district. Officials emphasized that such drives will continue in the coming days as part of a

sustained campaign.

The police also appealed to the general public, particularly the youth, to cooperate with authorities and play an active role in eliminating drug abuse from society, stressing that collective efforts are essential to build a drug-free and healthy community.

# Book "Sreh Te Veh" by Fiction Writer Bashir Ahmad Dangroo Released at Tagore Hall

- Literary events are vital for awakening social consciousness: Former Justice Rashid Ali
- Cultural Academy actively promoting literature and culture: Dr. Rafiq Masoodi

■ JAMEL ANSARI

**SRINAGAR, APR 16:** A dignified literary function was organized today at the Conference Hall of Tagore Hall, Srinagar, under the auspices of the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages. On the occasion, the book "Sreh Te Veh" by noted actor and fiction writer Bashir Ahmad Dangroo was formally released.

The event commenced with a welcome address by Cultural Academy Officer Dr. Syed Iftikhar Ahmad, who highlighted that such literary gatherings reflect our rich cultural and civilizational traditions. He stated that the Cultural Academy has always strived to provide a platform for writers to showcase their creative talents.

The function was presided over by former Justice Rashid Ali. Other dignitaries present on the dais included former Secretary of the Cultural Academy, poet and

translator Dr. Rafiq Masoodi, Dr. Shugufta Rathar, and the author Bashir Ahmad Dangroo.

A paper on the short story collection, written by Dr. Sohan Kaul, was presented in audio format for the audience.

In his presidential address, Justice Rashid Ali emphasized that literary events are a hallmark of a civilized society. He noted that such intellectual gatherings not only promote literature but also play a crucial role in guiding the younger generation towards constructive and positive activities. He added that writers and poets are the pulse of society, reflecting social issues through their works.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Rafiq Masoodi stated that the Jammu and Kashmir Cultural Academy has consistently worked towards the preservation and promotion of literature, language, and culture. He remarked that



such events not only encourage writers but also contribute to intellectual awakening in society. Dr. Shugufta Rathar, while

sharing her views, expressed her deep emotional connection with the Kashmiri language. She said that she belongs to a region that

has produced great poets and Sufi saints like Sheikh-ul-Alam (RA) and Abdul Ahad Azad. Their teachings, thought, and poetry have enriched Kashmiri literature and strengthened her own bond with the language.

The author, Bashir Ahmad Dangroo, expressed his gratitude to the Cultural Academy for organizing the event. He said he felt honored that his book was released on such a prestigious literary platform. He added that the book is the outcome of his long experience, observations, and hard work, and expressed hope that readers would appreciate it. Rahim Rahbar, Mushtaq Ali Ahmad Khan, and Abdul Rashid Hanjura also shared their views during the event.

The vote of thanks was presented by Cultural Academy Officer Dr. Shabnam Rafiq.

The event was attended by prominent writers, poets, and members of the literary community

## Sakeena Itoo expresses grief over death of college student in tragic Udhampur road accident

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR, APRIL 16:** Minister for Education, Social Welfare, Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo today expressed profound grief and sorrow over the tragic demise of Anjali Choudhary, a 4th semester student of Government College for Women, Gandhi Nagar Jammu, who lost her life in a road accident near Udhampur this morning.

The unfortunate incident occurred when the student was travelling along with fellow students on a picnic to Patnitop.

Expressing her heartfelt condolences, the



Minister said she was deeply saddened by the untimely loss of the young student, describing the incident as heart-breaking and tragic.

"I am deeply saddened to learn about the tragic demise of Anjali Choudhary, a bright young student of Government College for Women, Gandhi Nagar Jammu, who lost her life in an unfortunate road accident near Udhampur while travelling with fellow students to Patnitop," the Minister said.

Sakeena Itoo conveyed her sympathies to the bereaved family, friends and the entire college fraternity during this difficult time.

The Minister also directed the concerned authorities to extend all possible assistance and support to the grieving family.

"My heartfelt condolences are with her family, friends and the entire college fraternity. I have directed the concerned authorities to provide all necessary assistance to the bereaved family. May the departed soul rest in eternal peace," she added.

## DC Shopian reviews progress under PM Surya Ghar, RDSS

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**SHOPIAN, APRIL 16:** Deputy Commissioner Shopian, Shishir Gupta today chaired a comprehensive review meeting at the Mini Secretariat to assess the progress of key power sector initiatives, including PM Surya Ghar (Rooftop Solar Scheme) and the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS) in the district.

During the meeting, the DC conducted a detailed review of ongoing works and sought inputs from officers of KPDC, executing agencies, and other stakeholders.

Emphasis was laid on achieving set targets within stipulated timelines and addressing gaps requiring immediate intervention.

Highlighting the importance of mass participation, the DC directed all concerned officers, particularly Assistant Engineers (AEs) and Junior Engineers (JEs)



from various blocks, to significantly increase registrations on the PM Surya Ghar portal.

They were instructed to ensure submission of daily progress figures and work towards covering the entire eligible population of the district.

The DC stressed the need to accelerate rooftop solar installations and called for intensified field level efforts to enhance adoption.

He further directed that all inspections related to solar installations be completed within one week to avoid delays in execution.

While reviewing RDSS components, the DC underscored the importance of strengthening power distribution infrastructure for improved service delivery.

Issues related to smart metering were discussed in detail, and concerned were directed to resolve technical and operational bottlenecks promptly, ensuring smooth installation and functionality of smart meters.

The DC also emphasized addressing consumer-related concerns, including billing issues and service grievances, in a time bound manner.

Grievances raised by vendors and executing agencies were also discussed. The DC assured necessary support and directed departments to facilitate smooth coordination and remove procedural hurdles impacting progress.

To enhance awareness and public participation, the DC called for intensified publicity campaigns highlighting the benefits of PM Surya Ghar and RDSS.

He stressed the need to document and promote success stories to encourage wider adoption across the district and further instructed that periodic progress reports be submitted for continuous monitoring and review.

The meeting was attended by Sub Divisional Magistrate Zainapora, Bilal Ahamd, Executive Engineers of KPDC, R&B, LDM Shopian, senior officers, AEs, JEs, representatives of executing agencies, vendors etc.

## DC Bandipora reviews progress of Panchayat Electoral Roll Revision; Stresses Transparency, Saturation

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**BANDIPORA, APRIL 16:** Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, on Thursday chaired a meeting at Mini Secretariat Bandipora to review the progress of the Summary Revision of Panchayat Electoral Rolls 2026. During the meeting, it was informed that the revision process is being carried out across 1133 polling stations in the district. The DC took a detailed review of the progress achieved so far and emphasized the need for ensuring transparency and saturation in the electoral roll updation process.

The EROs/AEROs informed that the draft electoral rolls had already been published at Panchayats on 27-03-2026 for inspection by the general public and for inviting claims and objections.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the Assistant Commissioner Panchayat (ACP) to share a detailed calendar regarding public announcement vehicles with the BDOs to strengthen



awareness and outreach at the grassroots level. She also directed the ACP to chair meetings focusing on door-to-door data capturing to improve coverage.

Expressing concern over poor penetration in certain areas, the DC stressed the need for intensified field-level engagement. She directed Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) to ensure proper identification and inclusion of vulnerable sections, particularly persons with disabilities and voters aged 85 years and above.

The DC further called for organizing dedicated meetings with Booth

Level Officers (BLOs) to streamline the process and enhance efficiency. She emphasized the importance of proactive public interaction, urging officers to listen to people's concerns and address grievances effectively to ensure maximum participation and accuracy in the electoral rolls.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Assistant Commissioner Panchayat, Deputy District Election Officer, Sub-Divisional Magistrate Sumbal, District Sheep Husbandry Officer, BDOs, District Informatics Officer, and other concerned officers.

## DIPR Cultural Unit organizes Anti-Drug Awareness Programme at GSS Balhama

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR, APRIL 16:** As part of the ongoing 100-Day 'Nasha Mukht Jammu and Kashmir' campaign launched by the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor J&K, and in line with the calendar of activities of District Administration Srinagar, the Cultural Unit Kashmir of the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) today organized an awareness programme titled "Say No to Drugs and Yes to Life" under the ongoing Nasha Mukht J&K Abhiyan at Girls Secondary School (GSS), Balhama.

The programme witnessed active participation of students and staff, aiming to sensitize young minds about the harmful effects of drug abuse and the importance of leading a healthy and responsible life.

Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD) Srinagar, Tariq Reshi; BDO Khonmoh, Muqsit Wani; and AECO Cultural Unit, Syed Shakeel Shan, addressed the gathering.

The speakers highlighted the serious physical, psychological, and social consequences of drug addiction and emphasized the



need for collective efforts to eradicate this menace from society. They urged students to stay away from drugs and become ambassadors of a drug-free society.

As part of the awareness initiative, the Cultural Unit presented a thematic folk song and a short play carrying strong anti-drug messages.

The Principal and staff of the school appreciated the initiative taken by DIPR, acknowledging its role in creating awareness and guiding youth towards a positive and healthy future.

## DC Budgam reviews progress of 100-Day Nasha Mukht Abhiyan in District

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**BUDGAM, APRIL 16:** Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan today chaired a comprehensive review meeting to assess the progress of the ongoing 100-day intensive Nasha Mukht Abhiyan in the district.

During the meeting, the DC took a detailed review of activities being carried out by various departments under the Nasha Mukht Abhiyan, emphasizing the need for sustained and coordinated efforts to eliminate drug abuse from society. He stressed that all stakeholders must work in close synergy to ensure the success of the initiative.

Threadbare discussions were held on awareness campaigns, community outreach programmes, and the role of educational institutions in sensitizing youth against the menace of drug abuse. The DC underscored the importance of involving local communities, youth groups, and

institutions in spreading awareness and promoting a drug-free environment.

He directed all officers to intensify IEC activities, ensure wider public participation, and regularly monitor progress at the grassroots level. Departments were also instructed to share daily updates of their activities to maintain momentum and visibility of the campaign.

The DC called for a collective and proactive approach to make Budgam a drug-free district.

The meeting was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Budgam, Joint Director Planning, all Sub-Divisional Magistrates (SDMs), Assistant Commissioner Police (ACP), Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Principals of all Degree Colleges, District Information Officer (DIO), District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO), Executive Officers (EOs) of all Municipal Committees and representatives from the School Education Department.

## DLSA Budgam conducts Awareness Programme on Rights of Prisoners

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**BUDGAM, APRIL 16:** As part of its calendar of activities, the District Legal Services Authority, Budgam (DLSA Budgam), under the aegis of the J&K Legal Services Authority and under the chairmanship of O. P. Bhagat, Chairman DLSA (Principal District & Sessions Judge), Budgam, successfully conducted an awareness programme at Central Jail Srinagar on Rights of Prisoners and Legal Aid to Prisoners.

The programme was organized with the objective of sensitizing inmates about their legal rights and the availability of free legal aid services, ensuring that they are aware of their entitlements under law and are able to access justice effectively.

During the programme, resource person, Lateef Ahmad Khan, Chief LADC spoke on the importance of legal aid to prisoners. He explained the procedures for availing

free legal services and highlighted the role of Legal Services Authorities in ensuring that no individual is denied justice due to lack of financial resources. He encouraged the inmates to approach legal aid counsel for assistance in their cases and assured them of timely and effective legal support.

Nazeer Ahmad Wagay, Deputy LADC, elaborated on key rights such as the right to life and dignity, right to free legal aid, right to fair and speedy trial, and right to humane treatment while in custody. He also underscored the importance of access to medical care, communication with family members and legal counsel, and protection against any form of torture or inhuman treatment.

The programme witnessed active participation from the inmates, who raised queries regarding their cases and legal remedies. These queries were addressed comprehensively by the panel of legal experts.

# Chief Secy reviews development of key tourism circuits to boost Tourism in Jammu

HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 16:** Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo today chaired a high-level meeting to review the progress of works and strategic initiatives undertaken by the Tourism Department for the promotion and holistic development of tourism across the Jammu region.

The meeting focused on assessing the implementation of various tourism development strategies aimed at strengthening diverse tourism circuits across districts and positioning Jammu as a vibrant, all-season tourism destination.

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretaries of Finance, Tourism, and Public Works Department (PWD), Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Managing Director JKTC, Director Tourism Jammu, and other senior officers.

Emphasising the immense untapped tourism potential of the region, the Chief Secretary directed the department to identify and prioritise high-impact works under the Capex budget. He specifically called for immediate interventions at key religious and heritage destinations such as Shivkhori, Katra, Uttarbehni, and Purmandal. He observed that even diverting a small percentage of pilgrims visiting Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine to these circuits could significantly boost tourist footfall and transform them into major attractions.

Highlighting the importance of border tourism, the Chief



Secretary stressed large-scale development at Suchetgarh, noting its growing popularity among visitors in recent years. He also underscored the need to explore and expand adventure tourism avenues at locations such as Aithem and the iconic Chenab Rail Bridge, suggesting that many such projects could be developed through Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models.

Further, he instructed the department to identify suitable land parcels around Patnitop for development under the "One State: One Global Destination" programme.

The Chief Secretary also reviewed ongoing promotional strategies and stressed the importance of timely completion of all infrastructure projects. He called for a comprehensive approach to convert the large influx

of pilgrims into multi-day tourists by encouraging them to explore leisure, heritage, adventure, and spiritual tourism offerings beyond traditional routes.

Detailed reviews were conducted for major pilgrimage circuits, including Katra-Shivkhori and Uttarbehni-Purmandal, as well as adventure circuits covering Aithem, Chenab Rail Bridge, Baradari (Reasi), and Ranjit Sagar Lake (Kathua). Progress on leisure tourism circuits such as Patnitop-Sanasar, Surinsar-Mansar, and Rajouri-Poonch was also assessed.

Additional Chief Secretary Finance, Shailendra Kumar, suggested measures to improve accessibility to tourist destinations, including upgradation of road infrastructure, development of essential amenities such as eateries and refreshment points, and

strengthening public transport connectivity. He also proposed the development of entertainment and amusement facilities within Jammu city to encourage longer tourist stays.

Additional Chief Secretary Tourism, Ashish Chandra Verma, presented a comprehensive overview of departmental initiatives, outlining a multi-pronged strategy focused on thematic tourism circuits, heritage experiences, adventure tourism, infrastructure augmentation, and promotion of offbeat destinations. These initiatives aim to enhance tourist footfall while encouraging extended stays through diversified and customised experiences.

Director Tourism Jammu, Dr. Vikas Gupta, provided detailed insights into the works executed and promotional efforts across

various circuits. He highlighted the integration of major religious and heritage sites within the Katra-Shivkhori circuit, including Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine, Shivkhori, Krimchi Temples, Raghunath Temple, and Ranbireswar Temple. He also briefed the meeting on ongoing projects and long-term development proposals for each destination.

The meeting was further apprised of key initiatives such as the development of an Adventure Hub and Food Village at Aithem, establishment of a rafting centre at Baradari, and proposed adventure activities including bungee jumping, ziplining, and paragliding at the Chenab Rail Bridge with support from professional agencies. Plans for water sports at Ranjit Sagar Lake and promotion of border tourism at Suchetgarh and Gharana were also discussed.

The Tourism Department highlighted its extensive promotional efforts over the past year, including Familiarisation (FAM) tours, enhanced digital and social media outreach, and the successful organisation of thematic events such as the Jammu Marathon, Winter Carnivals at Patnitop, Bhaderwah, and Sarthal, National Rafting Championship at Shibnote (Doda), and Lohri Festival at Mubarak Mandi, among others.

The meeting also took appraisal of wide-ranging publicity campaigns conducted in major cities across the country to promote Jammu as a premier tourism destination.

## Training Programme for Surveyors under Mission Gyan Bharatam held at Bandipora

HT NEWS NETWORK

**BANDIPORA, APRIL 16:** A comprehensive training programme under the Mission Gyan Bharatam was conducted today for nominated surveyors at the Conference Hall of Mini Secretariat, Bandipora.

The training session witnessed participation from surveyors representing all blocks and municipal areas of the district, aimed at strengthening capacity building for the smooth conduct of the upcoming survey. The programme focused on equipping participants with the necessary skills and knowledge for identification, documentation and digitisation of manuscripts under the Mission.



The training was attended by Assistant Commissioner Development, District Mineral Officer and other concerned officials. The programme also witnessed participation of Sub-Divisional Magistrate Sumbal and Gurez, Tehsildars, Block Development Officers (BDOs), and Executive Officers (EOs) of Municipal Committees of Bandipora, who joined mostly through virtual mode. Officials from Sub-Divisions Gurez and Sumbal, including Gurez-based surveyors, also attended the session through virtual mode.

Notably, Dr Jahangir Iqbal, Head, Department of Persian, University of Kashmir and UT Coordinator, Mission Gyan Bharatam, J&K, participated in the programme as a resource person and provided expert insights on manuscript identification, historical significance, and preservation techniques, enriching the overall learning experience for the participants.

During the session, resource persons provided detailed guidance on survey methodology, standardised procedures, and use of digital tools for data collection and reporting. Participants were sensitised about accurate identification of manuscripts, proper documentation protocols, and the importance of maintaining consistency and reliability in the survey process.

An interactive session was also held, enabling participants to seek clarifications and enhance their understanding of field-level execution.

The training programme marks an important step towards effective implementation of the Gyan Bharatam Mission in the district, aimed at preservation and digitisation of valuable manuscript heritage through a structured and coordinated approach.

## Historic 3-Day Baisakhi Devika Mela concludes at Udhampur

HT NEWS NETWORK

**UDHAMPUR, APRIL 16:** The historic three-day Baisakhi Devika Mela, which commenced on April 14, 2026, on the sacred banks of the holy Devika rivulet in Udhampur town, concluded today amidst immense enthusiasm and devotion.

The event witnessed an overwhelming participation from over 75,000 visitors and devotees coming from different parts of Jammu Province.

On the concluding day, Additional Deputy Commissioner Prem Singh was the chief guest, while Chief Planning Officer Uttam Singh was the guest of honour.

A large number of people and government officials attended the concluding programme.

Addressing the gathering, the ADC extended warm greetings to the public for their enthusiastic participation. "Such traditional fairs are not only reflective of our rich and diverse cultural heritage but also serve as a major attraction for tourists," he added.



He also underlined the importance of preserving and promoting the region's cultural legacy, stating that events like the Baisakhi Devika Mela are indispensable parts of our cultural identity. He encouraged the younger generation to stay connected with their roots.

The three-day mela was organized under the overall supervision of Deputy Commissioner Minga Sherpa. The District Administration had made adequate arrangements for the successful culmination of the event.

The mela featured a number of temporary sweet shops, toy shops and eateries put up by local and outside vendors.

During the three-day mela, District Information Centre organised a scintillating cultural programme, featuring captivating performances by Folk Artists and students from different educational institutions.

Meanwhile, the three-day melas at Nainsoo and Binisang also concluded successfully, witnessing enthusiastic participation from the general public.

## District Admin Kupwara organizes Pad Yatras across district

HT NEWS NETWORK

**KUPWARA, APRIL 16:** In a significant step towards strengthening the ongoing Nasha Mukta JK Abhiyan, the District Administration Kupwara today organized mega Pad Yatras across the district to create mass awareness against drug abuse and promote a healthy, drug-free society.

A Mega Pad Yatra held in Kupwara, was attended by MLA Kupwara, Mir Mohammad Fayaz, Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, SSP Kupwara, Syed Al Tahir Gilani and witnessed overwhelming participation from officers, government employees, members of civil society, youth, and a large number of students.

Demonstrating strong public support, the rally drew an estimated participation of around 10,000 participants. The Yatra commenced from Boys Higher Secondary School (BHSS) Kupwara and passed through key streets and markets of Kupwara town, drawing attention from the general public and spreading the message of drug de-addiction.

On the occasion, Nasha Mukta pledge was also taken by the participants for



fighting against the drug menace. The rally culminated at Regipora Sumo Stand, where participants reiterated their commitment to combating the menace of drug abuse.

Participants carried placards and raised slogans highlighting the harmful effects of drug addiction and the importance of collective action to eliminate the threat from society. The initiative aimed not only to sensitize the public, particularly the youth, but also to encourage community

involvement in prevention and rehabilitation efforts.

Similar Pad Yatras were simultaneously organized across all tehsils and blocks of the district including border areas of Karnah, Machill and Keran under the Nasha Mukta JK Abhiyan. These events saw active participation from local administrations, educational institutions, and community groups, further amplifying the message at the grassroots level.

## DC Anantnag chairs meeting with religious clerics, calls for collective fight against drug abuse

HT NEWS NETWORK

**ANANTNAG, APRIL 16:** As part of the 100 day campaign under Nasha Mukta JK Abhiyan launched by Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor, Deputy Commissioner Anantnag, Dr. Bilal Mohiud Din Bhat, today chaired a meeting with prominent religious clerics, including Masjid Imams and scholars, at Dak Bunglalow Khanabal.

The meeting was aimed to seek their support in intensifying the fight against drug abuse and was attended by ADC, ACR, DSWO besides other concerned officials, religious clerics and Masjid Imams.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC described drug abuse as a grave social evil that is steadily entering homes and destroying the moral and social fabric of society. He emphasized that religious leaders, being influential voices within communities, have a crucial role in guiding youth towards a life free from addiction.

He urged the clerics to sensitise the masses about the ill effects of drug abuse by referring to religious



scriptures and values and to consistently promote awareness within their respective communities.

He called upon them to dedicate a segment of their Friday Sermons

and congregations on drastic individual and social consequences of drug abuse and invoke moral and theological teachings to tackle substance abuse.

Terming the fight against drugs

a "collective responsibility", the DC stated while administration and law enforcement agencies are targeting the supply side, the role of parents, teachers, religious figures and civil society is essential to constantly persuade and motivate the vulnerable population not to use contraband substances and assist in eliminating the menace from society.

During the meeting, Dr. Bilal reiterated, while stringent action is being taken against drug peddlers and suppliers under the provisions of the NDPS Act, a compassionate and non-stigmatised approach must be adopted towards the victims. He stressed the importance of identifying affected individuals at the community level and facilitating their treatment and rehabilitation at designated Drug De-addiction Centres and Addiction Treatment Facilities, while ensuring full privacy and confidentiality.

Cautioning about the devastating impact of addiction on individuals and families, the DC called for sincere and collective efforts from all sections of society

to curb the menace. He expressed hope that with the active involvement of religious institutions, the ongoing campaign against drugs will gain further strength and lead to the realisation of a drug-free district, Union Territory and country.

The religious clerics, while expressing concern over the menace of drug abuse, put forth their valuable suggestions and assured full cooperation with the district administration. "Fight against drug abuse is a collective challenge and this is our social and moral responsibility to save the youth and vulnerable population from consumption of drugs and intoxicants", they pledged in unison.

They further committed to utilise their platforms to spread awareness and guide society away from this destructive path and lead towards positive and constructive direction.

The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to work collectively towards eliminating drug abuse and safeguarding the future of younger generation.

**HT EDITORIAL**

**Ensure sanitation process is completed in early hours in Srinagar**

Sanitation workers popularly known as Safai Karamcharies usually finish their job early in the day in most of the cities of the country. The main motive of their finishing the job in the early hours is that people don't face any difficulty in carrying out their daily chores of life. Once the cleaning process is completed early in the day people carry out their job without any hassle whatsoever.

Srinagar is probably the only city in the country where the cleaning process is carried out during the day hours. This process disturbs the other activities of life and people face multiple problems in carrying out their daily chores of life. Traffic gets stopped for a lot of time and people could be seen covering their nose and mouth with the face masks. The stench emanating out of the garbage gives a shabby look to the entire surroundings.

As on date Srinagar city is one of the smart cities of the country and as such each and every activity should be smart. This includes disposal of garbage from the different locations of the summer capital of the union territory of Jammu & Kashmir. As on date there is nothing like smartness when it comes to disposal of garbage in the Srinagar city. Garbage trucks and hoppers used to dispose of the garbage can be seen roaming in the city during the day and the same presents a messy look to the entire surroundings.

In most of the cases the garbage trucks are open and the garbage loaded on the same sometimes flies as and when there is wind in the city. From time to time directions have been issued to the people involved with the sanitation process to cover the garbage so that the hazards associated with the same are avoided. These directions have fallen on deaf ears up to this moment of time and the garbage continues to remain uncovered in the garbage trucks and hoppers.

The officers of Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) should understand that Srinagar city can't become one of the cleanest cities of the country unless and until the sanitation process is improved. Reforms need to be carried out in this regard so that the people heave a sigh of relief. This would give a new dimension and meaning to the smart city tag of Srinagar and Srinagar would become one of the best smart cities of the country.

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**Strong Measures Against Drugs LG's Decision a Historic and Inevitable Step Forward**



■ **TAHIR AHMAD SOFI**

The announcement of strict and decisive action against drug peddlers and dealers by the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir is being termed a highly significant, timely, and far-reaching step. Under this policy, actions including confiscation of property of those involved in the drug trade, cancellation of passports and Aadhaar cards, and other legal proceedings reflect a robust strategy for the complete eradication of this menace.

This decision will not only strengthen the rule of law but will also instill fear of the law in society and help save the younger generation from this destructive path. The scourge of drugs has now become a global issue; however, its spread is even more alarming in a sensitive region like Jammu & Kashmir, where the future of the youth is being directly affected.

Drugs not only destroy an individual's health but also weaken the family system, erode social values, and worsen economic conditions. As a result, serious problems such as a rise in crime rates, educational backwardness, and mental illnesses emerge. If effective measures are not taken against it, this issue can take the form of a major social crisis.



**The Islamic Perspective:**  
Islam is a complete code of life that emphasizes human physical, mental, and spiritual purity. In Islamic Shariah, everything that impairs reason or harms a person has been declared haram (forbidden). The Prophet of Islam ﷺ said: "Every intoxicant is haram" (Sahih Muslim). In light of this principle, the use, sale, purchase, and promotion of drugs are all strictly prohibited.

According to Islamic teachings, the protection of human life, intellect, and lineage is among the fundamen-

tal objectives of Shariah. Drugs are contrary to all these objectives because they paralyze human intellect, destroy health, and ruin generations. Therefore, the struggle against drugs is not only a social responsibility but also a religious obligation.

**Collective Responsibility and Social Role:**

Although government measures are of utmost importance, public awareness at the grassroots level is indispensable for the complete erad-

ication of this curse. Parents should pay special attention to the upbringing of their children, monitor their company and daily activities, and establish a strong bond with them. Teachers and educational institutions can play a key role in raising awareness among youth, while religious scholars and social leaders can highlight the harms of drugs through mosques, madrasas, and public gatherings.

The role of the media is also highly important in this regard, as it can prove effective not only in spreading awareness but also in promoting a positive lifestyle. Similarly, civil society and youth organizations should also actively participate in this campaign so that a healthy and safe society can be built.

The Lieutenant Governor's decision sends a clear message that the government is pursuing a zero-tolerance policy against drugs. The time has come for every individual in society to realize their responsibility and play their part in this fight.

We once again pay tribute to this courageous step and pray that Allah Almighty protects our society from the deadly curse of drugs and grants us the ability to raise our generations properly.

**Let us pledge:**

We will all together strive wholeheartedly to make our homes, neighborhoods, and society drug-free, because a safe and healthy society is the only guarantee of a bright future.

**The author is a Teacher & Gen secretary JKTF. He can be reached at tahirsofi270@gmail.com**

**From Nervous Beginnings to Caring Hands at SMHS Srinagar**



■ **MOHAMMAD ARFAT WANI**

On the first day of April 2026, I entered SMHS Hospital Srinagar not merely as a student, but as someone stepping into a profession that demands patience, compassion, and responsibility. A quiet mix of fear and excitement stayed within me. The long corridors, the steady movement of staff, and the silent pain on patients faces made me realize that this was not just a hospital, but a place where life is tested and hope is restored. My posting began in Ward 5 of the medicine department, where I met nursing staff including Bilal Sir and Rozy Maam, whose calm and welcoming nature eased my nervousness. I also observed my seniors, Imtiyaz Sir and Seerat Maam, who were skilled, kind, and humble. Alongside my fellow students Yasir, Owais, and Aiman, I began this journey with hope, though uncertainty remained.

On the very first day, our Clinical Incharge, Sakia Maam came and asked us questions. It was not easy. She was checking both knowledge and confidence. She said one thing that stuck later, that observation is half learning. At that time I didn't really get it properly. We were told to maintain a clinical diary. Slowly I started writing it, but in the beginning, my time in the ward felt very limited. Most of the work was just medication rounds, and there were too many students, so chances to do things were less. I started feeling like I am just coming, watching, spending money, and going back without much learning. Sometimes I even felt maybe this is not useful for me.

On the third day, an incident changed everything. While breaking an ampoule, it slipped and a sharp piece pierced my thumb, causing heavy bleeding. I had done it before, but this time it went wrong. I was taken to the emergency department, where I was advised stitches, but I chose dressing. What stayed with me was not the pain, but the care. Tabasum Maam was concerned about me, administered an injection herself, and insisted that I take two days of rest because of the loss of blood. Her kindness showed me that healthcare is not only about treatment, but about humanity. After taking permission, I stayed home for two days, recovering and reflecting. I realized that if I truly wanted to learn, I needed to take initiative.

When I returned, I decided to move to the emer-

gency department. With the help of my friend Junaid Shafi from GMC Srinagar, I shifted there. He personally brought me and stayed with me for hours on my first day. The environment there was active, demanding, and full of learning. It was here that I met Navi Maam and Rafiya Maam. At first, I thought they were senior students because of their friendly and simple nature, but later I realized they were staff members. I even told Navi Maam that she still felt like one of us. When she noticed my hands still marked with blood, she said with concern, "Zan chuth kath moormut," which showed her attentiveness and care.

Apart from being exceptionally skilled, Navi Maam and Rafiya Maam were exceptional due to their humanness. These two taught me with a lot of patience, ensured I understood every aspect of what they taught, and ensured that I did not get intimidated in any way. My confidence levels grew thanks to them. Both of them exhibited great humanness in the way they treated patients and the students. I remember how Rafia Maam once introduced me to another staff member by saying, "This is my cousin," a small gesture that made me feel valued. In their presence, I never feared mistakes, because I knew I would be guided with kindness.

In emergency, everything started feeling real. I started spending more and more time there. Sometimes I stayed till evening, sometimes I came back again early morning around 7. In around ten days, I learned more than I had learned before. I started understanding patient care in a real way. I saw how medicines are given oral, IV, IM. I learned how to set IV lines, manage drips, insert cannulas, and give glucose. I also learned blood sampling in a better way. Slowly my confidence increased. I also understood how important hygiene and infection control is. And communication that was another big thing. Talking to patients and their families in a respectful way matters a lot.

I was present in the emergency ward throughout from 10 o'clock till 2 o'clock at night. In this process, I earned great experience and learning opportunities. But during this duration, an accident happened due to the negligence of the patient's attendant, resulting in a prick on me, making Navi Maam and Rafiya Maam quite worried about me. They sent the blood sample of the patient to be tested and got the test kit from my pocket. Luckily, the result was negative, but still it was a very stressful situation for me. I am extremely grateful to them for all the trouble they took for me and even consulted the doctor themselves.

They tried their best to make arrangements for me to stay in a room but did not have to bother as I have some friends in this area who helped me stay in their rooms. They provided me with a doctor's room, and I slept there till 6 AM and then continued my duty.

In the early hours of the morning at around ten o'clock,

four students visited in the emergency ward. They inquired about my presence there because it was not included in my shift roster. Consequently, Maam became aware of this and messaged in the group saying that Arfat will be absent for seven days. It broke my heart as I intended nothing but to learn something.

During this time, I also started feeling responsibility. Many patients and attendants started calling me "Sir." It felt good, but at the same time it also made me serious. I started thinking more carefully about my behavior and actions because people were trusting me.

The following day, while visiting my ward, a father of Member of Parliament Engineer Rashid was admitted to the hospital. His brother MLA Sahab and other family members were also there. Thus, I had the chance to draw blood sample from him. I felt satisfied and happy as it enabled me to put into practice what I had learned.

One strong thing I felt during this journey was emotional connection with patients. Many times I saw them and somehow felt like they are my own elders, like my grandparents. That feeling changed me. I stopped seeing them as just cases. I started caring naturally. Every patient has a story, pain, and struggle. I realized dignity and respect matter as much as treatment. That made me more sure that I am in the right field. I don't just want skills, I want to be useful for people.

The encouragement of senior students like Rahil Sir and Shakir Sir contributed to my growth as well. The senior students guided me in terms of processes and knowledge sharing, making me understand that health education is something to be undertaken as a community. But retrospectively, I find that my frustrations in Ward 5 were actually very beneficial to me. They made me take things into my own hands and make the most appropriate decisions for myself.

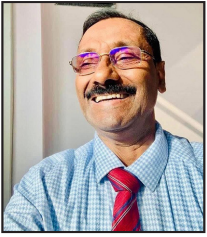
In addition, I extended an apology to the clinical incharge, Saika Maam. Even though there were other college students present, they did not receive the same treatment as mine, and this affected me greatly. It made me reflect on the type of environment that I belong to, and at times, I feel that my college is overly strict, and it mustn't be like that.

Despite everything, I acknowledge the fact that the lessons I gained from the emergency ward will probably never come by in the other wards that I was assigned to. In this regard, the situation taught me several things that contributed to strengthening my patience, courage, and love for learning.

**The author is a writer, social activist, and nursing student from Kuchmulla, Tral. He writes on social issues, culture, and public concerns with the aim of raising awareness and inspiring positive change. Email: wania6817@gmail.com**



# Development Dilemma in Kashmir: Indian Scenario



■ DR. RATAN BHATTACHARJEE

The development dilemma in Kashmir is a story of promise and paradox, a narrative where the aspirations of economic growth and modernization collide with the realities of political alienation, cultural anxieties, and security challenges. Kashmir, often celebrated for its breathtaking landscapes and rich cultural heritage, has long been burdened by conflict and instability that have deeply shaped its developmental trajectory. For decades, the region operated under the special constitutional provision of Article 370, which granted it autonomy and restricted external investment. While this autonomy was cherished by many locals as a safeguard for their identity, it also limited industrialization, discouraged private sector growth, and left the economy heavily dependent on agriculture, handicrafts, and tourism. The eruption of militancy in the late 1980s further disrupted economic activity, created a climate of insecurity, and discouraged long-term investment. Schools, businesses, and public services were frequently interrupted, and the region's youth grew up in an environment where opportunities were scarce and aspirations curtailed.

The abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019 was presented by the central government as a turning point, promising integration, investment, and development. Roads, tunnels, and railway projects began to accelerate, with landmark initiatives like the Chenab Bridge and Zojila Tunnel symbolizing infrastructural progress. Tourism witnessed a revival, with record numbers of visitors in 2022 and 2023, providing employment opportunities and boosting local businesses. Central schemes such as the Prime Minister's Development Package and rural employment programs were extended to Kashmir, aiming to bring it into the mainstream of India's developmental framework. Yet, despite these visible changes, the dilemma remains unresolved. Development in Kashmir is not simply about building roads or attracting investors; it is about addressing the deep political alienation, the persistent security challenges, and the cultural anxieties of the local population.

Many Kashmiris perceive the abrogation of Article 370 not as an opportunity but as an erosion of their identity and autonomy. Development projects, when seen as imposed rather than participatory, risk being rejected or resisted. The heavy presence of security forces, while ensuring stability, also creates a climate of fear and mistrust. Militancy, though reduced in scale compared to the 1990s, continues to deter long-term investment and undermines the confidence of entrepreneurs. Youth unemployment remains a pressing issue, with government jobs dominating aspirations but opportunities being limited. The private sector, though expanding in tourism and infrastructure, has yet to absorb the large numbers of educated young people entering the job market.

Another dimension of the dilemma is environmental and cultural. Kashmir's fragile ecology is threatened by rapid urbanization, unregulated construction, and mass tourism. The Dal Lake, once a symbol of Kashmir's beauty, suffers from pollution and encroachment. Locals fear that external migration and investment may dilute their cultural identity and disrupt the delicate balance of their society. Thus, while development promises prosperity, it also raises anxieties about sustainability and cultural preservation.

The dilemma can be summarized as a tension between growth and identity, between security and freedom, between external investment and local participation. Pre-2019 Kashmir was characterized by autonomy, restricted investment, and high militancy, while post-2019 Kashmir is marked by integration, infrastructural expansion, and improved tourism. Yet, the core issues of alienation, unemployment, and mistrust remain. The way forward requires inclusive governance that involves local stakeholders in decision-making, skill development programs that equip youth



for entrepreneurship and modern industries, balanced investment that prioritizes eco-friendly tourism and sustainable industries, and political dialogue that addresses grievances and builds trust. Security reforms must shift from militarization to community-based peacebuilding, ensuring that development is not seen as an external imposition but as a shared journey.

The development dilemma in Kashmir is therefore not merely economic but deeply political and cultural. Infrastructure and investment can provide opportunities, but without addressing alienation and security concerns, development risks being superficial. Genuine progress will come only when growth translates into empowerment, trust, and stability for the local population. Kashmir's future lies in reconciling its aspirations for identity and autonomy with the imperatives of integration and modernization. The challenge is immense, but the stakes are higher still, for Kashmir is not only a region of strategic importance but also a symbol of India's ability to balance diversity with unity, conflict with peace, and tradition with progress.

To understand the dilemma in its full depth, one must consider the historical trajectory of Kashmir's economy. Agriculture has traditionally been the backbone, with apple orchards, saffron cultivation, and rice fields sustaining livelihoods. Handicrafts such as Pashmina shawls and carpets have been globally renowned, yet artisans often struggle with low wages and lack of modern marketing channels. Tourism, once a thriving industry, collapsed during the peak of militancy in the 1990s, devastating local businesses. Even today, while tourism has revived, it remains vulnerable to political unrest. The lack of industrial diversification has meant that Kashmir's economy is fragile, dependent on seasonal flows and external subsidies.

The abrogation of Article 370 was intended to change this by opening the region to external investment. Yet, investors remain cautious, citing security concerns and political uncertainty. While some projects have taken off, large-scale industrialization has not yet materialized. The government's push for infrastructure is visible, but questions remain about whether these projects translate into sustainable livelihoods for locals. For instance, while the Chenab Bridge is an engineering marvel, its direct impact on employment is limited. Similarly, while tunnels and highways improve connectivity, they do not automatically generate industries unless accompanied by broader economic planning.

The youth of Kashmir embody the dilemma most acutely. Educated yet unemployed, they oscillate between hope and frustration. Many aspire to government jobs, seen as secure and prestigious, but the limited availability creates disillusionment. Entrepreneurship is often hindered by lack of capital, bureaucratic hurdles, and insecurity. Some youth turn to migration, seeking opportunities outside the region, while others fall prey to radicalization. The challenge is to channel this demographic energy into constructive avenues, but that requires trust in governance, access to resources, and a sense of ownership in

development.

Culturally, Kashmiris worry about losing their distinct identity. The fear of demographic change, though not yet realized, looms large in public discourse. The influx of external investors and workers is seen by some as a threat to the valley's social fabric. Development, if not sensitive to these concerns, risks being perceived as assimilation rather than empowerment. The preservation of Kashmiri language, traditions, and ecological heritage must therefore be integral to any developmental strategy.

Environmental sustainability is another critical dimension. The valley's fragile ecosystem is vulnerable to climate change, deforestation, and pollution. The expansion of tourism, while economically beneficial, has led to waste management crises, traffic congestion, and strain on natural resources. The Dal Lake, once pristine, now suffers from sewage inflows and encroachments. Glacial retreat threatens water security. Development that ignores these ecological realities risks long-term damage. Sustainable tourism, renewable energy projects, and strict environmental regulations are essential to balance growth with preservation.

Comparative insights from other conflict regions highlight the importance of inclusive development. In Northern Ireland, economic growth was tied to political reconciliation, with peace agreements creating a conducive environment for investment. Kashmir's dilemma similarly shows that economic initiatives cannot succeed in isolation from political dialogue. Without addressing grievances and building trust, development risks being superficial.

We should consider this dilemma from the viewpoint of Indian scenario. India, the world's largest democracy and one of the fastest-growing economies, stands at a critical juncture in its development journey. The nation's trajectory since independence in 1947 has been marked by remarkable achievements in industrialization, agriculture, technology, and services. Yet, despite these successes, India continues to grapple with deep-rooted challenges that create what scholars often call the "development dilemma." This dilemma is essentially the tension between rapid economic growth and the persistent social, environmental, and governance issues that threaten to undermine the sustainability and inclusiveness of that growth.

India's economy has consistently posted impressive growth rates, often outpacing other major economies. The rise of the IT sector, expansion of manufacturing, and a burgeoning services industry have contributed to this momentum. However, the benefits of growth have not been evenly distributed. Urban centers such as Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Delhi have become hubs of prosperity, while rural areas remain mired in poverty and underdevelopment. The dilemma here is stark: how can India sustain high growth while ensuring that marginalized communities are not left behind? The persistence of income inequality, coupled with limited access to quality education and healthcare in rural regions, perpetuates a cycle of poverty. Jobless growth compounds the problem, as millions of young Indians enter the labor

market each year without adequate opportunities. The challenge is not merely to grow, but to grow inclusively. India's push for industrialization has been both a boon and a bane. On one hand, it has created jobs, boosted exports, and strengthened infrastructure. On the other, it has led to severe environmental degradation. Air pollution in cities like Delhi routinely reaches hazardous levels, while rivers such as the Ganga suffer from industrial waste and untreated sewage.

The reliance on coal for energy generation further complicates the picture. While India has set ambitious targets for renewable energy, including solar and wind, coal continues to dominate the energy mix due to its affordability and availability. This creates a dilemma: should India prioritize immediate economic needs through cheap energy, or should it invest heavily in green alternatives that may be costlier in the short term but sustainable in the long run? Climate change adds urgency to this debate. India is highly vulnerable to floods, droughts, and heatwaves, which threaten agriculture and livelihoods. Balancing industrial growth with environmental sustainability is therefore not just a policy choice but a survival imperative.

India's federal structure, while ensuring democratic representation, has also contributed to uneven development across states. States like Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Karnataka have successfully attracted investment and built strong industrial bases. In contrast, states such as Bihar, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh struggle with weak institutions, poor infrastructure, and limited human capital. This unevenness creates a dilemma for policymakers: how to design national strategies that respect federal autonomy while ensuring balanced development. Central schemes often face implementation challenges due to bureaucratic inefficiencies and corruption at the state level. The result is a patchwork of progress, where some regions surge ahead while others stagnate.

India's democratic system is both its greatest strength and its most significant constraint. Democracy ensures accountability, transparency, and citizen participation. However, it also slows down decision-making compared to authoritarian models like China. Populist politics often prioritize short-term welfare schemes over long-term structural reforms. For instance, subsidies on fuel, electricity, and food provide immediate relief to the poor but strain fiscal resources and discourage efficiency. At the same time, reforms in labor laws, land acquisition, and taxation face resistance from vested interests and political opposition. The dilemma lies in balancing democratic responsiveness with the need for swift, decisive action to drive development. India's integration into the global economy has opened up opportunities for trade, investment, and technology transfer. Yet, globalization also exposes India to external shocks. Fluctuations in oil prices, geopolitical conflicts, and global recessions can derail domestic growth.

The dilemma here is how to embrace globalization while safeguarding national interests. Protectionist policies may shield domestic industries but risk isolating India from global markets. Conversely, excessive

openness may make India vulnerable to external pressures. Striking the right balance is crucial for sustainable development. India's demographic dividend—its large youth population—is often cited as a potential driver of growth. However, this dividend can turn into a liability if not harnessed effectively. The quality of education remains uneven, with elite institutions producing world-class graduates while government schools struggle with inadequate infrastructure and teacher shortages. The dilemma is clear: how to equip millions of young Indians with the skills needed for a modern economy? Without significant investment in education and vocational training, India risks squandering its demographic advantage.

Healthcare is another area where India faces a development dilemma. While private hospitals in urban areas offer advanced medical care, rural populations often lack access to even basic facilities. Public health expenditure remains low compared to global standards, and the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the fragility of India's healthcare system. The challenge is to expand healthcare access without overwhelming fiscal resources. Universal healthcare is an aspirational goal, but achieving it requires careful prioritization and efficient use of funds.

To navigate its development dilemma, India must adopt a multi-pronged strategy: i) Focus on rural development, job creation, and targeted welfare schemes to reduce inequality. ii) Invest in renewable energy, enforce stricter environmental regulations, and promote sustainable practices. iii) Strengthen state institutions, improve governance, and incentivize lagging states to attract investment. iv) Streamline decision-making processes, reduce bureaucratic red tape, and build consensus for long-term reforms. v) Diversify trade partners, build resilience against external shocks, and promote self-reliance in critical sectors. vi) Enhance quality of schooling, expand vocational training, and integrate technology into learning. vii) Increase public health spending, strengthen primary care, and promote preventive healthcare.

Resolving this dilemma requires visionary leadership, robust institutions, and active citizen participation. India's future depends not just on how fast it grows, but on how well it balances the competing demands of progress and equity. If India can navigate this complex terrain, it will not only secure prosperity for its people but also emerge as a model of sustainable development for the world. The way forward lies in a multi-pronged approach. Inclusive governance must involve local stakeholders in decision-making, ensuring that development is participatory rather than imposed. Skill development programs must equip youth for modern industries such as IT, renewable energy, and sustainable tourism. Balanced investment must prioritize eco-friendly industries, avoiding the pitfalls of unsustainable urbanization. Political dialogue must address grievances, building trust between the state and the people. Security reforms must shift from militarization to community-based peacebuilding, creating an environment where development can flourish. Ultimately, the development dilemma in Kashmir is a test of India's ability to balance diversity with unity, conflict with peace, and tradition with progress. It is a reminder that development is not merely about infrastructure but about people, identity, and trust. The challenge is immense, but the stakes are higher still, for Kashmir is not only a region of strategic importance but also a symbol of India's democratic promise.

India's development dilemma is not a question of whether the nation will grow—it undoubtedly will. The real question is whether that growth will be equitable, sustainable, and resilient. The tension between economic expansion and social justice, industrialization and environmental sustainability, democracy and efficiency, globalization and self-reliance defines the contours of India's development journey.

**International Tagore Awardee Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee a Reid. Head Dum Dum Motijheel College and a former Affiliate Faculty of Virginia Commonwealth University is the author of Our Time Revisited a collection of contemporary social issues . He may be mailed at profdratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com**

# Don't feel like exercising? Maybe it's the wrong time of day for you

■ MICHELLE ROBERTS

To get the most out of a gym session, fitness class or a run, do it at the time of day that best suits your own natural internal body clock, say health researchers.

Early risers or "larks" should exercise in the morning for maximum benefit, while night owls should train in the evening, they suggest.

Synchronising exercise in this way could boost heart gains, especially for people already at higher risk of heart disease, according to a new study published in the journal *Open Heart*.

Volunteers who tried it had better sleep, lower blood pressure and healthier blood sugar levels overall.

Some 134 people in their 40s and 50s in Pakistan took part in the study.

None were super fit and had at least one heart risk factor, such as high blood pressure or being overweight.

They were asked to do supervised, brisk-walking exercise sessions on a treadmill for 40 minutes a day, five times a week for three months.

Based on questionnaires, 70 were classed as morning larks and 64 were night owls.

Some did their exercises at times to match their body clock chronotype - the natural predisposition to morning or evening alertness - while others did the opposite.

Both groups showed improvements in fitness.

But matching exercise with chronotype produced larger health gains in blood pressure, aerobic capacity, metabolic markers and sleep quality.

Your internal body clock affects sleep-wake patterns and hormone and energy levels across the day, which, in turn, could influence exercise performance and adherence, explain the researchers.

The study authors say the findings suggest a "one-size fits-all" approach to exercise timing is less than ideal.

A mismatch between biological and social schedules or "social jetlag" has been linked to increased heart risk.

Night owls can be at greater risk of this,



they add, meaning they shouldn't force early morning exercise routines.

Some gyms now stay open all hours, night and day.

Hugh Hanley, Personal Training & Fitness Director at PureGym, says Monday and Tuesday evenings are typical peak busy times but, increasingly, people are spreading out the hours they train.

"One thing we have noticed over the last few years is people are actually prioritising their health more, bringing in more flexibility."

He says the key to staying fit is consistency - creating a habit of movement, building it into your lifestyle.

"Doing it regularly is better than one or two blasts."

"We see a lot of the time that people set too big a goal initially. We'd always rather they break it into small bite-sized goals that are achievable."

The trend at the moment, he says, is strength training. "We're seeing a big rise... across all generations. The younger generation are definitely prioritising strength training, but even the older demographic."

Dr Rajiv Sankaranarayanan of the British Cardiovascular Society, which co-owns the journal the work is published

in, said the findings supported a shift towards workouts to suit body clocks, but proposed more studies to confirm this.

Dr Nina Rzechorzek, an expert in body rhythms at the University of Cambridge, said while timing may be one factor worth considering, getting enough regular exercise mattered most.

Doing a mix of exercise is helpful, evidence suggests, with the NHS recommending strengthening activities at least two days a week and vigorous cardio exercise for at least 75 minutes.

Ready to hit the gym morning or night? Strength-training exercises, such as wall squats or holding the plank position, are among the best ways to lower blood pressure.

These isometric exercises are designed to build strength without moving muscles or joints.

Wall squats involve putting your back against a wall and lowering down into a sitting position using your hips until the thighs are parallel to the ground.

The plank involves holding a position similar to a push-up for an extended period to work core abdominal muscles as well as the back, shoulders, arms and glutes. (BBC)

# Healthy Gut, Healthy Life



■ SURINDERPAL SINGH

Gut health forms the very foundation of overall well-being, influencing not only digestion but also immunity, metabolism, and even mental health. It refers to the balance and proper functioning of the digestive system, particularly the gut microbiome—a vast community of trillions of bacteria, fungi, and other microorganisms living in our intestines. These microbes are far from passive; they actively participate in breaking down food, producing essential nutrients, regulating immune responses, and communicating with the brain. In today's fast-paced and materialistic lifestyle, however, gut health is increasingly compromised, giving rise to a wide range of health concerns.

The gut plays a central role in maintaining human health. It is responsible for digestion and the absorption of vital nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, and amino acids that are essential for the body's proper functioning. A significant portion of the immune system—nearly seventy percent—resides in the gut, making it a critical line of defense against infections and diseases. Beyond physical health, the gut also shares a strong connection with the brain through what is known as the gut-brain axis. This connection influences mood, stress levels, and overall mental well-being. Additionally, the gut contributes to metabolic control, affecting body weight, blood sugar levels, and fat storage.

Despite its importance, modern lifestyle choices often damage gut health. The widespread consumption of processed and junk food, which is low in fiber and high in sugar and unhealthy fats, disrupts the balance of gut bacteria by promoting harmful microbes. Excessive use of antibiotics further worsens this imbalance by killing both beneficial and harmful bacteria,

leading to a condition known as dysbiosis. Chronic stress has also emerged as a silent disruptor, altering gut bacteria and weakening digestive functions. Similarly, lack of sleep disturbs the natural rhythm of the gut microbiome, while a sedentary lifestyle reduces gut motility and microbial diversity. High sugar intake, artificial additives, and environmental toxins further inflame the intestines and damage the gut lining, gradually impairing its function.

When gut health deteriorates, the body begins to show clear warning signs. Common physical symptoms include bloating, gas, constipation, diarrhea, frequent infections, and food intolerances. Beyond these, systemic effects such as fatigue, skin issues like acne and eczema, and unexplained weight fluctuations may appear. Mental health is also closely affected, with symptoms like anxiety, depression, and brain fog often linked to an unhealthy gut.

The consequences of poor gut health can be far-reaching. It is associated with inflammatory conditions, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), obesity, diabetes, autoimmune diseases, and mental health disorders. In some cases, damage to the gut lining may result in what is commonly referred to as "leaky gut," a condition where toxins and harmful substances pass into the bloodstream, triggering widespread inflammation and further health complications.

The encouraging aspect, however, is that gut health can often be restored. The gut is highly adaptable and responds positively to consistent lifestyle and dietary changes. By making mindful choices, individuals can rebuild a healthy gut environment and improve overall well-being. A diet rich in fiber, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes, nourishes beneficial bacteria and supports digestion. The inclusion of probiotics through foods like yogurt, curd, and other fermented items helps introduce good bacteria into the gut. Prebiotic foods such as garlic, onions, and bananas serve as fuel for these beneficial microbes, promoting their growth and activity. Staying well-hydrated supports digestion and maintains the integrity of the gut lining.

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

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WITH Dr.SUMIT , Mr.TURAB, Former Sr. Audiologist at Max Hospital Saket ,Delhi)  
@ Kifayatkifi  
8:00PM On January 18<sup>th</sup>, Sunday

# DC Shopian chairs meeting with traders, vendors associations to strengthen Nasha Mukht Abhiyaan in District

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**SHOPIAN, APRIL 16:** Deputy Commissioner Shopian, Shishir Gupta, today chaired a meeting with representatives of traders and vendors associations of the district to seek their active cooperation in making the ongoing Nasha Mukht Abhiyaan more impactful in its results.

During the meeting, The DC emphasized the crucial role of the business community in curbing the menace of drug abuse and appealed to all stakeholders to extend their full support in this collective effort.

Traders and vendors were urged to remain vigilant and assist authorities in identifying and reporting any suspicious activities related to drug peddling.

Senior Superintendent of Police Shopian, Mushtaq Ahmad Choudhary, also participated in the meeting and requested traders



and vendors to cooperate with the police in efforts to eradicate the drug menace from the district.

He highlighted the importance of timely information from the public in identifying and acting against drug peddlers.

Traders and vendors were further encouraged to spread awareness and carry forward the message of a drug free society across all sections of the community.

During the interaction, representatives of traders associations and vendors assured the administration that they would extend full cooperation and help in every possible way to curb the drug menace from the district.

They expressed their commitment to actively participate in awareness and prevention efforts.

The meeting was also attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner Shopian, Dr. Zakir Husain Faaz, Chief Executive Officer, Municipal Council Shopian, and other officials.

- از عدالت پریسل ڈسٹرکٹ جج کیواڑہ با اجلاس منجیت منگولہ منہاس
1. Raqaya Rasool W/O Nazir Ahmad Khan
  2. Minhaaj ur Rabb alies Minhaj S/O Nazir Ahmad Khan
  3. Zuha Khan D/O Nazir Ahmad Khan
  4. Zara Khan D/O Nazir Ahmad Khan R/O Tangwari Trehgam Kupwara
  5. (Petitioners 3 and 4 through Mother Raqaya Rasool (Petitioners) V/S Public at Large (Respondents)

درخواست از جانب ساکنان برادعاطی سرٹیفیکٹ جانشینی نہتونی زیر احمد خان ولد غلام احمد خان ساکن گولاری ترگام کیواڑہ نہت رقم (Rs 1291150)۔

اشتبہا براداد آگاہی مول/میلولان ہر غاص و عام مقدمہ عنوان الصد میں ساکنان نے ایک درخواست برادعاطی سرٹیفیکٹ جانشینی نہت رقم مبلغ بارہ لاکھ اکانوسے ہزار ایک سو پچاس روپے عدالت خذا میں پیش کی ہے۔ جو کہ زیر تحقیقات روان ہے۔ لہذا مول/میلولان الصد یا کسی بھی شخص کو درخواست ہذا کے منظور ہونے میں کسی قسم کا کوئی نذر یا اعتراض ہو تو اصالتاً و کاتباً یا اختماً عدالت ہذا حاضر آ کر پیش کریں۔ بعد گزرنے میعا کوئی عدالت قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

تحریر بتاریخ 31/03/2026

پریسل ڈسٹرکٹ جج کیواڑہ

## Public Notice

My name has been wrongly written on my Driving Licence No. JK-03 20130025913 as KARAMJEET SINGH with Date of Birth 20/04/1980.

Whereas my actual and correct name is KAREMJEET SINGH as per my Aadhaar Card and my correct Date of Birth is 02/04/1980 as per my Date of Birth Certificate and Aadhaar Card.

Now I want to correct the above particulars in my Driving Licence records.

If anybody has any objection, he/she may contact the concerned authority within a period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. After that, no objection shall be entertained.

**Name: KAREMJEET SINGH**  
**S/O: KULWANT SINGH**  
**R/O: CHITTI SINGH PORA**  
**Distt: ANANTNAG**  
**Licence No. JK-03 20130025913**

## Public Notice

I, Zareena Begum, hereby inform the general public that I am applying for the issuance of a birth certificate for my daughter, whose particulars are as follows:

Name of Child: Munazah Manzoor  
Father's Name: Manzoor Ahmad Peer  
Date of Birth: 31-01-2024  
Address: Peer Mohalla, Nagri Malpora  
Claimant: Zareena Begum (Mother of Munazah Manzoor)

If any person has any objection regarding the issuance of the said birth certificate, he/she may report the same to the concerned authority within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. After the expiry of the said period, no objection shall be entertained.

## Public Notice

I, Meema Bano, wife of Late Manzoor Tahir Qadri, resident of Bubernagh, Kupwara, hereby inform the general public that I am applying for the issuance of my birth certificate, with the following particulars:

Name: Meema Bano  
Spouse's Name: Late Manzoor Tahir Qadri  
Date of Birth: 05/03/1979  
Address: Bubernagh, Kupwara  
Claimant: Meema Bano (Self)

If any person has any objection regarding the issuance of the said birth certificate, he/she may report the same to the concerned authority within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. After the expiry of the said period, no objection shall be entertained.

## Training of staff for JKSSB Junior Assistant Exam held at Anantnag

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**ANANTNAG, APRIL 16:** To ensure smooth, fair and transparent conduct of the upcoming OMR-based Written Test for the post of Junior Assistant scheduled on April 19, 2026, the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) in collaboration with District Administration Anantnag organized a comprehensive training session for superintendents and deputy superintendents, invigilating and other supervisory staff, today at Dak Bunglaw, Khanabal.

Member JKSSB, Showkat Ahmad Rather, Additional District Magistrate, Tariq Ahmad Malik, superintendents, deputy superintendents, invigilating



ators and other officials attended the session.

The primary aim of the session was to sensitise the deployed staff about the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and examination guidelines.

Addressing the meeting, Member JKSSB, Showkat Ahmad Rather said the purpose of the training programme is to familiarise the exam staff with prescribed procedures and SOPs. He stressed the need for maintaining utmost transparency and fairness and to ensure the examination is held in a smooth and hassle free manner.

During the training, key aspects of the examination process were discussed in detail to ensure that the staff is well-versed with the necessary procedures. Special emphasis was laid on proper checking of candidates at entry points before allowing them into the examination halls. The staff were strictly instructed to ensure that no candidate carries mobile phones or any other prohibited electronic gadgets inside the examination centres.

The session emphasized the importance of vigilance, transparency, integrity and fairness throughout the conduct of the examination.

## Arrangements for JKSSB Junior Assistant Examination finalised at Budgam

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**BUDGAM, APRIL 16:** District Administration Budgam today convened a meeting at the Conference Hall Budgam to finalize arrangements for the OMR-based written examination for the post of Junior Assistant, scheduled to be conducted on 19th of April by the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB).

The meeting was chaired by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Budgam, Mehraj-ud-din Shah, and attended by the Additional Secretary JKSSB along with senior officers and officials from various departments. Among those present were District Transport Officer Budgam, District Informatics Officer Budgam, ARTO Budgam, representatives from Police, Education Department, Traffic Police, besides Centre Superintendents, Deputy Superintendents, Magistrates/Observers, and Heads of Institutions of the designated examination centres.

During the meeting, the ADC reviewed in detail the arrangements being put in place for the smooth conduct of the examination. He stressed the importance of effective coordination among all departments to ensure that the examination is conducted in a fair, transparent, and orderly manner.

Threadbare discussions were held on crucial aspects including deployment of magistrates and observers, security arrangements, transportation facilities, confidentiality and safe



handling of examination material, availability of basic amenities at examination centres, and strict adherence to Standard Operating Procedures prescribed for the examination.

The Additional Secretary JKSSB briefed the participants about examination guidelines, protocols to be followed at centres, and the responsibilities assigned to supervisory staff. He emphasized strict compliance with the Board's instructions to uphold transparency and integrity throughout the examination process. ADC Budgam directed all con-

cerned officers to ensure advance arrangements related to security deployment, traffic regulation, and logistical support. He instructed Centre Superintendents and supervisory staff to remain vigilant and facilitate a hassle-free examination experience for candidates.

All departments were asked to maintain close coordination and ensure timely deployment of manpower and resources for the successful conduct of the JKSSB Junior Assistant examination across all designated centres in the district.

Office of the Principal

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NAAC Accredited Grade "B"

NO. DCB/NOTICE/428 | DATED: 16-04-2026 | TENDER NOTICE

On behalf of Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor UT of Jammu & Kashmir sealed tenders affixed with Revenue stamp of Rs. 2/- are invited from registered vendors, interested and experienced persons having registration certificate from Assistant Commissioner Food and Safety Standards for running of College canteen for the year 2026-27 which should reach this office within 07 days from the date of publication of this tender notice. The tenders should be accompanied with a CDR of 5000/- (Rupees Five Thousand only) pledged to Principal Govt. Degree College Bijbehara. The successful tenderer shall have to produce a certificate of good moral character from concerned agency. The tenderer shall quote his rates on the prescribed format available in the office or can download from the official website of the college www.gdcbijbehara.edu.in. No tender shall be accepted on any format other than the one mentioned above. The other terms and conditions as prescribed in the format shall be held in letter and spirit, which can be had from the office of the undersigned within the prescribed time. The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any tender without assigning any reasons thereof.

Sd/- Principal GDC Bijbehara

DIPK: 464/26 | Dated: 16-04-2026

## Gandhi Memorial College Srinagar hosts Seminar on Social Justice

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR, APRIL 16:** Debates and Seminar Committee, Gandhi Memorial College, Srinagar, organized a seminar titled "Social Justice and the Indian Constitution" in the college auditorium. The event was attended by a significant gathering of students and faculty. The event featured an insightful keynote address by the Principal, Prof. (Dr.) Masood Ahmad Malik, who explored the intricate nuances of social justice and paid tribute to the transformative role of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in shaping India's constitutional mandate for equality. Complementing the academic discourse, an elocution contest was held featuring twelve student speakers, where Ashiya Zahoor, Ashiya Javed, and Abid Awan secured the first, second, and third positions, respectively, for their exceptional performances.

## Office of the Child Development Project Officer, ICDS Project Lar

Address: Main Market Lar Ganderbal | E. mail: cdpolargb@gmail.com

### SELECTION NOTICE

In pursuance of Advertisement Notice No. 01 CDPO Lar of 2026, Dated.29-01-2026, in respect of Poshan (ICDS) Project Lar the merit cum selection list of candidates who have applied for the post of Sangini (AWW) is hereby published for the information of all concerned/general public. Appeal if any, regarding to the proposed selection list of the candidate shall be submitted with in a period of Seven (07) days from the date of issuance of this notice in the office of undersigned. No appeal/objection will be accepted after the lapse of stipulated period.

S.NO.	Form Receipt No.	Name of the Panchayat Halqa	Name of the AWC	Name of Candidate	Parentage	DOB	Marital Status	Qualification	Marks obtained in 12th	Final Merit	Remarks
1	004	Lar B	Shah Mohalla Lar	Sameena Habib	W/o Javid Ahmad Hafiz	04-06-1996	Married	12th	320/500	64.0	1st Meritorious Selectee
2	003			Rifat Rehman	W/o Moumin Shafi	20-10-1989	Married	12th	333/600	55.5	2nd Meritorious
3	002			Yasmeena Bano	W/o Tawseef Ahmad Sheikh	18-09-1994	Married	12th	257/500	51.4	3rd Meritorious
4	001			Abida Rehman	W/o Manzoor Ahmad Sheikh	03-01-1989	Married	12th	365/750	48.67	4th Meritorious

Sd/- Child Development Project Officer, Poshan Lar

DIPK: 463/26 | Dated: 16-04-2026

# Secretary RDD reviews SASCI Projects, UT Capex Plan for FY 2026-27

Key Assets Planned Under Viksit Village in Each Assembly Constituency

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 16:** Secretary, Rural Development Department (RDD) and Panchayati Raj, Mohammad Aijaz Asad, today chaired a review meeting to assess progress under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investments (SASCI) scheme and to finalise the Annual Action Plan for FY 2026-27 under UT Capex (Community Development).

The meeting was attended by Director Rural Development Kashmir, Shabir Hussain Bhat; Director Rural Development Jammu, Shahnaz Akhter; Director Finance, Umar Khan; Joint Director Planning, Kamal Kumar Sharma; besides senior officers of the R&B and RD&PR departments.

Reviewing the status of SASCI projects, the Secretary was informed that construction of residential accommodation for PRI members and protected persons at Bijbehara (Anantnag) is underway in Kashmir division. In Jammu



division, key projects under execution include two-BHK residential complexes for DDC/PRI members at Udhampur, Reasi, Kathua and Samba; a District Development Council building at

Reasi; drainage upgradation works in Mendhar; and construction of BDO office complexes, community halls, guest houses and drainage nullahs in Jammu district.

The Secretary directed both

Directors to ensure that UT Capex and District Capex plans are uploaded on the designated portal by April 21, as per timelines fixed by the Chief Secretary. He stressed that proposals must prioritise

high-impact, durable infrastructure assets aimed at improving the quality of life in rural areas.

He further instructed that construction of Block Development Officer (BDO) offices be proposed in all blocks where such facilities are not available, to enhance access to administrative and developmental services.

The meeting also reviewed progress under the Viksit Village Scheme, which provides for an allocation of 2 crore per Assembly constituency. Under the scheme, one village in each constituency will be developed as a Model Village with creation of key infrastructural, social and economic assets including DEWATS, Plastic Waste Management Units, village museums, entrance arches, selfie points, chaupals, digital labs, public libraries and multipurpose facility centres.

The Secretary directed officers to expedite preparation of DPRs and estimates to ensure timely implementation of the scheme.

## DC Pulwama presides over Media Workshop under NMBA

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**PULWAMA, APRIL 16:** Deputy Commissioner (DC) Pulwama, Dr. Basharat Qayoom, today presided over a media workshop on the 100-day intensive campaign under the Nasha Mukht Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan (NMBA) at Circuit House Pulwama.

The workshop was organised by District Administration in collaboration with the Department of Information and Public Relations Pulwama to sensitise media professionals about their role and responsibilities in the effective implementation of the campaign and to strengthen collaboration between the administration and the media for combating drug abuse.



## Budgam witnesses Wide-Ranging Activities under Nasha Mukht Abhiyan

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**BUDGAM, APRIL 16:** The ongoing 100 days intensive Nasha Mukht Abhiyan in district Budgam continues to gain momentum with a series of impactful awareness and outreach activities conducted across educational institutions and departments, reflecting strong community participation and collective commitment towards a drug-free society.

Educational institutions across the district remained at the forefront for organizing diverse activities to sensitize students about the harmful effects of drug abuse.

At BHSS Ichigam, a plantation drive and a painting competition were organized, where students actively participated and conveyed powerful messages promoting environmental sustainability and a drug-free lifestyle through creative expression.

Similarly, Higher Secondary School Khansahib and GDC Magam organized pledge ceremonies, where students and staff reaffirmed their commitment to combating drug abuse and building a healthier society.

Awareness activities were also conducted at HSS Soibugh, HSS Chadoora, High School Gojithajji, and HSS Khansahib, focusing on educating students about the dangers of substance abuse and encouraging responsible behavior.



In HSS Narbal, a drug awareness marathon was organized, witnessing enthusiastic participation from students and staff. The event aimed to spread awareness through active community engagement and promote the message of a healthy, drug-free lifestyle.

The District Employment & Counseling Centre Budgam also contributed to the campaign by organizing a film screening on drug de-addiction. The screening highlighted the physical, mental, and social consequences of drug abuse and encouraged participants to adopt a substance-free lifestyle.

The programme concluded with an interactive discussion, further reinforcing the importance of prevention and rehabilitation.

Meanwhile, the Excise Department conducted an awareness programme at Government Middle School, Village Khandah (Tehsil BK Pora), sensitizing participants about the ill effects of drug abuse, illicit cultivation of narcotic crops, and legal provisions under the NDPS Act.

These activities, conducted under the Nasha Mukht Abhiyan, underscore the district administration's multi-pronged approach involving education, awareness, and community participation. The overwhelming response from students, staff, and the general public reflects a growing resolve to eradicate the menace of drugs from society.

The District Administration Budgam reiterates its commitment to continue such initiatives and calls upon all stakeholders to actively participate in building a safe, healthy, and drug-free future for the district.

## Comm Secretary I&C visits Pulwama, attends mega event under NMBA

Reviews 100 day action plan implementation

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**PULWAMA, APRIL 16:** Commissioner Secretary, Industries and Commerce (I&C) Department, Vikramjit Singh, who is the District Mentor for overseeing the implementation of Nasha Mukht Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan in Pulwama, today visited the district and presided over a mega event at Government Degree College (Boys), Pulwama.

The event was organised under the ongoing 100-day intensive campaign of the Nasha Mukht Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan and witnessed participation from a large number of stakeholders.

The programme featured cultural performances, awareness skits, speeches and interactive sessions aimed at highlighting the ill effects of drug abuse and promoting a drug-free society.

Addressing the gathering, Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Rajpora, Ghulam Mohi-ud-din Mir, highlighted the menace of drug abuse and stressed the need for collective efforts to eliminate it from society. He appreciated the initiative of the 100-day intensive campaign and urged people from all walks of life to actively participate in the campaign for a better and healthier future.

Member of Legislative Assembly Pulwama, Waheed-ur-Rehman Para, emphasised the importance of engaging youth in constructive activities and linking them with government-sponsored schemes to safeguard them from drug abuse. He also emphasized the role of society and local communities in preventing substance abuse and supporting affected individuals.

Highlighting the role of youth, he said that the administration is taking

sustained measures for the rehabilitation of victims of drug abuse and their reintegration into society by linking them with various government schemes. He added that youth clubs across wards and Panchayat halqas are being revitalised and strengthened to act as platforms for positive engagement.

Addressing the gathering, Vikramjit Singh who attended the programme as Chief Guest, said that drug menace has adversely impacted society and highlighted various factors that lead youth towards substance abuse. He advised young people to introspect and understand the devastating impact of drugs on individuals, families and the socio-economic fabric of society.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Pulwama said that the 100-day campaign has been launched with the objective of eliminating drug abuse through coordinated efforts of all stakeholders. He added that the campaign is being implemented through a three-pronged strategy focusing on Information, Education and Communication (IEC), treatment, rehabilitation and prevention, and enforcement across the district.

"A whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach remains central to the successful implementation of the campaign," said the DC, while appreciating the enthusiastic participation of various sections of society in the event and the campaign at large.

He called for coordinated efforts among the administration, police, civil society and community stakeholders to ensure effective implementation of the Nasha Mukht Abhiyan and to make it a mass movement.

On the occasion, Commissioner Secretary led the participants in taking the Nasha Mukht pledge and also took part in a signature campaign along with attendees to mark their support towards the successful implementation of the campaign.

The event was attended by MLA Rajpora Ghulam Mohi-ud-din Mir; MLA Pulwama Waheed-ur-Rehman Para; former DDC member Dadsara Avtar Singh; political representatives; members of Trade Federation Pulwama; Auqaf Committee members; civil society members; social activists; religious leaders; students; and officers from paramilitary forces, district administration and police including Senior Superintendent of Police Pulwama, Tanushree, and Commandant CRPF 182/183 Battalion, among others.

Later in the day, the Commissioner Secretary held a review meeting with Deputy Commissioner Pulwama, Senior Superintendent of Police Pulwama and other district and sectoral officers to assess the implementation of the ongoing 100-day intensive campaign under the Nasha Mukht Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan.

Meanwhile, as part of the campaign, a series of awareness programmes and activities were conducted across municipal wards and Panchayat halqas in areas including Gulistan Aripal, Amirabad Dadsara and Prichoo Pulwama, involving local communities and focusing on themes related to a drug-free society.

Besides, as part of the campaign, special poster-making competitions on the theme "Say No to Drugs and Yes to Life" were organised across educational institutions of the district.

## Religious Leaders mobilized for Drug Prevention in landmark Nasha Mukht Abhiyan at Bandipora

Faith-Based Community response strengthens District's 100-Day Anti-Narcotics Campaign

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**BANDIPORA, APRIL 16:** In a strategic move to leverage faith-based institutions and moral authority in combating substance abuse, the District Administration Bandipora convened a high-level interactive programme with Imams, Molvis, and religious scholars at Kaloosa Auditorium on Thursday, as part of the Nasha Mukht Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan's 100-Day Mission Mode initiative.

Presided over by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Zaffar Husson Shawl, the gathering brought together religious leaders and community representatives from across the district to chart a coordinated approach to drug abuse prevention through faith-



based messaging and community engagement.

Speaking on the occasion, the ADC emphasized that substance abuse represents not merely a law-and-order challenge, but a

profound moral and social crisis demanding a multi-stakeholder response anchored in shared values. "Religious institutions wield unparalleled influence in shaping societal norms and guiding youth,"

he noted, underscoring the critical role of mosques, sermons, and faith-based discourse in preventing drug addiction.

The interactive session witnessed substantive engagement from religious scholars, including Mufti Nazir Ahmad Qasmi and Maulana Khursheed Ahmad Nadvi, who articulated the Islamic perspective on substance abuse and pledged institutional support for the campaign. Participants stressed the importance of value-based education, awareness generation through religious gatherings, and grassroots vigilance in preventing narcotics consumption.

Speakers highlighted the devastating toll of addiction on families and communities, calling

for strengthened coordination between the administration and religious leadership to amplify prevention messaging across traditional networks. The consensus emphasized that faith-based interventions, rooted in ethical teachings and community accountability, represent a powerful counterforce to drug abuse. The leaders collectively resolved to propagate the anti-drug message during Friday sermons starting tomorrow.

The District Administration emphasized its commitment to inclusive governance, engaging all sections of society, including religious institutions, civil society, and community organizations, in the collective effort to establish a drug-free Bandipora.

## Bond yields seen easing after March volatility; RBI policy, global cues to guide trend: Crisil

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**NEW DELHI, APRIL 16** : Despite sharp volatility in March, domestic bond yields are expected to ease in the near term, supported by stable monetary policy and improving market conditions, according to a report by CRISIL released here on Thursday.

The report said the yield on the 10-year benchmark government security, which rose to 7.02 per cent at the end of March, is likely to soften to 6.85 - 6.95 per cent by April-end and remain broadly steady in the following months.

March saw significant turbulence in the debt market, with yields rising across segments due to a spike in crude oil prices, firm US Treasury yields, geopolitical tensions in West Asia and pressure on the rupee. The surge in global oil prices, triggered by escalating tensions involving Iran, played a key role in driving investor caution and pushing yields higher.

However, the outlook remains relatively stable as domestic mac-



roeconomic fundamentals continue to provide support. The report expects the Reserve Bank of India to maintain its current policy stance, with the Monetary Policy Committee likely to keep interest rates unchanged amid a greater focus on supporting growth.

India's economic outlook remains resilient, with GDP growth projected at around 7.1 per cent in the next fiscal year, backed by strong consumption and steady

investment activity. Inflation is expected to stay within manageable levels, even as global energy prices remain elevated, partly due to government measures cushioning the impact on consumers.

Liquidity conditions, which tightened briefly in March due to advance tax outflows and higher credit demand, are expected to remain adequate, supported by active central bank intervention through liquidity management

operations.

On the global front, developments such as crude oil price movements, geopolitical tensions and policy actions by the Federal Reserve will continue to influence bond yields. Expectations of rate cuts by the US central bank later this year could provide some relief to emerging markets, including India.

The report also highlighted that despite higher government borrowing, demand for bonds has remained strong, with state loan auctions witnessing robust subscription levels, indicating healthy investor appetite.

However, foreign investor sentiment remained cautious, with net outflows from the domestic debt market recorded in March amid rising global yields and a stronger dollar.

Overall, while intermittent volatility cannot be ruled out due to global uncertainties, the domestic bond market is expected to stabilise, with yields gradually easing as policy support and macroeconomic stability take hold. UNI

## Ashok Leyland launches twin fuel variants of DOST, DOST XL

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**CHENNAI, APR 16** : Leading CV makers Ashok Leyland, the Indian flagship of the Hinduja Group, on Thursday announced the launch of Twin Fuel variants of its popular Light Commercial Vehicles (LCVs) – DOST and DOST XL, reinforcing its commitment to delivering sustainable customer-centric mobility solutions in the LCV segment.

The vehicles were unveiled by Mr. Amandeep Singh, President – LCV, IO, Defence and Power Solutions, Ashok Leyland, in the presence of Mr. Viplay Shah, Head – LCV Business, a company release said.

The newly launched twin fuel models are equipped with advanced technology that allows seamless switching between Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and petrol, offering customers unmatched flexibility and peace of mind.

The twin fuel technology addresses one of the most pressing concerns for CNG vehicle users – range anxiety and the fear of not finding a CNG pump along their route. With the dual-fuel capability, customers can seamlessly switch between CNG and Petrol, ensuring uninterrupted journeys and the freedom to travel longer distances

without compromise.

Amandeep Singh said: "The launch of our twin fuel Dost and Dost XL is a significant step in our journey towards sustainable and customer-focused innovation.

These vehicles empower operators to drive in the cleaner and greener CNG mode and switch to Petrol as a backup fuel when required, ensuring overall lower operating costs and reduced emissions. We believe this will set new benchmarks in the LCV segment and reinforce our leadership in providing future-ready mobility solutions."

Viplay Shah said "the Dost range already has the trust of hundreds of thousands of small businesses. With the introduction of twin fuel variants, we are empowering small businesses and fleet operators with greater choice and efficiency.

The vehicles are designed to provide operational flexibility by running on CNG for cost efficiency and petrol for extended range and eliminating availability anxiety, while delivering lower emissions that reduce the carbon footprint and support India's sustainability goals. We believe this innovation will resonate strongly with entrepreneurs and fleet operators across India."UNI

## March volatility hits markets amid FII outflows, crude spike: Swastika Investmart

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**NEW DELHI, APRIL 16** : Even as recent ceasefire signals between the US and Iran and diplomatic engagements, including talks in Islamabad, have raised hopes of easing geopolitical tensions, Indian financial markets remain cautious after witnessing a sharp bout of turbulence in March.

Santosh Meena, Head of Research at Swastika Investmart, said investor sentiment remains cautious and volatile, with the West Asia conflict involving Iran, Israel and the US continuing to drive a global "risk-off" mood.

He said persistent concerns over oil supply disruptions, higher crude prices and imported inflation have kept investors on edge.

He noted that foreign institutional investors (FIIs) have stayed net sellers into early April, reflecting heightened geopolitical uncertainty and a clear flight to safety.

However, domestic institu-

tional investors (DIIs) have provided strong and consistent support through sustained buying, effectively cushioning the markets against sharper declines.

Despite global headwinds, Meena said overall sentiment remains resilient on the back of strong domestic fundamentals, though markets are highly sensitive to any escalation in the conflict, movements in crude oil prices and the Reserve Bank of India's data-dependent policy approach.

He said markets are expected to remain range-bound and volatile until clarity emerges on the duration and intensity of the West Asia situation.

Reflecting on recent developments, he said March 2026 was one of the most turbulent months in recent years, as benchmark indices such as the Nifty and Sensex witnessed sharp sell-offs.

The Nifty, in some assessments, declined by around 13 per cent during the month amid broad-based risk aversion.

The sell-off was triggered by

a "perfect storm" of factors, including escalation of the West Asia conflict, a sharp spike in crude oil prices to above USD 100-115 per barrel, and record FII outflows amounting to about Rs 1.14 lakh crore, marking the worst monthly exodus on record.

This led to heavy risk aversion, broad-based selling and significant erosion of investor wealth.

Simultaneously, the Indian rupee came under severe pressure, hitting multiple record lows and briefly weakening past the 94-95 mark against the US dollar.

The depreciation was driven by surging oil import bills, increased demand for the dollar, a strong global USD environment and sustained FII outflows.

With India importing nearly 85-90 per cent of its crude requirements, the spike in prices intensified pressures on the external account.

Meena said the combined impact of geopolitical shocks, rising energy prices and capital

outflows heightened fears of imported inflation, widened current account deficit concerns and amplified overall market volatility.

While DII buying offered some support, the month still ended with significant wealth erosion.

On the policy front, he said addressing rupee depreciation requires a mix of structural and short-term measures that complement the Reserve Bank of India's forex interventions.

He emphasised the need to accelerate foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows through faster approvals, sector-specific incentives and deeper trade agreements to offset FII volatility and strengthen the capital account.

He also called for aggressively boosting exports through production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes, improved logistics and new free trade agreements to improve the trade balance and generate natural dollar inflows.

Reducing oil import dependence remains critical, he said,

suggesting expansion of strategic petroleum reserves, acceleration of renewable energy adoption, promotion of domestic exploration and improved energy efficiency.

Further, Meena stressed maintaining fiscal discipline to keep the current account deficit in check and avoid excessive populist spending that could widen deficits and erode investor confidence.

He also highlighted the need for enhanced policy coordination with the RBI, including clear communication and targeted reforms such as easing norms for foreign portfolio investment in select sectors, while allowing a market-driven exchange rate flexibility.

Overall, he said that while recent geopolitical developments may offer some relief, markets are likely to remain volatile and range-bound until greater clarity emerges, with domestic institutional strength continuing to play a key stabilising role. UNI

## India growing twice as fast as average global growth: IMF

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**NEW DELHI, APRIL 16** : International Monetary Fund (IMF) chief Kristalina Georgieva on Thursday said India's growth rate is more than twice the average global growth.

"Look at India today. India's growth rate is more than twice the average global growth. That is happening because the country has strong fundamentals," said IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva.

Georgieva attributed India's resilience to factors such as macroeconomic stability and robust domestic demand, which continue to support momentum.



IMF chief said there are no signs of a sharp slowdown in India's growth path, even as the global economy faces headwinds from geopolitical tensions and supply disruptions linked to the West Asia conflict.

The IMF had projected that the Indian economy is expected to grow at 6.5 per cent in 2027 despite escalating tensions in West Asia.

The 6.5 per cent growth projection makes India the fastest-growing major economy in 2026.

She further cautioned that policymakers should remain attentive to developments in the financial sector, and pointed out that parts of the financial system appear to be holding substantial liquidity and relative strength, suggesting the need for close monitoring to ensure stability as conditions evolve.

For the global economy, the IMF had lowered its forecast due to the West Asia tensions. It expects the global economy to grow by 3.1 per cent this year, a slowdown from its earlier forecast of 3.3 per cent.

The IMF slashed its 2026 forecast for the Middle East and Central Asia by 2 percentage points to 1.9 per cent.

The IMF has also warned that countries should skip fuel subsidies to help their citizens deal with a shortage of oil and the corresponding surge in energy prices, and instead opt for targeted, temporary cash transfers that do not obscure higher prices while keeping demand high. UNI

## Aurobindo Pharma arm signs new pact with Merck Sharp & Dohme

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**HYDERABAD, APR 16** : Aurobindo Pharma on Wednesday announced that its subsidiary, TheraNym Biologics Private Limited, has executed an additional product schedule with Merck Sharp & Dohme Singapore Trading Pte Ltd (MSD), expanding their existing contract manufacturing organisation (CMO) agreement.

The development follows the earlier arrangement between the companies announced in May 2024 and further strengthens their ongoing partnership, the Hyderabad-based pharmaceutical major said.

Under the newly signed product schedule, TheraNym Biologics will set up a greenfield project to establish a large-scale mammalian drug substance manufacturing facility, referred to as "Unit 2."

The facility will have a total bioreactor capacity of 60 KL, aimed at enhancing biologics production capabilities.

As part of the agreement, TheraNym will build the manufacturing facility, produce the drug substances, and supply them to MSD.

The company will invest approximately USD 150-175 million to establish the facility, which will include mammalian cell culture bioreactors with an aggregate capacity of 60,000 litres, along with downstream purification infrastructure for drug substance production.

The expansion marks a significant step in scaling up Aurobindo Pharma's biologics manufacturing capabilities and deepening its collaboration with MSD in the global pharmaceutical space.

The disclosure was made under Regulation 30 of the SEBI Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements Regulations 2015. UNI

## LPL Financial opens India's first GCC in Hyderabad, Plans 700 hiring this year

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**HYDERABAD, APRIL 16** : LPL Financial, a leading U.S.-based wealth management firm with over USD 2.4 trillion in assets under management, on Wednesday inaugurated its first Global Capability Centre (GCC) in India at Hyderabad, marking a major step in expanding its global operations and technology-driven innovation. The company currently has a workforce of about 30 employees at the centre and plans to scale up headcount to around 700 within this year, officials said.

The GCC is presently operating from a temporary facility at Prestige Sky Tech, Tower-1, in Nanakramguda's Financial District, and is expected to shift to its permanent campus in Tower-2 by early 2027.

The inauguration ceremony was attended virtually by Telangana IT

Minister D. Sridhar Babu, along with senior leadership of the company from the United States and other financial industry leaders.

LPL Financial supports more than 32,000 financial advisors and around 1,200 financial institutions, managing assets on behalf of nearly 8 million clients across the United States.

According to the company, the Hyderabad GCC will support key enterprise functions including technology development, operations, product innovation, data analytics, and risk management. The centre is expected to enhance advisory and client services, strengthen platform resilience, and accelerate next-generation capabilities.

Speaking on the occasion, D. Sridhar Babu said the investment reinforces Telangana's vision of transforming Hyderabad into a global hub for wealth management and

financial services innovation. He added that Hyderabad is emerging as a global capital for GCCs, hosting a significant share of such centres in India. Highlighting India's fintech leadership, the Minister referred to innovations such as Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Real Time Gross Settlement as globally impactful financial technologies.

Greg Gates, Chief Technology and Information Officer at LPL Financial, said the new centre represents a key milestone in building a more agile and innovation-driven organisation by leveraging global talent.

Ramesh Kaza, Executive Vice President and Head of Country for the GCC, said the launch reflects strong confidence in Hyderabad's talent ecosystem and added that the centre is expected to evolve into a major capability hub over the next three to five years.

## Trust key to digital growth: CII conference highlights AI, cyber resilience

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**HYDERABAD, APR 16** : Industry leaders on Wednesday underscored that trust has become the cornerstone of success in the digital economy, as the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) hosted a conference on "Beyond Security: Driving Trust through AI, Cyber Resilience and Data Protection" in Hyderabad.

CII Telangana Chairman M Goutham Reddy said growth

without trust is fragile, stressing that AI adoption must be supported by strong governance, transparency, and accountability frameworks.

He noted that while large enterprises are advancing in cybersecurity preparedness, MSMEs continue to face challenges due to limited resources, calling for collaborative and shared solutions.

Speakers highlighted that cybersecurity and data protection have moved beyond IT func-

tions to become boardroom priorities, directly impacting business continuity, brand reputation, and regulatory compliance. With organisations increasingly embracing AI and cloud technologies, experts warned of evolving risks, including the rise of "shadow AI," where unauthorised tools may expose sensitive data.

Industry experts emphasised the need for "secure-by-design" AI systems, robust identity and access management, and pre-

paredness for India's Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) framework.

They also pointed out that compliance alone is not sufficient, calling instead for a culture of continuous cyber resilience and proactive risk management.

The conference featured panel discussions on key strategic decisions around technology adoption, vendor management, and securing complex digital ecosystems. Experts

shared practical insights on balancing innovation with security, while ensuring scalability and cost efficiency.

Officials also highlighted the role of trusted digital identity systems and multi-factor authentication in safeguarding AI-driven environments.

The overarching message of the conference was that trust must be embedded into every aspect of digital transformation to ensure secure, ethical and sustainable growth. UNI



# Training for the turnaround - Pooran puts on a show on match eve

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**BENGALURU:** He had just sent five deliveries in a row sailing out of the ground. The backswing was fluid, the contact precise, and his follow-through almost nonchalant.

At one point, about half-an-hour into his range-hitting session at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru, the ground staff closed in on the nets, ready to dismantle them upon receiving instructions that Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) were to shut shop by 8.30pm.

Then a message went out saying Pooran would be batting on. So the ground staff queued up behind the nets and watched what was like a highlights reel on loop. Pooran seemed to be batting in a bubble, intent on hitting just about anything that came his way.

You could understand why he didn't want to leave. This feeling of bat meeting ball, the blaze of sixes and the purity in his strokes have eluded him so far this season. The joy as he scythed yorkers, swung through length balls and disdainfully flicked full deliveries was easy to see.

As he finally wound up, a few of the ground staff walked across to shake hands and thank him for the evening's entertainment. Pooran responded with a smile and a gleeful look at his willow, tapping its middle as if to say that

he had rediscovered the sweet spot.

Four innings at IPL 2026 have brought Pooran 41 runs at a strike rate of 85 - the lowest among batters who have faced at least 30 deliveries. Against fast bowling, the returns are even more concerning: an average of 5 and a strike rate of 63.

Pooran's dismissal to Prasad Krishna in the previous game, against Gujarat Titans, summed it up as he skewed a slower bouncer tamely to mid-off. That afternoon in Ahmedabad, Pooran scored 19 off 21 balls, 12 of which were dots; his strike rate was nudged only by two back-to-back sixes off Rashid Khan.

This, after all, is the same Pooran who lit up the previous season by hitting 527 runs at a strike rate pushing 197, dismantling attacks with ferocity and freedom, mostly at No. 3. He is the same Pooran who then stunned many by stepping away from T20 internationals when at his peak. And yet, since 2024, only Abhishek Sharma has hit more sixes than Pooran.

Since IPL 2025, however, there has been a noticeable dip in his returns across multiple T20 leagues (MLC, CPL, SA20 and ILT20). He has been striking in the 130s and lower. For context, between June 2024 and the end of IPL 2025, he struck at 164.

## Finch to KKR: Look Beyond Cameron Green Price Tag

■ AGENCIES

**KOLKATA:** Five games. Zero wins. One point thanks to a washout. Bar the game against Lucknow Super Giants, which went down to the last ball, Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) haven't looked like they were going to win any of their other matches in IPL 2026.

Their pace attack is depleted. One of their two primary spinners is out of form. Their batting just doesn't seem to have the firepower. And, as Aaron Finch put it, "some of their tactics were very questionable" against Chennai Super Kings (CSK) on Tuesday night, even if opening the batting with Sunil Narine suggested some thinking behind the scenes. But if that was in response to being set 193 to win and a positive step, Ajinkya Rahane and Angkrish Raghuvanshi in their partnership - 50 in 31 balls - showed little enterprise.

"Certainly wasn't pretty," Finch said on ESPNcricinfo's TimeOut show after the game. "A lot of question marks about KKR, particularly in that run chase. Some of their tactics were very questionable. We praised the decision for Sunil Narine to go to the top of the order. It didn't come off today [24 in 17 balls], but it was something different. At least they tried it."

"But some of the other decisions were a bit



strange. And they were never in the hunt. We talked about Rahane and Raghuvanshi batting together, about how that can be such a stalling [factor]. And their partnership wasn't bad, but there's still no point of difference in that partnership. They don't take the bowling on. They don't get to a point where the opposition captain has to make some serious decisions about reshuffling their team."

Is it likely that Narine will continue to open? As recently as IPL 2024 - which KKR won - Narine had opened the innings regularly, and scored 488 runs at a strike rate of 180.74.

"He's obviously had a lot of success in the batting for Kolkata in the IPL, so I guess we've got a lot of options at the top of the order, and then we thought we'd try something different in this game," Tim Southee, KKR's bowling coach, said at the press conference after the match.

## Poor luck, poorer choices - KKR's season of rocks and hard places

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**NEW DELHI:** At the auction table, they built a side that had top-order firepower and variety in their bowling attack. By their first game of IPL 2026, they were left with Blessing Muzarabani and Umran Malik as their only capped fast bowlers.

On Tuesday, Cameron Green took over that mantle. He had bowled his full quota of four overs eight times in 74 previous T20s. And it had been three years since a team had asked him to share new-ball duties. Choosing to bowl with an attack like that is, uhm, one way to go.

Chennai Super Kings showed no mercy, scoring 72 for 2 in the powerplay, after which the spinners got the ball to grip and scoring scored down. KKR would have known that this chase - 193

- was all about the powerplay. So they pushed Sunil Narine up the order, which, whether it worked or not, throws up questions. Ajinkya Rahane's best position is opening the batting. But if this is the situation that plays out when the team is in need of big runs in the first six overs, it paints their captain in less than ideal light.

As much as depth is good in T20 cricket, the top order might be the exception to the rule. Because when you have too many of those, it means one or more will always have to bat out of position. This is part of why Green's output is 56 runs in five innings - he hasn't batted in the same position two games in a row. Against CSK, he came out at No. 6. He's batted there, and lower, in the IPL seven times and has a highest score of 17 not out.



When he's been in the top three, he's hit back-to-back fifties and a hundred as well.

KKR have reason to feel ag-

grieved for sitting winless after five matches. They lost so much of their bowling firepower - Harshit Rana and Akash Deep

to injuries and Mustafzur Rahman to non-cricketing reasons, and are yet to have Matheesha Pathirana in their squad - that even getting on the park feels like a pretty cool thing. CSK lost just one bowler - Nathan Ellis - and they were barely holding it together in their first three matches. But the choices KKR have made with their batting line-up, and even with the toss, just make it feel like they are complicating things further. Ahead of the game, local boy R Ashwin was on the broadcast talking about the pitch and conditions. He said the predominantly red-soil make-up of the pitch would give the bowlers something to work with. There was other data that indicated this surface would lend itself to defending a total. When the coin came down in KKR's favour, Rahane chose to do the exact opposite.

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