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Amarnath Yatra to Cross Three Lakh Pilgrims Today

Over 24,000 Devotees Visit Shrine on Monday as Administration Credits Improved Facilities and Security for Rising Footfall

■ HT News Desk / Agencies

SRINAGAR, JULY 13: The annual Amarnath pilgrimage is set to surpass the three-lakh pilgrim milestone today, marking another significant achievement for one of the country's largest religious journeys amid a sustained rise in daily arrivals and enhanced arrangements for devotees.

Official figures showed that 24,259 pilgrims visited the holy cave shrine on Monday, raising the cumulative number of pilgrims who have completed the pilgrimage to 275,618. The day's



visitors included 17,076 men, 6,407 women, 295 children, 182 religious ascetics, 18 women ascetics, seven transgender pilgrims and 274 security personnel.

Officials said the steady increase in pilgrim arrivals reflects growing public confidence in the extensive security and logistical arrangements put in place for this year's pilgrimage. They attributed the rising turnout to coordinated efforts by the civil administration and security agencies to ensure a safe, comfortable and well-

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'Pashu Seva' feeds 10,000 animals daily near Holy Cave Shrine

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

PAHALGAM, JUL 13: An initiative titled 'Pashu Seva' is providing daily feed to nearly 10,000 horses, mules and other pack animals that ferry Amarnath pilgrims along the arduous pilgrimage route, ensuring their well-being throughout the Yatra.

Shree Pashupati Nath Sewak, a Delhi-based langar organisation, has been providing free

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BJP Hits Back at Omar Abdullah With Rs100 Cr Legal Defamation Notice

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

JAMMU, JUL 13: The Jammu and Kashmir unit of the BJP on Monday served a legal notice to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah over his claim that the national party had attempted to bribe National Conference legislators with cash and ministerial berths in a bid to topple his government.

Calling the allegations "false, baseless and defamatory," the BJP has demanded a written retraction and an unconditional public apology within seven days. It has warned that failure to comply will result



in civil and criminal proceedings, including a defamation suit seeking Rs 100 crore in damages.

The chief minister, while addressing National Conference (NC) workers at Hazratbal last week, alleged that the BJP is trying to bring down his government by engineering a split in his party. He also claimed that an NC MLA from Jammu told him that he was offered Rs 20-30 crore and a ministerial berth to switch

sides to the saffron camp. The notice has been issued through advocate

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CS Takes Stock of Cancer Care Roadmap

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 13: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today chaired a high-level meeting to assess the initial formulation of a comprehensive Cancer Care Strategy for the Union Territory aimed at creating an integrated, accessible and technology-enabled cancer care ecosystem across Jammu & Kashmir.

Among others, the meeting was attended by Director, SKIMS; Mission Director, National Health Mission; Director, Tata Memorial Centre (TMC), Chandigarh; Principals of Government Medical Colleges; Director, Health Services, Kashmir/Jammu; Faculty Members of GMCs and other senior officers of the Health & Medical Education



Department. The strategy, prepared by the Health &



Medical Education Department in

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J&K Notifies Tenancy Rules to Strengthen Landlord-Tenant Relations

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, JULY 13: In a major reform aimed at bringing greater transparency and legal certainty to the rental housing sector, the Jammu and Kashmir Government has notified the Jammu and Kashmir Tenancy Rules, 2026, providing a comprehensive framework to govern landlord-tenant relations across the Union Territory.

The Rules, notified by the Housing and Urban Development Department, operationalise the provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Tenancy Act passed by the Legislative Assembly and prescribe detailed procedures for registration

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Hot, humid weather to continue in J&K, heavy rain from Jul 18: MeT

Warms of flash floods, mudslides, landslides in vulnerable areas



■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, JUL 13: Jammu and Kashmir is likely to witness generally hot and humid weather over the next few days, with the

● Turn on Page 2

Jammu tops mercury chart, Gulmarg remains coolest in J&K

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, JULY 13: Most parts of Jammu and Kashmir remained dry on Monday, with day temperatures hovering close to normal across the Union Territory, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

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Army GOC Reviews Operational Preparedness Future Warfare Initiatives In Rajouri

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JULY 13: General Officer Commanding of White Knight Corps Lt Gen P K Mishra on Monday visited the headquarters of Ace of Spades division and Counter-insurgency Romeo Force in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri and was briefed on precision strike capabilities and initiatives to strengthen readiness for future warfare, army said.

During the visit, Lt Gen Mishra commended all ranks for their indomitable vigilance, operational excellence and sustained commitment towards maintaining a secure and stable environment.

"GOC White Knight Corps visited operational locations of Ace of Spades Division

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Major Boost to Medical Education in J&K

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 13: In a significant development for the medical education sector and aspiring medical students in the Union Territory, the Health and Medical Education Department today announced that the National Medical Commission (NMC) has granted permission to increase the annual MBBS intake capacity at Government Medical College (GMC) Jammu.

The Medical Assessment and Rating Board (MARB) of the NMC has issued the Letter of Permission (LoP) approving an additional 50 MBBS seats for the college. With this approval, the total annual intake capacity

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18 Amarnath pilgrims injured in Chanderkote accident

DC Ramban leads swift rescue, relief operation

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

RAMBAN, JULY 13: The district administration Ramban, under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Ramban Mohammad Alyas Khan, in close coordination with the Police Department, carried out a prompt rescue and relief operation

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LADAKH UT CREATES NEW ENGINEERING DIVISIONS

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

LEH, JULY 13: In another major administrative reform aimed at accelerating development and strengthening governance at the grassroots level, the Union Territory Administration of Ladakh has approved the creation of new engineering divisions across the newly created districts.

The decision is part of the Administration's broader strategy to decentralise governance, improve infrastructure planning, and ensure the timely execution of development projects in remote and border areas of Ladakh.

Under the new restructuring, a total of 11 engineering divisions have been sanctioned. These include seven Public Works Department (PWD) divisions, of which five divisions will function under the

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DGP reviews security grid in Srinagar

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 13: Director General of Police (DGP) Nalin Prabhat on Monday conducted an extensive review of the security grid in Downtown Srinagar, assessing the operational preparedness of the Jammu and Kashmir Police and allied security agencies amid heightened security arrangements in the Valley.

The review, attended by Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir V.K. Birdi, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Srinagar and other senior officers, focused on the prevailing security scenario, deployment strategy and the overall readiness of forces deployed across sensitive locations in the old city.

During the visit, the DGP inspected key deployment points, interacted with officers and personnel on the ground, and reviewed measures put



in place to maintain law and order and respond effectively to any emerging security challenge.

Emphasising the need for constant vigilance, Prabhat directed officers to strengthen coordination among various security agencies, enhance

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Crime Branch Urges Public to Report Job Fraud Without Delay

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, JULY 13: Calling on citizens to remain vigilant against fraudulent employment schemes, the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) Kashmir of the Crime Branch has urged the public to immediately report any incidents of job fraud, forged appointment letters or suspicious recruitment offers, following the arrest of a wanted fraud suspect allegedly involved in multiple employment scams across the Valley.

The appeal came after the arrest of Abdul Majeed Mir, a resident of Lashtiyal, Kalaroos in Kupwara district, who is accused of orchestrating a series of cheating and forgery cases by luring job seekers with false promises of government employment.

According to the Crime Branch, the accused was apprehended in execution of a long-pending

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CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....

Amarnath.....

managed experience for devotees.

The influx of pilgrims also remained strong at the Jammu base camp, from where the 12th batch comprising 7,754 pilgrims departed for Kashmir in the early hours of Monday under multi-layered security cover.

The convoy, consisting of 303 vehicles, was divided between the two traditional routes to the shrine. A total of 2,896 pilgrims travelled towards the Baltal base camp in 133 vehicles, while 4,858 pilgrims proceeded via the Pahalgam route in 170 vehicles. The batch included 5,383 men, 2,071 women, 16 children, 222 religious ascetics, 58 women ascetics and four transgender pilgrims.

Officials said continuous improvements in accommodation, transport, sanitation, medical care and security have significantly enhanced the overall pilgrimage experience. They added that these measures, coupled with efficient coordination among various departments, have contributed to the smooth conduct of the annual pilgrimage.

The administration also noted that encouraging feedback from pilgrims has become an important factor behind the growing participation. Many devotees have praised the arrangements and expressed satisfaction with the facilities provided throughout the journey.

Pilgrim from Maharashtra said the arrangements had exceeded expectations, describing the pilgrimage as peaceful, secure and spiritually fulfilling. The devotees said the positive experience would encourage more people from family and friends to undertake the journey in the coming days.

Officials further said the increasing number of registered pilgrims departing from Jammu each day, along with heavy demand for on-the-spot registration, indicates sustained enthusiasm for the pilgrimage. They added that all arrangements are being reviewed regularly to ensure every pilgrim is provided with a safe, comfortable and seamless journey to the holy shrine.

‘Pashu Seva’.....

fodder, clean drinking water and basic care to animals besides running its traditional 56-bhog community kitchen for pilgrims and service providers during the yatra.

Talking to news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Rajiv Sethi, a representative of the organisation, said around 8,000 to 10,000 animals are being fed daily during the pilgrimage.

"For the last three years, we have been serving near the holy cave. Along with food for devotees, pony handlers and other people associated with the yatra, we also provide free fodder and care for horses, mules and other animals. These animals are an integral part of the pilgrimage and deserve equal care and respect," he said.

Sethi said nearly 200 volunteers are engaged in the service and continue to work throughout the yatra.

"Everything is being carried out with the blessings of God. From the first day till the conclusion of the yatra, our team remains committed to serving both pilgrims and the animals. We will continue this service in the coming years as well," he added.

A pony handler said the service has brought major relief to those dependent on the animals for their livelihood.

"There are very few organisations that think about the welfare of these animals. Timely fodder and water keep our ponies healthy and fit for work. It not only reduces our burden but also helps us take better care of them," he said.

He said that many pony owners travel long distances and cannot always arrange sufficient fodder on their own.

"This service is a blessing for us. Healthy animals mean a safer journey for pilgrims and a better livelihood for our families. We hope such services continue in the years ahead," the pony handler said—(KNO)

BJP Hits.....

Parimoksh Seth on the instructions of BJP J-K president and Rajya Sabha MP Sat Paul Sharma. It contends that the chief minister's statements have caused serious damage to the reputation and public standing of the BJP and its office-bearers.

A BJP spokesperson informed that the party has sent the notice to the chief minister.

According to the three-page notice, Abdullah alleged that BJP functionaries had approached certain National Conference MLAs from the Jammu region with offers of Rs 20-30 crore, ministerial berths and restoration of statehood in an attempt to persuade them to switch allegiance to the BJP.

It refers to the chief minister's allegation that a senior BJP office-bearer, who is also a lawyer practising in the Supreme Court, allegedly played a role in offering the inducements.

Rejecting the allegations, the BJP has described them as "entirely untrue, malicious and without any factual basis."

The notice states that the allegations were deliberately made to tarnish the party's image and have been widely circulated, thereby causing substantial reputational harm.

The legal notice asserts that the allegations amount to defamation under both civil and criminal law and calls upon the chief minister to withdraw his charges in writing.

"Issue an unconditional public apology within seven days of receiving the notice. Refrain from publishing or circulating any further defamatory material concerning the BJP. Immediately cease and desist from making or repeating any such statements," it said.

The BJP has warned that if the demands are not complied with within the stipulated period, it will initiate appropriate civil and criminal proceedings before a competent court. These would include a defamation suit seeking damages of Rs 100 crore, apart from other legal remedies available under the law.

Talking to PTI, J&K BJP president defended the party's decision to serve legal notice on Abdullah and said the serious allegations levelled by him were intended to tarnish the image of the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"These people repeatedly try to tarnish the image of the BJP and the Prime Minister. Their focus has always been on finding ways to damage the reputation of a leader who is respected across the world...our legal department has issued him a notice. Keeping in mind his stature, the BJP has decided to seek compensation of Rs 100 crore from him. Given the damage he has caused, even this amount cannot truly compensate for the harm done. Through his remarks, he has attempted to tarnish the image of a political party that is today the largest in the world, has been in power for the past 12 years, and has been working in the interest of the country," Sharma said.

He said even in Jammu and Kashmir, significant development has taken place especially over the past two years after the formation of the NC government. "Abdullah himself has stood alongside the Prime Minister at inauguration ceremonies. Yet despite that, he attempted to damage the image of the Prime Minister's political party."

Rejecting the National Conference's invitation to join its proposed statehood protest in Delhi on July 20, Sharma said the BJP had full faith in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assurance that Jammu and Kashmir's statehood would be restored at an appropriate time.

"We have faith in the Prime Minister's assurance. If a leader or a Chief Minister does not have faith in what the Prime Minister has said, how can we stop him? He is free to go—we have never said he should not," Sharma said.

Accusing the National Conference of creating conditions that had delayed the restoration of statehood, Sharma alleged, "On one hand, they even invite separatists to join them. If separatism has grown in Jammu and Kashmir, these are the very people responsible for creating that environment. That is also why the restoration of statehood has been delayed."

Explaining what the Prime Minister meant by an "appropriate time", the BJP leader said Jammu and Kashmir must continue to move towards peace, stability and a conducive atmosphere. "We should all work together to create such an environment so that statehood can be restored," he added. (Agencies)

CS Takes.....

consultation with leading oncology experts and national institutions, envisages a holistic framework covering cancer prevention, early detection, screening, diagnosis, treatment, palliative care, research, capacity building and digital health interventions.

Reviewing the proposed roadmap, the Chief Secretary observed that cancer is emerging as a major public health challenge and called for a coordinated, evidence-based and patient-centric response to improve health outcomes across the Union Territory. He directed the department to ensure time-bound implementation of all proposed interventions through effective institutional coordination, regular monitoring and measurable outcomes.

The Chief Secretary underscored the importance of establishing a robust preventive oncology framework across all Government Medical Colleges in the Union Territory to promote early detection and timely intervention against cancer. He stressed the need for simultaneously strengthening both human resource capacity and the requisite healthcare infrastructure so that quality diagnostic and treatment facilities are made available closer to the patients, thereby minimizing the need for travelling to distant facilities.

He directed the Health Department to undertake a phased capacity-building programme by training the required specialist manpower, including Radiation Safety Officer (RSO)-certified personnel, while concurrently upgrading the necessary medical equipment and infrastructure in all medical colleges. He observed that these interventions would significantly enhance the quality and accessibility of cancer care services across Jammu & Kashmir.

The Chief Secretary further instructed that the entire strategy should be implemented in a well-defined, phase-wise manner over the coming years to ensure equitable distribution of oncology facilities across the Union Territory. He also directed each of the expert committees constituted under the Cancer Care Strategy to prepare detailed, time-bound implementation plans within their respective domains.

He said that these implementation plans should be examined and harmonised by the Apex Committee chaired by Dr. Sudeep Gupta, Director, Tata Memorial Centre (TMC), Mumbai and other experts here to ensure their technical soundness, feasibility and effective execution.

Highlighting the strategic collaboration with the Tata Memorial Centre, the Chief Secretary observed that the partnership with one of the country's premier cancer care institutions would provide invaluable technical guidance, facilitate adoption of national best practices and significantly accelerate the implementation of the Cancer Care Strategy on the ground, ultimately leading to improved patient outcomes across Jammu & Kashmir.

The meeting was informed by MD, NHM, Akriti Sagar that a Steering Committee-cum-State Cancer Registry Coordination Unit has already been constituted to establish a robust Population-Based Cancer Registry (PBCR) and Hospital-Based Cancer Registry (HBCR) network across Jammu & Kashmir.

She added that the initiative would facilitate systematic collection of cancer incidence data, strengthen disease surveillance and support evidence-based planning under the National Cancer Registry Programme.

The MD further informed that following the notification declaring cancer as a notifiable disease in the Union Territory, the Government has initiated the process for executing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Indian Council of Medical Research-

National Institute of Non-Communicable Disease Epidemiology (ICMR-NIE), Bengaluru, for technical support in establishing a modern cancer registry system here.

The meeting also reviewed the existing oncology infrastructure available in the Union Territory, including the State Cancer Institute at Government Medical College Jammu, SKIMS Soura, Government Medical College Srinagar, AIIMS Vijaypur, newly established Government Medical Colleges and district-level Day Care Chemotherapy Centres established under the National Health Mission.

To strengthen diagnostic capabilities, the strategy proposes establishment of advanced Molecular Oncology Laboratories across Government Medical Colleges equipped with modern technologies including molecular pathology, immunohistochemistry, genomic profiling and next-generation sequencing.

The meeting was apprised that proposals have already been submitted to ICMR under the DiaMONDS Project for establishment of molecular oncology laboratories in selected medical colleges while additional funding support is being explored for expansion across the UT.

The strategy also recommends augmentation of cancer imaging facilities through phased establishment of mammography units, PET-CT scanners, MRI facilities, gamma cameras and endoscopy services to ensure timely diagnosis and improve early detection of various cancers.

The Chief Secretary reviewed proposals for strengthening cancer treatment services through expansion of radiotherapy infrastructure, enhancement of surgical oncology services, establishment of additional Bone Marrow Transplant and Stem Cell Transplant facilities and creation of multidisciplinary oncology teams across major tertiary healthcare institutions.

The meeting further reviewed proposals for extensive Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaigns through print, electronic and digital media, schools, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Anganwadi Centres and community-based platforms to promote awareness regarding cancer risk factors, warning signs, screening services and healthy lifestyle practices.

As proposed the Cancer Care Strategy seeks to build an integrated continuum of care covering prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, palliative care and research, with the ultimate objective of reducing cancer burden, improving survival outcomes and ensuring equitable access to quality oncology services for the people of Jammu & Kashmir.

J&K Notifies.....

of tenancy agreements, rent regulation, dispute resolution and protection of the rights of both landlords and tenants.

Under the newly notified Rules, every tenancy agreement must be reported to the Rent Authority within two months of its execution, either through physical submission or electronically. The Rent Authority will issue a Unique Identification Number (UIN) for each agreement and provide an electronic acknowledgement to both parties within seven working days.

To facilitate implementation, the Rules require the Rent Authority to establish a dedicated digital platform in local or official languages, enabling landlords and tenants to submit tenancy-related documents and applications online within the timeframe prescribed under the Act.

The framework also places significant emphasis on safeguarding personal information. The Rent Authority has been directed to ensure the privacy and security of all data submitted through the digital platform. Details relating to tenancy agreements, renewals, extensions, supplementary agreements and other related applications will remain accessible only to the concerned parties and authorised officials, and will not be available to the general public.

The Rules also establish a formal mechanism for resolving disputes over revision of rent and other charges. In such cases, the Rent Authority will hear both landlords and tenants, assess prevailing rental rates and other relevant factors before determining revised rent or charges. It has also been empowered to appoint government-recognised property valuers to assist in assessing fair rental values where necessary.

In a move aimed at protecting tenants, the Rules permit tenants to deposit rent directly with the Rent Authority if a landlord refuses to accept payment. Similarly, landlords who fail to refund advance rent or security deposits will be required to pay interest at the Jammu and Kashmir Bank's Marginal Cost of Lending Rate, ensuring greater financial accountability.

Officials said the draft Rules had been placed in the public domain on April 15, 2026, for public consultation. As no suggestions or objections were received during the prescribed 15-day period, the Government proceeded to notify the Rules.

Hot, humid.....

Meteorological Centre here forecasting a fresh spell of widespread rain and the possibility of heavy showers in parts of the Union Territory from July 18 onwards.

According to details obtained by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), weather conditions are expected to remain largely hot and humid between July 14 and 17, although scattered areas may receive brief spells of rain or thundershowers. Isolated places in the Jammu division could also witness short-duration intense showers during this period.

The MeT Centre said the weather is expected to change from July 18, with the forecast indicating partly to generally cloudy skies accompanied by light to moderate rain or thundershowers at many places on July 18 and 19. Some isolated areas of the Jammu division may experience brief spells of heavy rainfall.

From July 20 to 22, the MeT Centre has predicted a further increase in rain activity, saying many parts of both Kashmir and Jammu divisions are likely to receive light to moderate rainfall, while isolated loca-

tions could witness heavy rain or intense show-ers.

The weather office has also issued an advisory warning of heavy rainfall during the late hours of July 18, the morning of July 19 and again between July 20 and 22, particularly during the early morning and late afternoon hours.

It cautioned that the expected rainfall could trigger flash floods, landslides and mudslides at vulnerable locations, especially in the Chenab Valley and Pir Panjal range, and advised people to avoid venturing near streams, nallas and landslide-prone areas during the forecast period—(KNO)

Jammu tops.....

The MeT department told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that no rainfall was recorded at most weather stations between 8.30 am and 5.30 pm, while only Gulmarg received 1.6 mm of precipitation during the period.

Srinagar recorded a maximum temperature of 28.6 degrees Celsius, 1.1 notches below normal, while the minimum settled at 15.8 degrees Celsius, 2.6 degrees below the seasonal average.

Jammu registered a high of 34.1 degrees Celsius, marginally below normal, with the minimum at 23.4 degrees Celsius.

Among other stations, Qazigund recorded a maximum of 28 degrees Celsius, Banihal 30 degrees, Katra 30.4 degrees, Batote 27 degrees and Bhaderwah 27.4 degrees. Pahalgam recorded a high of 23 degrees Celsius, while Gulmarg remained the coolest place in the Valley at 18.4 degrees Celsius.

Night temperatures also remained below normal at most stations. Gulmarg recorded the lowest minimum temperature at 8.5 degrees Celsius, followed by Pahalgam at 9.6 degrees Celsius.

The IMD said light rainfall during the previous 24 hours was reported at a few places, including Bhaderwah (2.4 mm), Pahalgam and Jammu (2 mm each), Gulmarg (2 mm), Kukernag (1.3 mm), Srinagar (0.8 mm), Batote (0.6 mm), Banihal (0.4 mm), Kupwara (0.2 mm), Katra (0.2 mm) and Qazigund (0.1 mm).

Humidity levels remained relatively high across the Union Territory, with morning humidity ranging between 71 and 90 per cent at most stations, the MeT department said—(KNO)

Army GOC.....

and CIF (Counter-insurgency force) Romeo to review the prevailing security situation and operational preparedness....," the army said in a post on X.

The post, shared by the White Knight Corps on its official page, said the corps commander interacted with deployed troops deployed and appreciated their high morale and professional-ism.

"He was briefed on operational preparedness, capability enhancement, surveillance systems, precision strike capabilities and initiatives to strengthen readiness for future warfare," the army said.

Major Boost.....

of GMC Jammu will rise from the existing 200 seats to 250 seats, effective from the upcoming Academic Year (A.Y.) 2026-27.

It is pertinent to mention that earlier, on 10.07.2026, the NMC has granted permission in favour of GMC Srinagar for additional 50 MBBS Seats, thereby raising the total intake of GMC Srinagar to 250 seats.

Expressing satisfaction over the allocation of additional seats in these GMC's, the Health and Medical Education Department has stated that the expansion reflects the government's steadfast commitment to upgrading medical infrastructure, improving human resource capacity, and providing greater opportunities for local youth to pursue medical careers within the region.

18 Amarnath.....

following an unfortunate road mishap involving the Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra convoy early this morning.

The last vehicle of the Pahalgam-bound convoy reportedly lost control near the Chanderkote Langar site and collided with a few stranded vehicles. The incident resulted in damage to three vehicles and minor injuries to 18 Yatriss.

As part of the ongoing Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra arrangements, Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Alyas Khan along with SSP Ramban Arun Gupta, SSP NHW Raja Adil Hamid and ADC Varunjeet Singh Charak, was already present in the area. The officers immediately supervised the rescue operation, ensuring the swift evacuation of all injured pilgrims to District Hospital Ramban, where they received prompt medical attention and necessary treatment.

The Deputy Commissioner personally visited the hospital to monitor the treatment of the injured pilgrims. He interacted with the Yatriss to enquire about their well-being and directed the Chief Medical Officer and medical staff to ensure the best possible healthcare and all necessary assistance. After receiving first aid and medical treatment, all the injured pilgrims were discharged from the hospital. The District Administration subsequently arranged separate vehicles to facilitate their onward journey to the Holy Cave Shrine.

The prompt and well-coordinated response of the District Administration, Police, Health Department and other concerned agencies ensured timely rescue, quality medical care and the smooth continuation of the Shri Amarnath

Ji Yatra, reaffirming the administration's commitment to the safety, security and well-being of all pilgrims.

Ladakh UT.....

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) to boost rural road connectivity. In addition, four divisions have been created under the Public Health Engineering (PHE) and Irrigation & Flood Control (I&FC) Departments to improve the planning and implementation of water supply, irrigation, and flood management projects.

The newly created engineering divisions will be established in the five newly created districts of Ladakh, ensuring that every district has its own dedicated engineering setup capable of independently planning, executing, and monitoring developmental works.

Officials said that the move is expected to significantly reduce administrative delays by eliminating jurisdictional overlaps and long-distance coordination between districts. With engineering staff stationed at the district level, decisions on infrastructure projects can now be taken more efficiently, resulting in faster execution and better monitoring of public works.

The restructuring also aligns engineering divisions with the newly notified district boundaries. This administrative realignment is expected to remove long-standing jurisdictional constraints that often delayed project approvals and implementation. It will facilitate seamless project planning, improve coordination among departments, and ensure that developmental schemes reach beneficiaries without unnecessary procedural hurdles.

The Administration believes that decentralising engineering functions will strengthen local governance by empowering district authorities to address infrastructure needs more effectively. Improved coordination is also expected to enhance the quality of roads, drinking water facilities, irrigation networks, and flood protection measures across the Union Territory.

The latest decision reflects the Ladakh Administration's continued focus on administrative reforms designed to bring governance closer to the people. By establishing dedicated engineering divisions in every district, the Administration aims to improve public service delivery, strengthen institutional capacity, and ensure that development projects are implemented in a transparent, efficient, and time-bound manner.

Officials stated that the initiative marks another significant step towards responsive and people-centric governance, reaffirming the Union Territory Administration's commitment to decentralisation, balanced regional development, and improving the quality of life for residents across Ladakh, particularly those living in remote and geographically challenging areas.

DGP reviews.....

intelligence sharing and adopt proactive measures to prevent any untoward incident.

He also stressed the importance of maintaining a people-friendly approach while performing security duties, saying effective policing must go hand in hand with public confidence and cooperation.

The review forms part of the Jammu and Kashmir Police's ongoing efforts to reinforce the security architecture, ensure public safety and maintain peace and stability across the Kashmir Valley.

Crime Branch.....

arrest warrant issued by the Court of the Principal District and Sessions Judge, Srinagar, in connection with FIR No. 17/2015, registered under provisions relating to cheating, forgery, use of forged documents and criminal conspiracy.

Officials said the investigation into the case had been completed earlier and a charge sheet was filed before the competent court. However, the accused had remained at large for a considerable period before being traced and arrested by the Economic Offences Wing.

The Crime Branch described the accused as a habitual offender with 11 criminal cases registered against him at various police stations across Kashmir. Investigators said the cases primarily relate to allegations of defrauding unsuspecting job seekers by issuing fake appointment letters, fabricating official documents and collecting money on the false promise of securing government employment.

Police said four cases are currently under investigation, while seven have already been charge-sheeted before different courts, reflecting a prolonged pattern of alleged fraudulent activities.

Following his arrest, the accused was produced before the competent court, which remanded him to judicial custody. He has since been lodged in Central Jail Srinagar. Police records show that cases against the accused have been registered at the Crime Branch Kashmir, the Economic Offences Wing Kashmir and police stations including Maisuma, Kupwara, Pantha Chowk and Lal Bazar between 2015 and 2026.

Reiterating its advisory, the Crime Branch urged members of the public not to trust individuals claiming they can secure government jobs in return for money or through unofficial means. It advised citizens to verify recruitment processes only through authorised government channels and to promptly report any suspected cases of employment fraud, forgery or cheating to the nearest police station or the Economic Offences Wing for immediate legal action.



Div Com Kashmir visits SKIMS Soura, Reviews Medical Care of Shri Amarnath Ji Yatris

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 13: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, on Monday visited the Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), Soura, to review the medical care and treatment being provided to Shri Amarnath Ji Yatris admitted to the hospital with various health issues.

During the visit, the Divisional Commissioner interacted with the yatris undergoing treatment and enquired about their health, well-being, and the quality of medical care being provided. He assured them of the administration's full support and commitment to ensuring the best possible healthcare and assistance



throughout their stay.

Reviewing the arrangements,

Garg instructed the hospital administration and senior doctors

to closely monitor treatment protocols and ensure the availability

of all essential medical facilities. He directed the concerned officials to provide prompt, comprehensive, and quality healthcare to every admitted yatri. Director SKIMS, Prof. Dr. Mohammad Ashraf Ganie, informed the Divisional Commissioner that the hospital has earmarked a dedicated ward with exclusive medical and support staff to provide specialized care to the pilgrims.

He further stated that SKIMS has received 44 yatris for treatment so far, out of which, 28 have been discharged after recovery.

The visit was attended by the Medical Superintendent, SKIMS, the Assistant Commissioner Central, and other senior medical officials and staff.

SWD Srinagar organises PMMVY drive

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 13: Social Welfare Department (SWD), SANKALP-HEW, Srinagar organised a comprehensive awareness and registration drive under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) at the Maternity Hospital, Lal Ded (LD) Hospital, Srinagar.

The programme was organized with the objective of enhancing awareness among pregnant and lactating women about the benefits of the flagship maternity benefit scheme.

The drive witnessed enthusiastic participation from expecting mothers, their attendants, healthcare professionals, and field functionaries. Officials of the SWD provided detailed information regarding the eligibility criteria, registration process, documentation requirements, and the financial assistance available under the scheme. On-the-spot registration and facilitation support were also extended to eligible beneficiaries.

Speaking on the occasion, the officials of SANKALP-HEW Srinagar highlighted that PMMVY is a flagship maternity benefit scheme of the Government of India aimed at improving the health and nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). The scheme seeks to encourage timely antenatal care, institutional deliveries, and improved maternal and child health outcomes.

The Department reiterated its commitment to ensuring that every eligible beneficiary is enrolled under the scheme and receives the entitled benefits without delay. The officials also appealed to all eligible pregnant women and lactating mothers to approach their nearest Anganwadi Centre or the concerned Social Welfare Office for registration and assistance under PMMVY.

The awareness drive forms part of the department's ongoing efforts to strengthen outreach, improve scheme coverage, and ensure that welfare benefits reach every deserving beneficiary across the district. The department will continue to organise similar awareness and enrolment drives at healthcare institutions and community-level centres to promote maternal health and social security.

DC Kulgam visits Tehsil Office Pahloo to oversee process of Jamabandi Reading of latest Digitized Jamabandi

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM, JULY 13: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam today visited the Tehsil Office to oversee the process of Jamabandi reading of the latest digitized Jamabandi, prepared after digitization and incorporation of mutations. The Jamabandi reading was conducted in the presence of the public, who had been duly informed about the process.

It was informed that the latest digitized Jamabandi is available on the Zameen Sudhar Portal (jkzameen-sudhar.jk.gov.in), enabling every estate holder to check their land-related records.

The DC stated that the public can verify their land records and identify if any corrections are required.

It was informed that non-quasi-judicial errors can be corrected at the level of the concerned Tehsildar.

Later, the DC visited newly constructed Tehsil building and directed Exen R&B to complete the remaining



work in a time bound manner. He also visited the Patwar Halqa Pahloo

and Zangalpura and assessed the progress of Agri stack.

SHEW Shopian conducts awareness camp on Girl Child Empowerment under BBBP at Heerpora

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN, JULY 13: Sankalp Hub for Empowerment of Women (SHEW), Mission Shakti, Shopian today organized an awareness programme under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative at Heerpora.

The programme focused on sensitizing participants about the importance of protecting, educating and empowering girls while fostering gender equality and eliminating gender-based discrimination.

Resource persons highlighted the objectives of the BBBP campaign and stressed the collective responsibility of society in ensuring equal opportunities for girls in education, healthcare and overall development.

Participants were also informed about various women-centric welfare schemes being implemented under Mission Shakti. Awareness was created regarding women safety measures and protection mechanisms, including the Women Helpline (181), Child Helpline (1098) and other support services available for women and children.

The event concluded with an interactive session during which participants raised queries and shared their views. The programme ended with a renewed pledge to build a safe, inclusive and gender-equal society through collective community participation and sustained awareness efforts.

Director Social Welfare reviews progress of welfare schemes with District Social Welfare Officers of Jammu Division

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JULY 13: Director Social Welfare, Jammu, Ranjeet Singh today chaired a review meeting with all District Social Welfare Officers (DSWOs) of Jammu Division to assess implementation and progress of welfare schemes being implemented by the Social Welfare Department.

The meeting focussed on a scheme-wise review of physical and financial progress, district-wise achievements, pendency of cases, implementation challenges and corrective measures required for effective and timely delivery of welfare benefits to eligible beneficiaries.

The Social Welfare Department is committed to ensuring every eligible beneficiary receives benefits in a transparent, efficient



and time-bound manner, the Director said. He directed all DSWOs to strengthen monitoring mechanisms, maintain updated records, expedite disposal of

pending cases, ensure prompt submission of reports sought by the Directorate, resolve bottlenecks through better coordination with line departments, con-

duct regular field inspections, strengthen beneficiary outreach, ensure strict adherence to government guidelines and regularly update progress on online

portals so that no eligible beneficiary is deprived of benefits due to procedural delays or incomplete documentation.

District-wise performance was reviewed and officers were encouraged to share best practices and challenges faced in implementing the schemes.

The meeting concluded with a review of district-wise action points and timelines for improving implementation, reducing pendency and enhancing monitoring under welfare programmes of the Social Welfare Department.

Among those present were Deputy Director (Administration) Raman Joshi, Deputy Director (Planning) Mehak Gupta, Assistant Director (Administration) Pallavi Sharma and Assistant Director (Schemes) Siddharth Dubey along with District Social Welfare Officers of Jammu Division.

PSA Conducts Democratic District Elections in Ganderbal; Sheikh Javaid Ali Elected President

■ FAROOQ RATHER

GANDERBAL, JULY 13: The Private Schools' Association (PSA) on Monday successfully conducted its District Elections in Ganderbal through a transparent, constitutional and democratic process, further strengthening the Association's organisational structure across Jammu and Kashmir.

The elections witnessed overwhelming participation by private schools from across the district, reflecting growing confidence in the Association's democratic framework. The polling process was supervised by District Election Commissioner Mehraj-ud-Din Bhat, while B.A. Shah served as Election Observer to ensure a free, fair and transparent election.

The programme was attended by NISA Joint Secretary and PSA Chief Patron Dr. G.N. Var, DySP Headquarters Ganderbal Dr. Umar Urfan, PSA President Bilal Ahmad Bhat, former Joint Director School Education Department Mehboob Hussain, senior trade union leader and J&K Civil Society Executive Member Mir Fayaz, PSA General Secretary (Organisation) Mohammad Syed Wani, Treasurer and District President Shopian Hilal Ahmad Khan, Director Media & Communications and District President Budgam Dr. Owais Mattoo, District President Kulgam Dr. Waseem Siddiqui, District President Srinagar Aadil Habib, District President Bandipora Dr. Yasir Ramzan Bhat, District President Kupwara Tanveer Ahmad Lone, Vice President Kupwara Altaf Hussain Shah, besides school heads and educationists.

Following the completion of the election process, Sheikh Javaid Ali was unanimously elected as the District President, while Mohammad Shafi Mir was elected Vice President. The elected Zonal Presidents include Ishfaq Ahmad Khan (Ganderbal), Mehraj-ud-Din Bhat (Tullamulla), Abdul Rashid Parray (Kangan) and Ashiq Hussain (Harganwan).

Addressing the gathering, PSA Chief Patron Dr. G.N. Var described the elections as a historic milestone, stating that for the first time in nearly 17 years, the Association had conducted democratic elections at the grassroots level. He said that over 95 per cent participation by private schools reflected the trust, unity and credibility enjoyed by the Association.

Dr. Var reiterated that the PSA is the only duly registered body representing private schools in Jammu and Kashmir and appealed to all private educational institutions to unite under one credible and constitutional platform. He added that district-level elections are nearing completion and the Association will soon elect its Central Apex Body to further strengthen democratic governance and collective leadership.

DySP Headquarters Ganderbal Dr. Umar Urfan appreciated the role of private schools in shaping future generations and described education as one of the noblest services to society. He lauded the contribution of private educational institutions towards nation-building.

PSA President Bilal Ahmad Bhat said private schools have consistently worked alongside the Government to strengthen the education sector. He emphasised the need to prepare students for national and global challenges through quality education, trained teachers and modern teaching practices, while stressing that technology should complement rather than replace human values.

Former Joint Director School Education Department Mehboob Hussain said government and private schools share the common objective of building the future of children through quality education, skill development, strong values and attention to students' mental well-being.

PSA General Secretary (Organisation) Mohammad Syed Wani said the Association would continue strengthening its grassroots leadership, empowering teachers through training and promoting child-centred education across Jammu and Kashmir.

In his acceptance address, newly elected District President Sheikh Javaid Ali thanked the private schools of Ganderbal for their confidence and pledged to unite every private school under one platform. He said the Association would work towards implementing the competency-based vision of the National Education Policy while promoting educational innovation and quality learning.

Senior Trade Union Leader Mir Fayaz said the transparent election reflected the strength of democracy, institutional values and collective leadership, while PSA Treasurer and District President Shopian Hilal Ahmad Khan termed the successful elections another milestone in strengthening the Association's organisational base.

Director Media & Communications and District President Budgam Dr. Owais Mattoo said transparent elections reinforce trust, accountability and unity within the Association, while District President Kulgam Dr. Waseem Siddiqui observed that strong grassroots leadership would help address educational challenges more effectively.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Election Observer B.A. Shah, who congratulated the newly elected office-bearers and appreciated all participating schools, organisers and guests for ensuring the successful conduct of the democratic exercise with discipline, transparency and unity.

Sanjeev Verma chairs preparatory meeting for ECI's Electoral Literacy Conference at Jammu

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JULY 13: Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), J&K, Sanjeev Kumar Verma, today convened a preparatory meeting with the senior officers at Nirvachan Bhawan, Rail Head Complex, here to discuss arrangements for the proposed conference aimed to strengthen the electoral literacy in the UT.

The meeting discussed various other issues including participation of educational institutions, Universities and other stakeholders to ensure successful conduct of the conference.

Addressing the officers, the CEO informed that the Election Commission of India has initiated a programme to strengthen the network of Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs). In this regard, a conference is being organized at Jammu with the aim to familiarize the participants with ECI Net and to discuss



the role of Universities and educational institutions in promoting electoral literacy, democratic values and meaningful

participation.

Sanjeev Verma said the conference will also focus on strengthening the network of ELCs across

schools, colleges and Universities at UT, district, ACs and polling station level throughout J&K as a vibrant platform for continuous

electoral and democratic learning.

The CEO directed the senior officers of concerned departments and district administrations to ensure wide participation of students, faculty members and nodal officers of ELCs. He stressed on proper coordination with the Higher Education and School Education Departments for maximum outreach.

Sanjeev Verma further directed all the concerned officers to complete venue identification and other preparatory arrangements at the earliest. He asked to seek any assistance from the CEO office for smooth conduct of the proposed conference.

All the District Election Officers (DCs), Senior officers of Election Department, Higher Education, School Education, Tourism, Universities and other concerned departments attended the meeting in person and through video conferencing.

DC Ganderbal reviews implementation of Mission YUVA; approves 267 beneficiary cases

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

GANDERBAL, JULY 13: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore, today chaired a meeting of the District Level Implementation Committee (DLIC) under Mission YUVA to review the progress of the flagship self-employment programme and consider beneficiary cases for approval.

At the outset, the DC reviewed the pace of sanctioning and disbursement of approved cases. He directed the concerned departments, financial institutions and implementing agencies to expedite the process so that aspiring entrepreneurs receive timely financial assistance to establish their ventures.

Stressing the need to improve the overall performance under the scheme, the DC called for enhanced coordination among all stakeholders to ensure faster processing of cases and timely achievement of programme targets. He also directed the concerned officers to strengthen output tracking and closely monitor the progress of units established under Mission YUVA to ensure that beneficiaries receive continuous handholding and their enterprises become sustainable.

Highlighting the importance of skill development and entrepreneurship, the DC instructed the concerned departments to organise capacity-building and orientation programmes without delay so that beneficiaries are equipped with the knowledge and skills required to successfully manage their enterprises.

Special emphasis was laid on extending the benefits of Mission YUVA to members of Self Help Groups, particularly Lakhpati Didi beneficiaries. The DC directed the concerned officers to proactively identify eligible women entrepreneurs and facilitate their coverage under the scheme to promote sustainable livelihoods and women-led economic empowerment.

During the meeting, the District Level Implementation Committee approved 267 beneficiary cases under Mission YUVA for financial assistance.

Among others, the meeting was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner, Manzoor Ahmad; General Manager District Industries Centre, Assistant Director Employment, District Social Welfare Officer, District Nodal Officer JKEDI, District Development Manager NABARD, Cluster Head J&K Bank, Lead District Manager and other members of the District Level Implementation Committee.

Director Agriculture Kashmir inaugurates District-Level MIDH Workshop

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 13: Department of Agriculture, Kashmir, today organized a One-Day District-Level Workshop-cum-Exhibition under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) at Srinagar, aimed at creating awareness among farmers about the various interventions, incentives, and opportunities available under the scheme. Farmers from the Qamerwari, Brain, and Harwan zones participated enthusiastically in the



programme.

The workshop was presided over by Director Agriculture Kashmir, Sartaj Ahmad Shah, in the presence of Chief Agriculture Officer, Srinagar, Aijaz Hussain Dar, senior officers of the department, technical experts, and field functionaries.

Addressing the gathering, Director Agriculture Kashmir emphasized the immense potential of the agriculture sector in transforming the rural economy and enhancing farmers' livelihoods. He highlighted that the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture is a key initiative of the Government aimed at promoting scientific agriculture through financial assistance, infrastructure development, technology dissemination, and capacity building. "Our objective is to empower farmers by connecting them with modern technologies and innovative agricultural practices. Through MIDH, we are providing the necessary support to enhance productivity, improve quality, reduce post-harvest losses, and increase farm income. Farmers must take full advantage of these opportunities to build resilient and profitable farming enterprises," the Director said.

Chief Agriculture Officer, Srinagar, delivered a detailed presentation on the implementation of MIDH and explained the benefits of the cluster-based approach.

Enforcement Drive, Cleanliness Campaign intensified in Gurez to Curb Single-Use Plastic

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, JULY 13: Continuing its sustained efforts to preserve the fragile ecology of Gurez Valley, the District Administration Bandipora on Monday intensified enforcement against the use of banned single-use plastic (SUP) while conducting extensive cleanliness drives across Dawar Market and nearby tourist locations.

An enforcement drive was carried out at Dawar Market by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Gurez, Mukhtar Ahmad; Assistant Commissioner Panchayats (ACP) Bandipora, Ajaz Ahmad Lone; and Block

Development Officer (BDO) Gurez, Lateef Ahmad Mantoo, along with a police team led by the Station House Officer (SHO) Gurez.

During the drive, around 18 kilograms of single-use plastic was seized, while a penalty of Rs 13,000 was imposed on four shopkeepers found violating the ban on single-use plastic. A cleanliness drive was also conducted in the Main Market, Dawar, under the supervision of the SDM Gurez and ACP Bandipora. Officials, field staff and sanitation workers participated in the campaign to collect waste and enhance public cleanliness. Another cleanliness drive was undertaken at the Badi Dassi camp-

ing site under the supervision of BDO Gurez, Lateef Ahmad Mantoo, during which a substantial quantity of waste was collected and scientifically disposed of to restore the site's cleanliness.

The District Administration reiterated that strict enforcement against banned single-use plastic will continue alongside regular sanitation drives to safeguard the pristine environment of Gurez Valley. The Administration appealed to citizens, traders and visitors to co-operate by avoiding the use of single-use plastic and maintaining cleanliness at all public places and tourist destinations.

MP Main Altaf chairs DISHA meeting at Shopian

Reviews developmental works and Government schemes

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN, JULY 13: Member of Parliament for the Anantnag-Rajouri Parliamentary Constituency, Mian Altaf Ahmad today chaired the District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (DISHA) meeting at Mini Secretariat, Shopian, to review the implementation and progress of government flagged schemes and major developmental projects across the district.

The meeting was attended by MP, Srinagar Parliamentary Constituency, Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi; MLA, Zainapora, Showkat Hussain Ganie; MLA, Shopian, Shabir Ahmed Kullay, and other officers of district administration. District Development Commissioner (DDC), Shopian, Shishir Gupta gave a comprehensive presentation highlighting the physical and financial progress of flagship schemes and development initiatives being implemented in the district.

During the meeting, the progress and achievements recorded under centrally sponsored schemes including MPLADS,

MGNREGA, PMAY-G, PMGSY, PMAY- U, SBM- Grameen & Urban, HADP, JKICP, FRA, PMFBY, PM SVANidhi, AMRUT 2.0, JJM, POSHAN 2.0, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, PM Vishwakarma, Samagra Shiksha, RDSS, PM Surya Ghar, along with Urban Development, Social & labour welfare, social security, self employment and skill development initiatives and schemes were presented by the DDC during the department wise review. He also flagged off department wise issues and manpower deficits before the chair.

The MP, Chairperson DISHA reviewed the status of major infrastructure projects, including the Shopian town beautification, de-congestion works, development of adjoining villages, tribal welfare projects, 50-bedded Critical Care Block, District Integrated District Public Health Laboratory, road connectivity projects, water supply schemes and irrigation works along with other public welfare works.

Emphasising effective implementation of public benefit pro-



grammes, Mian Altaf called upon officers to ensure timely completion of all ongoing projects, enhance public outreach regarding government schemes and expedite works aimed at improving infrastructure and public service delivery.

The MP stressed that special

focus should be laid on promoting schemes for agriculture & allied sectors, sheep and animal husbandry besides focusing on tribal welfare and employment generation to maximise benefits for the people. He underscored the importance of extensive

awareness among people regarding the scheme benefits of centrally and UT sponsored schemes.

The MP also called for speedy disposal of Forest Rights Act claims, improved civic amenities, better road connectivity and adequate facilities for tourists and commuters, particularly along the Mughal Road.

During the meeting, MLAs of Zainapora and Shopian raised several constituency-specific issues, including the augmentation of public infrastructure, strengthening of healthcare and education facilities, drinking water supply, irrigation and expeditious implementation of ongoing developmental works.

Responding to the concerns, the chairperson assured the legislators that all genuine issues would be taken up with the concerned departments and higher authorities for prompt redressal. He emphasized that equitable and inclusive development of all constituencies remains a priority and directed district administration officers to address the issues in a time-bound and co-ordinated manner.

FDA INTENSIFIES FOOD SAFETY DRIVE IN TOURIST DESTINATIONS; 31 SAMPLES LIFTED FOR TESTING

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 13: Food Safety Wing of the Food & Drugs Administration (FDA), J&K, has intensified enforcement and surveillance activities in major tourist destinations of Pahalgam, Sonamarg and Srinagar to ensure availability of safe, hygienic and quality food for tourists and the general public.

During the enforcement drive, teams of Food Safety Officers inspected 56 hotels, restaurants and other food establishments to assess compliance with the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, including hygiene and sanitation practices, food handling, storage conditions and other statutory require-

ments.

As part of the drive, 31 enforcement samples including 20 from Pahalgam, five from Sonamarg and six from Srinagar of various food articles were lifted and sent to NABL-accredited Food Testing Laboratories for analysis of prescribed safety and quality parameters.

During inspections, violations related to unhygienic and insanitary conditions were detected, following which two cases were initiated under Section 56 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

Further, a penalty of 10,500 was imposed and recovered from three Food Business Operators for violation of hygiene and sanitation requirements.

DISTRICT ADMIN PULWAMA, IRCS ORGANISE MEGA DRUG DE-ADDICTION AWARENESS PROGRAMME AT TRAL

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

PULWAMA, JULY 13: As part of the ongoing 100-day campaign under the Nasha Mukti Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan, the District Administration Pulwama, in collaboration with the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS), Jammu & Kashmir, today organised a Mega Drug De-Addiction Awareness Programme at Government Degree College, Tral to educate students and the public about the harmful effects of drug abuse and promote a drug-free society.

Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA), Tral, Rafiq Ahmad Naik

attended the programme as the chief guest. Among others present were Treasurer, Indian Red Cross Society, J&K, G.A. Qureshi; Principal, Government Degree College Tral; Chief Medical Officer Pulwama; senior officers from various departments; social workers; faculty members; and a large gathering of students.

Speaking on the occasion, the MLA appreciated the series of activities organised across the district under the ongoing campaign. He advised the youth and students to remain vigilant against the dangers of substance abuse and urged them to channel their

energies towards education, sports and other constructive pursuits. He also appealed to parents to remain closely connected with their children, monitor their activities and provide timely guidance to prevent them from falling prey to drug addiction.

Addressing the gathering, the speakers highlighted the harmful effects of drug abuse and the need for a coordinated and community-driven approach to eradicate the menace. They stressed the importance of sustained awareness, early intervention, counselling, rehabilitation and active participation of educational in-

stitutions, families and civil society in protecting the younger generation from substance abuse.

Medical experts, on the occasion, also conducted awareness sessions on the physical, psychological and social consequences of drug addiction. They encouraged students to adopt healthy lifestyles, make informed choices and become ambassadors of a drug-free society. Furthermore, during the programme, the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), Pulwama screened an awareness film highlighting the devastating impact of drug abuse on individuals, families.

"Sada-e-Hussain" Programme Held with Devotion and Reverence at Tagore Hall, Srinagar



HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 13: A grand religious and cultural programme titled "Sada-e-Hussain" was organized today at Tagore Hall, Srinagar, by ARStudio in collaboration with the Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages (JKAA-CL). The event was conducted with great devotion and reverence, commemorating the timeless message of the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam

Hussain (AS) and the martyrs of Karbala.

The programme was ably moderated by Kifayat Faheem and witnessed enthusiastic participation from students representing various educational institutions, schools, and colleges across the Valley. Eminent Islamic scholars and renowned Noha Khwans also attended the event, paying rich tributes to Hazrat Imam Hussain (AS) and the martyrs of Karbala

while eloquently highlighting the enduring message of sacrifice, justice, truth, patience, selflessness, and humanity embodied in the tragedy of Karbala.

The chief guest on the occasion was Syed Arshad Hussain Mousavi, while BJP leader Engineer Ejaz Hussain attended as a distinguished guest.

Addressing the gathering, AR Studio Chairman Arshad Hussain said that the Sada-e-Hussain pro-

gramme has been organized continuously for several years with the objective of acquainting the younger generation with the universal values and teachings of Karbala. He emphasized that the sacrifice of Hazrat Imam Hussain (AS) continues to inspire humanity to uphold truth, justice, righteousness, patience, and compassion in every age.

At the conclusion of the programme, Arshad Hussain

expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the distinguished guests, religious scholars, Noha Khwans, students and teachers from various educational institutions, the Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, and all those who contributed to the successful organization of the event. He expressed hope that such meaningful and spiritually enriching programmes would continue to be organized in the future.

Natrang Honours Prof. B.S. Sahay, Director, IIM Jammu, for Integrating Arts into Management Education

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JULY 13: Recognizing a pioneering initiative that has reimagined management education through the integration of arts and culture, Natrang, the premier cultural institution of Jammu & Kashmir, honoured Prof. B.S. Sahay, Director of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Jammu, at the historic Abhinav Theatre here today. The honour was conferred by Padma Shri Balwant Thakur during the presentation of Natrang's Children Theatre Extravaganza-2026, in the presence of eminent artists, academicians, students and theatre lovers.

Prof. B.S. Sahay has earned widespread appreciation for introducing performing and visual arts as an integral component of management education at IIM Jammu. His visionary initiative is founded on the belief that arts are not merely mediums of cultural expression but powerful catalysts for nurturing creativity, emotional intelligence, empathy, innovation, communication, leadership and ethical decision-making qualities that distinguish exceptional managers and enlightened leaders.

Congratulating Prof. Sahay, Padma Shri Balwant Thakur described his initiative as a path-breaking intervention in contemporary management education. He observed that while business schools have traditionally focused on analytical thinking and technical competence, the challenges of the twenty-first century demand leaders who are equally imaginative, emotionally intelligent, culturally sensitive and socially responsible. According to him, theatre, music, dance and the visual arts provide transformative learning experiences that foster self-awareness, collaborative spirit, resilience, adaptability and the ability to appreciate diverse perspectives.

He further remarked that performing arts cultivate confidence, sharpen communication skills, strengthen observation and listening abilities, enhance problem solving and encourage innovation by allowing students to engage with complex human emotions and real-life situations. Such exposure prepares future managers not only to lead successful organizations but also to build compassionate workplaces and contribute meaningfully to society. Integrating arts into management education, he said, represents a progressive educational philosophy that balances intellectual excellence with emotional and cultural development.

Under the dynamic leadership of Prof. Sahay, IIM Jammu has rapidly emerged as one of India's most progressive and fastest-growing management institutions. The institute has distinguished itself through academic excellence, innovative pedagogy, strong industry partnerships, entrepreneurship promotion, sustainability initiatives and a vibrant ecosystem that encourages holistic personality development through sports, culture, community engagement and the arts. His visionary leadership has positioned IIM Jammu as a centre of excellence committed to nurturing globally competent, socially conscious and ethically grounded business leaders.

An eminent academician, institution builder and management thinker, Prof. B.S. Sahay has made distinguished contributions to higher education over a career spanning more than three decades. Prior to assuming the Directorship of IIM Jammu, he served in several prestigious academic leadership positions and earned national recognition for his contributions to management education, institutional development, strategic leadership and research. A prolific scholar, he has authored numerous research publications, guided doctoral scholars, contributed to policy discourse and consistently advocated innovation, interdisciplinary learning and excellence in higher education. His educational philosophy emphasizes the harmonious integration of intellectual rigour, creativity, inclusivity and societal relevance.

Presenting the honour, Padma Shri Balwant Thakur said that Prof. Sahay's visionary decision to bring performing and visual arts into the mainstream of management education deserves national recognition. He expressed hope that this pioneering model would inspire other institutions of higher learning to embrace the transformative power of the arts in shaping future leaders who are not only professionally accomplished but also emotionally resilient, culturally enriched and deeply committed to the larger good of society.

Vomedh Hosts "Shradhanjali" in Memory of Dr Amar Malmohi at Jammu

SCHOLARS, WRITERS PAY RICH TRIBUTES TO EMINENT LITERATEUR

GULFAM BARJI

JAMMU, JULY 13: Vomedh organised a solemn Shradhanjali programme in memory of eminent scholar playwright and academician Dr Amarnath Bhat Malmohi at the Writers Club, KL Sehgal Hall Jammu on Sunday. The memorial brought together leading scholars, writers, poets and community members who paid floral tributes and remembered the late litterateur for his outstanding contribution to Kashmiri and Urdu literature. The programme commenced with floral tributes and a minute's silence in honour of Dr Malmohi. Family members, friends, colleagues and admirers recalled his lifelong dedication to literature, scholarship and the preservation of Kashmiri cultural heritage. Welcoming the gathering, Rohit Bhat President of Vomedh thanked the participants for joining the tribute and reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to carrying forward Dr Malmohi's literary and cultural mission. The proceedings were conducted by Bindiya Tikoo, who highlighted the scholar's remarkable contribution to literature



and the cultural identity of Kashmir. Former MLC Ajay Bharti, R.L. Shant, Dr Rattan Lal Talashi, Bal Krishan Sanyasi, Kusum Dhar, Ramesh Hangloo, Dolly Tikoo Aarwal, Rajesh Kachroo (Youth for Panun Kashmir) Roshan Lal Bhat, Bharti Koul and King C. Bharati, Editor-in-Chief of Vitasta Herald paid glowing tributes to Dr Malmohi. The speakers described him as a distinguished literary figure whose writings promoted humanism, cultural values and the rich traditions

of Kashmir, while inspiring generations of readers and writers. The speakers also

acknowledged the social and cultural initiatives of Dr Malmohi's son Rohit Ravi Bhat stating that his work reflects the values and vision cherished by his father. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks and a collective resolve to preserve and promote Dr Malmohi's literary legacy through literature, theatre and cultural activities.

Youm-e-Zainab Conference Preparations Begin with Hussaini Mushaira Honouring the Legacy of Karbala

Organisers review arrangements for annual observance on 26th of Safar; Poets pay tribute to Imam Hussain (A.S.) and Hazrat Zainab (S.A.)

HT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JULY 13: Preparations for the annual Youm-e-Zainab conference gathered momentum on Monday as organisers held a participants' meeting to finalise arrangements for the event, which will be observed on the 26th of Safar.

The meeting brought together prominent members and organisers, including Basharat Hussain, Zakir Mohammad Ramzan Malla, Taufiq Talib, Gulfam Nowgami, Ghulam Hassan Hassan, Ibrahim Sumblu, Mir Rafiq, Syed Rizwan Shalhari and Saleem Yousuf. Participants reviewed the organisational framework of the conference and discussed measures to ensure the smooth and successful conduct of the annual observance.

The speakers underlined the importance of Youm-e-Zainab in commemorating the courage, patience and unwavering commitment of Hazrat Zainab (S.A.), whose steadfast leadership after the tragedy of Karbala played a pivotal role in preserving and conveying the message of Imam Hussain (A.S.) and his companions.

Following the meeting, a Hussaini Mushaira was organised,



drawing participation from members of the forum and invited poets. The gathering featured devotional poetry dedicated to Imam Hussain (A.S.), with participants presenting verses that reflected the ideals of sacrifice, justice, truth and resistance against oppression embodied by the martyrs of Karbala.

The recitations also paid homage to Hazrat Zainab (S.A.), highlighting her resilience, eloquence and historic role in safeguarding the legacy of Karbala despite immense personal suffering. The poetic session created a solemn atmosphere as attendees expressed their reverence for the sacrifices made by the Prophet's family.

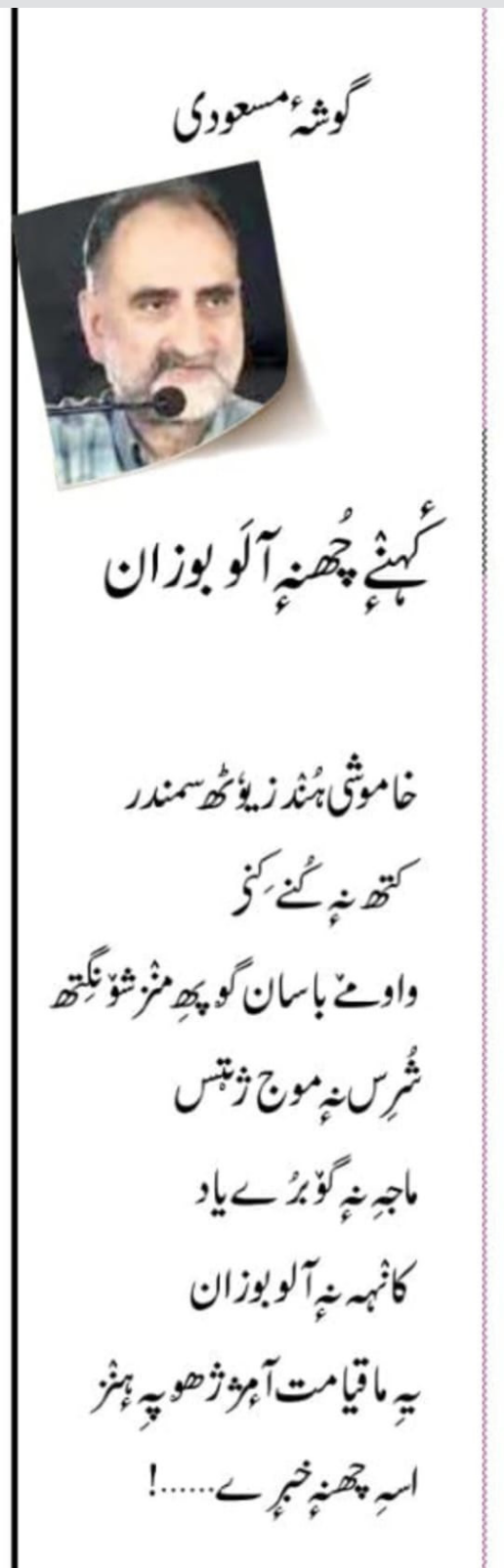
Organisers said the annual Youm-e-Zainab conference aims to promote the universal values of faith, dignity, perseverance and social justice associated with the lives of Imam Hussain (A.S.) and Hazrat Zainab (S.A.). They expressed confidence that the event would witness wide participation from scholars, literary figures and devotees.

The meeting concluded with prayers for peace, communal harmony and the successful organisation of the annual conference on the 26th of Safar.

No one hears the call

A boundless sea of silence lies outstretched.
No voice comes from any quarter.
The wind, it seems, has fallen asleep
in the depths of a cave.
The child no longer knows the mother.
The mother no longer remembers the child.
No one hears the call.
Has the Day of Silence descended upon us?
Or has its apocalypse already arrived?
We do not know.

Original kashmiri Rafeeq Masoodi: English version by :Sanjay pandita, Dehradun, UK



HT EDITORIAL

Power Supply Must Match Public Expectations

The quality of public services is often judged not by grand announcements but by the experience of ordinary citizens in their daily lives. Few services influence every-day life as profoundly as electricity. It powers homes, keeps hospitals functioning, enables businesses to operate and supports education, communication and countless essential activities. When that service becomes unreliable, the consequences are felt across every section of society.

The Kashmir Valley has witnessed significant investment in its power infrastructure over the past several years. Distribution networks have been upgraded, metering has expanded and consumers have been encouraged to adopt a culture of timely bill payment. These reforms were undertaken with the promise of delivering a more dependable and efficient electricity supply. Understandably, people now expect those improvements to be reflected in their daily lives.

Yet, frequent and unscheduled power outages continue to test public patience. While no electricity network is immune to technical faults or weather-related disruptions, recurring interruptions without prior notice leave consumers frustrated and uncertain. The inconvenience is no longer limited to temporary discomfort. It affects livelihoods, interrupts education, disrupts healthcare services and creates avoidable hardships for households that increasingly depend on electricity for routine activities.

Modern economies cannot function efficiently on an unreliable power supply. Small enterprises lose productive hours, digital services suffer interruptions and institutions that rely on uninterrupted electricity are forced to depend on costly backup arrangements. Such disruptions also undermine public confidence in reforms that were introduced to modernise the sector.

Consumers have played their part. Thousands of households have accepted metered connections, complied with billing systems and contributed to improved revenue collection. Their cooperation deserves to be matched by consistent service delivery. Areas where infrastructure has been upgraded should experience tangible improvements in reliability, reinforcing the principle that responsible consumer behaviour and public investment must yield visible benefits.

At the same time, communication with consumers requires considerable improvement. Planned maintenance or unavoidable shutdowns should never come as a surprise. Timely public advisories through official channels can help people make necessary arrangements and significantly reduce inconvenience. Effective communication is not merely an administrative formality; it is an essential component of good governance.

The challenge before the power department is not only to strengthen infrastructure but also to build public confidence. Every restored transformer, every upgraded distribution line and every successful reform should ultimately translate into a better experience for the consumer. Infrastructure development has little meaning if people continue to face uncertainty over something as basic as electricity.

Reliable power is more than a utility; it is the foundation of development and a hallmark of responsive administration. As Jammu and Kashmir continues its journey towards economic growth and digital transformation, ensuring uninterrupted and predictable electricity must remain a priority.

Citizens deserve a power system that is efficient, transparent and capable of meeting the demands of a modern society. Meeting that expectation will not only improve daily life but also strengthen public trust in the institutions responsible for delivering one of the most essential public services.

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What if a single coin could tell the story of an entire civilization?



■ AFRREEN JAN

Long before paper currency, digital payments, and banknotes became part of everyday life, the people of Kashmir relied on coins that carried far more than monetary value. They bore the symbols of kingdoms, the names of rulers, the influence of religions, and the marks of cultures that flourished across centuries. Every coin that has passed through Kashmir's hands is a silent witness to its remarkable history.

The journey of Kashmir's currency began over two thousand years ago with simple punch-marked silver and copper coins. These early coins, stamped with small symbols instead of portraits, were among the first organized forms of money used in the region. They helped replace barter and encouraged trade, laying the foundation for a growing economy.

As history unfolded, Kashmir welcomed new rulers and new ideas. The Indo-Greeks introduced beautifully crafted coins featuring realistic portraits and Greek inscriptions, while



the Kushan rulers transformed coinage into works of art. Under Emperor Kanishka I, coins displayed kings alongside gods and goddesses from different religious traditions, reflecting the rich cultural diversity of the time. These coins also remind us that Kashmir was once an important crossroads connecting South Asia, Central Asia, and beyond.

The Hindu dynasties that followed created one of the most enduring coin designs in South Asian history. For centuries, their coins commonly featured a standing king on one side and a seated goddess on the other. This remarkable consistency reflected not only artistic tradition but also the political continuity that defined

medieval Kashmir.

A new chapter opened in 1339 with the establishment of the Kashmir Sultanate. Persian inscriptions replaced earlier designs, and coins became expressions of Islamic art and calligraphy. Gold Dinars, Silver Sasnus, Copper Punchshis, and Bronze Kaseras circulated across the valley, supporting trade while symbolizing the authority of the Sultans.

The arrival of the Mughals in 1586 connected Kashmir to one of the world's greatest empires. Standardized Gold Mohurs, Silver Rupees, and Copper Dams made commerce more efficient and linked Kashmiri markets with cities such as Lahore, Delhi, Agra, and Kabul. Coins became symbols of

economic integration as much as political power.

Later, Afghan, Sikh, and Dogra rulers each left their own imprint on Kashmir's monetary history. During Dogra rule, an important milestone was reached with the introduction of paper currency in the nineteenth century, marking the transition from a purely metallic economy toward a modern financial system.

Today, the Indian Rupee is the official currency used in Jammu and Kashmir. Yet the ancient coins preserved in museums, archaeological collections, and private holdings continue to speak across generations. They remind us that history is not found only in books or monuments—it can also be held in the palm of a hand.

For historians, archaeologists, and collectors, these coins are priceless records of Kashmir's political changes, artistic achievements, and economic development. For ordinary readers, they offer something equally valuable: a chance to connect with a shared heritage that stretches back more than two millennia.

In an age when money is increasingly digital and invisible, the old coins of Kashmir invite us to pause and remember that currency is more than a medium of exchange. It is a reflection of identity, culture, and history. Every coin carries a story, and together, they tell the extraordinary story of Kashmir itself.

Labkhal



■ SAHIL MANZOOR BHATTI

Valleys forests are like cool and brushing our emotions with its coniferous trees. I am amazing, I am glad how exciting this is? Nature deals with peace and bestow us mesmerizing surroundings for our survival and are so fortuitous and almighty has blessed us with luscious surroundings and we are greatly thankful to our nature.

As the snow melts, mountains that once appeared distant and inaccessible come alive with vibrant colours. The brown and green shades of the towering peaks, covered with pine and fir forests, create a spectacular panorama. Every corner of this region invites nature lovers, photographers, and adventure enthusiasts.

Personally, I find every season in Kashmir pleasant and enchanting, but summer holds a special place for trekkers. Unlike winter, when heavy snowfall limits access, summer brings the freedom to explore, climb, and connect with the mountains. Tourist destinations such as Pahalgam, Gulmarg, Sonamarg, Yousmarg, Doodhpathri, and Tosamaidan come alive from June to September as trekkers and visitors flock to these valleys. In Doodhpathri, popular trekking routes such as Diskhal, Ashtaar, Daani Deer, and Marg offer unforgettable

experiences.

Exploring Labkhal: A Hidden Treasure

Today, I would like to introduce Labkhal, a lesser-known yet extraordinarily beautiful Bahak (summer pasture) in the Pir Panjal Range.

As you walk towards Labkhal, the melodious chirping of birds fills the air like the gentle strings of a guitar. Cattle graze peacefully across the lush meadows, blending perfectly with the surrounding landscape. Traditional mud huts (Kothas) stand like natural sculptures, while crystal-clear spring water flows through the pasture, offering a refreshing taste of nature.

Labkhal lies to the south of the famous Shaliganga River. After crossing the river and turning left, a trek of about one and a half hours through dense forests leads visitors to this peaceful paradise. It can also be reached via Pal Maidan and Triken Bahak before arriving at Labkhal.

Gujjar, Bakarwal, Pahari, and Chopan Communities: The Soul of the Mountains

During the summer months, the upper reaches of Kashmir become home to the Gujjar, Bakarwal, Pahari, and Chopan communities. These hardworking and hospitable people migrate with their livestock to the high-altitude meadows. They bring cows, buffaloes, sheep, goats, and even poultry to the Bahaks, where they spend the summer in temporary mud-and-wood shelters.

For centuries, these communities have lived in harmony with nature. Their Bahaks are legally recognised grazing areas that sustain their traditional way of life. Beyond supporting their families, they also serve as dedicated guardians of the forests by reporting illegal logging, monitoring environmental damage, and assisting forest officials in conservation efforts.

What Do These Communities Need?

Despite their invaluable contribution, these communities continue to face several challenges.

The glacial water available in these high-altitude pastures is extremely cold and unsuitable for regular domestic use. There is an urgent need for mobile toilets to improve sanitation and prevent the spread of diseases. Solar-powered lighting systems would also greatly improve their quality of life by providing light during the night and helping them care for their livestock.

These are not luxuries they are basic necessities that would improve living conditions while supporting sustainable tourism.

Suggestions and the Way Forward
To strengthen the livelihoods of the Gujjar, Bakarwal, Pahari, and Chopan communities while promoting responsible tourism, the following measures should be considered:

Provide essential facilities in the Bahaks, including clean drinking water, sanitation, and solar lighting.

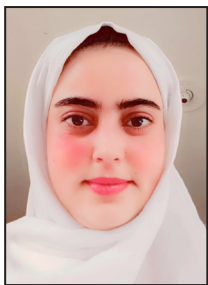
Employ local community members as trained trekking guides, allowing visitors to benefit from their extensive knowledge of the terrain and local ecology.

Promote eco-tourism models that ensure both local communities and visitors benefit while protecting the fragile mountain ecosystem.

These mountain guardians are the unsung heroes of Kashmir's forests. Supporting them means preserving the culture, natural beauty, and ecological heritage of remarkable places like Labkhal and Doodhpathri for generations to come.

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The Habit of Noticing: How Science, Literature, Music, and Travel Shaped My Journey



■ **BISMA ASHRAF**

Some lives are shaped by a single calling. Others are defined by the ability to weave together many pursuits into one meaningful path. I have often found myself somewhere between those worlds, drawn equally to science, literature, music, and the quiet act of observing. Looking back, I realize that everything I have pursued has grown from a single habit that has stayed with me since childhood—the habit of noticing.

My earliest understanding of the world was shaped in Wanigam, a village in Baramulla, Jammu and Kashmir. Long before I entered a laboratory or filled the pages of a notebook, the valley had already become my first teacher. Its changing seasons, quiet fields, winding paths, and familiar faces taught me to pay attention to what often goes unnoticed. I learned that every place carries its own rhythm and every ordinary moment has a story waiting to be understood. Without knowing it then, I was learning to observe before I was learning to explain.

My years at Public High School English Medium, Wanigam, strengthened that instinct. The classrooms gave me knowledge, but they also nurtured curiosity. I became interested not only in finding answers but in asking better questions. I learned that understanding begins with careful observation and patient listening. Those early lessons stayed with me, shaping the way I approached both people and ideas in the years that followed.

Higher secondary education in Pattan widened my perspective. Biology fascinated me because it revealed an invisible world where every cell, every molecule, and every process contributed to something larger than itself. At the same time, discussions with teachers and classmates taught me the importance of different perspectives. I slowly began to understand that curiosity is not limited to science. It belongs equally to conversations, stories, and the countless experiences that shape human lives.

Choosing Biotechnology at Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal Central University marked the next chapter of that curiosity. Science became the foundation of my thinking. It taught me how to question, how to observe, and how to search for answers with patience. Yet somewhere along that journey, I realized that discovering the world was only one part of my purpose. I also wanted to tell its stories.

The laboratory became a place where patience mattered as much as intelligence. Every experiment demanded precision, discipline, and resilience. Success was rewarding, but failure often became the better teacher. I discovered that science is built not only on knowledge but also on persistence, humility, and the willingness to begin again.

As I spent more time in laboratories, I noticed that the habits I was developing as a researcher were quietly influencing the way I wrote. A scientific experiment and a piece of writing shared more similarities than I had ever imagined. Both required observation, structure, revision, and honesty. Just as every experiment demanded evidence, every paragraph demanded clarity. The discipline of research gradually became the discipline of storytelling.

Instead of seeing science and literature as separate worlds, I began to see them as different ways of asking the same questions. Biology helped me understand resilience, adaptation, communication, and survival. Writing allowed me to translate those ideas

into stories about people, relationships, and everyday life. Scientific concepts no longer felt distant or confined to textbooks. They became ways of understanding the human condition itself.

My postgraduate studies at Maya Devi University, Uttarakhand, gave me the freedom to explore these connections more deeply. Alongside biotechnology, I found myself reading philosophy, literature, and the humanities with equal enthusiasm. Each discipline challenged the other. Scientific thinking sharpened my reasoning, while literature reminded me that knowledge becomes meaningful only when it speaks to lived experience. Those years encouraged me to embrace curiosity without boundaries.

Over time, curiosity sought another language. Writing became the natural extension of everything I was learning. It gave my observations a voice and my questions a place to live. What had begun as scientific inquiry gradually evolved into a lifelong commitment to storytelling.

In 2023, I published my debut book, *The Picture of Many Feelings*, a collection that brought together themes of memory, healing, emotion, and hope. Through those pages, I wanted to create conversations between science and humanity, allowing technical ideas to become personal and familiar through storytelling. More than anything, I wanted readers to feel that knowledge becomes valuable when it helps us understand ourselves and one another.

Not every story could be written. Some were better carried through melody.

While writing became the language of my thoughts, music became the language of my emotions. Each found its own place in my life, often enriching the other in unexpected ways. Singing allows me to express emotions that words sometimes struggle to hold. I often find that the rhythm of a melody shapes the rhythm of my sentences, just as writing teaches me to appreciate the silence between musical notes. To me, music and literature are dif-

ferent languages expressing the same inner experience.

Beyond laboratories, books, and melodies, I found another teacher in the world itself. Every journey invited me to see differently, listen more carefully, and return with stories no classroom could ever offer.

Travel has become another classroom. Every journey invites me to observe people, cultures, traditions, and landscapes with fresh eyes. I have never been interested in collecting destinations for their own sake. What stays with me are ordinary moments, conversations with strangers, the scent of rain on unfamiliar streets, local customs, and small details that reveal the character of a place. Those experiences quietly return in my writing, enriching every story I tell.

Living between research and creativity requires balance. My days move between laboratories, books, notebooks, music, and reflection. Every pursuit informs the others. Conversations with fellow researchers, writers, and friends continue to shape my thinking because I believe meaningful ideas grow stronger through dialogue. Neither science nor creativity flourishes in isolation. Both depend upon curiosity, collaboration, and an openness to learning.

Together, science, writing, music, and travel gradually stopped feeling like separate interests. They became different expressions of the same curiosity, each shaping the way I understand people, knowledge, and the world around me.

At the heart of everything I do lies a simple belief: knowledge should create connection. Science should not remain confined within laboratories, and literature should not exist only for private reflection. Both have the ability to deepen public understanding, encourage empathy, and bring people closer to the questions that shape our collective future. Whether I write about biology or human emotion, my purpose remains the same—to make complex ideas feel accessible, relevant, and deeply human.

The journey has not been free of chal-

lenges. Balancing academic demands with creative work has often required difficult choices. Time remains limited, and building a life across multiple disciplines demands persistence. Yet those very challenges have clarified what matters most. They have reminded me that meaningful work is rarely effortless and that growth often begins where certainty ends.

As I look ahead, I hope to continue building bridges between science and storytelling. I aspire to pursue research with meaningful social impact, write books across different genres, communicate science to wider audiences, and collaborate on projects that bring together literature, music, and scholarship. More than pursuing separate achievements, I hope to continue living a life where each discipline strengthens the others.

If my journey offers one lesson, it is that we do not have to choose between curiosity and creativity, between scientific rigor and artistic imagination. We can carry multiple identities with equal sincerity. We can allow one passion to deepen another. For me, every experiment, every page, every song, and every journey begins in the same place—with the quiet decision to notice.

The habit of noticing continues to shape the way I move through the world. It reminds me that the most meaningful discoveries rarely arrive all at once. They emerge slowly through careful observation, thoughtful reflection, and the willingness to find connections where others see only distance. That habit has guided every chapter of my life so far, and I hope it continues to guide every chapter still to come.

The author, Bisma Ashraf Lone, is pursuing a Master's degree in Biotechnology. She is the author of *The Picture of Many Feelings (2023)* and writes on the intersections of science, literature, music, and human experience. She can be reached at: bismaashraf1one@gmail.com.



■ **M. S. NAZKI**

"Your courage is taller than the heights you are deployed in. Your resolve is stronger than the valleys you walk every day, and your arms are as strong as the rocks that surround you." These words of Prime Minister Narendra Modi beautifully capture the spirit of the Indian soldiers who guard the nation's frontiers under some of the harshest conditions on Earth. Standing amidst snow-clad mountains, freezing temperatures, and unforgiving terrain, these brave men and women remain the unyielding shield of the nation, inspiring every Indian through their unwavering commitment and sacrifice.

The Prime Minister's tribute to the armed forces reflects the immense confidence that the nation places in its soldiers. He emphasized that India's security rests safely in their capable hands and that their courage inspires millions of fellow citizens to dedicate themselves to the service of the motherland. Referring to the exceptional bravery displayed by the armed forces in recent times, he remarked that India's enemies have witnessed the fire and fury of its soldiers. The sight of women soldiers serving alongside their male counterparts on the frontlines further demonstrates the transformation and growing strength of the Indian Armed Forces.

The legacy of courage displayed by Indian soldiers is deeply rooted in history. One of the finest examples remains the heroic stand of Major Shaitan Singh and his 120 men during the Battle of Rezang La in 1962. Facing overwhelming odds against a much larger Chinese force,

these soldiers fought to the very last man and bullet, earning immortal recognition in India's military history. Their extraordinary sacrifice continues to inspire generations of soldiers serving in the high-altitude battlefields of Ladakh.

Today, that same spirit of determination is reflected in the operational readiness of the Indian Army's Fire and Fury Corps. Recently, Lieutenant General Madanraj Pande, General Officer Commanding of the Fire and Fury Corps, visited the headquarters of the Trishul Division to review its operational preparedness and combat readiness. During his visit, he interacted with troops deployed along the Line of Actual Control and commended them for their professionalism, operational excellence, and steadfast commitment to national security. He urged all ranks to maintain the highest standards of vigilance and preparedness while defending one of the world's most sensitive borders.

The strategic outlook of the Indian Army has undergone a remarkable transformation, particularly after Operation Sindoor. Launched in May 2025 in response to the Pahalgam terror attack, the operation marked a decisive shift in India's military doctrine. The Army moved beyond a purely defensive posture to adopt a proactive and integrated approach capable of responding swiftly across multiple domains of warfare.

One of the defining features of Oper-



ation Sindoor has been the normalization of precision air power as an essential component of military response. Air strikes are no longer viewed merely as escalatory measures but as standard options available to neutralize terrorist infrastructure across the border whenever necessary. The operation also reinforced India's willingness to conduct precision strikes on enemy territory without allowing such actions to escalate into a full-scale conventional conflict.

Another significant outcome has been the emphasis on multi-domain integra-

tion. Modern military operations are now planned with complete coordination across land, air, cyber, maritime, space, and information warfare, replacing the earlier model of isolated ground operations. Simultaneously, the Army has accelerated the induction of advanced technologies, including unmanned aerial vehicles, counter-drone systems, long-range precision weapons, and sophisticated surveillance capabilities to maintain a decisive advantage on the battlefield.

Counter-terrorism strategy has also evolved considerably. Rather than

responding only after attacks occur, the focus has shifted toward dismantling terrorist ecosystems at their source through intelligence-driven operations involving close coordination among various military and security agencies. Integrated Battle Groups now provide greater operational flexibility, enabling quicker mobilization and deeper precision strikes whenever required.

The visit of the Fire and Fury Corps Commander gains even greater significance when viewed in the context of the formation he reviewed—the Trishul Division. The name "Trishul" itself carries profound symbolism. Derived from the Sanskrit words Tri, meaning three, and Shul, meaning sharp spear or trident, the Trishul is the sacred weapon of Lord Shiva. It represents not merely a weapon of destruction but the harmonious balance of creation, preservation, and transformation.

In Hindu philosophy, the three prongs of the Trishul symbolize several sacred triads, including Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer. They also represent the past, present, and future, reflecting strength, wisdom, and continuity. These qualities mirror the ethos of the Trishul Division, whose soldiers remain prepared to defend India's territorial integrity while preserving peace and stability along one of the world's most challenging frontiers.

The Trishul Division, officially designated as the 3 Infantry Division of the Indian Army, was raised on 26 October 1962 in Leh during the Indo-China conflict. Initially known as the 3 Himalayan Division under the command of Major General Budh Singh, it was created to strengthen India's defensive posture amid increasing tensions on the northern borders. Today, headquartered at Karu near Leh, the division functions under the prestigious XIV Corps, widely known as the Fire and Fury Corps, and remains one of the most strategically important formations of the Indian Army.

Ultra-processed foods can increase the risk of multiple chronic health conditions, such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes

A new study found that a diet heavy in ultra-processed foods can harm male reproductive health and reduce sperm quality

The researchers say that ultra processed foods may contain molecules found in plastics that are known to disrupt hormonal systems in the body

Ultra-Processed Foods May Harm Male Reproductive, Metabolic Health

A new study reports that ultra-processed foods may be linked to a decline in male reproductive health, including sperm quality.

The research, published on August 28 in Cell Metabolism, states that regular consumption of ultra-processed foods has several effects on a person's health.

These include higher cholesterol levels and increased body weight. They noted that participants in their study gained more than a kilogram of weight when they ate ultra-processed foods. The amount of fat mass in their bodies also increased.

The researchers added that "sperm quality trended toward impairment" when participants were on an ultra-processed diet. The researchers pointed out that these health effects occurred even when a person on an ultra-processed diet consumed the same number of calories as a person on another type of diet.

"This study provides evidence that consumption of ultra-processed food is detrimental for cardiometabolic and reproductive outcomes, regardless of excessive caloric intake," the study authors wrote.

Philip Werthman, MD, a urologist and director of the Center for Male Reproductive Medicine and Vasectomy Reversal in Los Angeles, says the study is proof that what you eat can be more important than how much you eat.

"It's not the calories you're getting. It's the type of calories you're getting," Werthman told Healthline.

Effects of an ultra-processed diet on sperm quality

For their study, researchers recruited 43 males ages 20–35. Each participant spent three weeks on both a diet primarily of ultra-processed foods and a diet of unprocessed foods, with a 3-month "washing out" period between the two diets.

Half of the participants started on the unprocessed diet while the other half began with the ultra-processed diet. Half of the men from each group were also put on a diet that included 500 extra calories per day.

Researchers noted that subjects on the ultra-processed diet experienced an increase in the phthalate cMINP, a substance



found in plastics that can disrupt hormones.

Those on the ultra-processed diet also saw decreases in their testosterone levels and follicle-stimulating hormones, which are crucial for sperm production.

The researchers said some of the endocrine-disrupting substances may come from the plastic packaging used for ultra-processed foods.

They note that the introduction of ultra-processed foods in the 1970s seems to fall in line with a 60% decline worldwide in sperm count.

Kristin Kirkpatrick, president of KAK Consulting and a dietitian at Cleveland Clinic's Department of Wellness & Preventive Medicine, said the research sends a clear message. "The study found that endocrine disruptors and other components altered hormone levels in men, even if the men were healthy," she told Healthline. "This means, even if you're healthy based on other parameters, yet consume a diet higher in ultra-processed foods, you still are at risk for increases in

chronic conditions."

Werthman added that a man's general health can also affect their reproductive system. For example, a person who has gained weight, developed type 2 diabetes, or experienced a rise in cholesterol levels may see a decline in reproductive health measures such as sperm quality.

"The reproductive system is a function of your overall health," Werthman explained. "The reproductive system is quite sensitive."

Michael Eisenberg, MD, a professor of urology at Stanford University, had one caution about the study's conclusions.

"While none reached statistical significance, there does appear to be a decline in semen quality when examining the summative data," he told Healthline. "However, it's important to note that the intervention was for three weeks, and a cycle of sperm production typically takes between two to three months."

Health impacts of ultra-processed foods

The Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention (CDC) reports Trusted Source that ultra-processed foods account for an average of 55% of total calories consumed by people in the United States.

It notes that people under 19 years of age tend to eat slightly more ultra-processed foods than adults 19 years and older. The agency states there is little difference in ultra-processed food consumption between men and women.

The CDC says ultra-processed foods tend to be "hyperpalatable, energy-dense, low in dietary fiber, and contain little or no whole foods, while having high amounts of salt, sweeteners, and unhealthy fats."

It states that sandwiches (including burgers), sweet bakery products, sweetened beverages, and savory snacks are among the top sources of calories from ultra-processed foods.

A July 2025 study reported that ultra-processed foods are a major contributing factor to obesity as well as increasing a person's risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and sleep apnea.

An April 2025 study estimated that

ultra-processed foods were linked to 124,000 preventable deaths in the United States during a two-year period.

A May 2024 study revealed that ultra-processed foods may also increase the risk of stroke and cognitive decline.

Kirkpatrick said there are a number of reasons for these impacts, including what a person is not eating.

"Consuming ultra-processed foods means that other foods, which are found to help in the prevention of heart disease (like fresh fruit and vegetables, healthy fats, and fiber) are not being consumed," she said. "Further, excess sugar and sodium consumption has been found in multiple studies to pose a significant risk to heart health. Sugar and sodium are common ingredients in ultra-processed foods."

Werthman said the pattern is clear. "This study is another confirmation that the food industry has been poisoning us for the past 20 to 30 years," he noted. "We see the effects of that now."

Tips to improve male reproductive health

Experts say there are lifestyle habits that can help improve and maintain male reproductive health. "In general, good diet (whole grains, fruits, vegetables), exercise, and maintaining a good body weight will help overall and reproductive health," said Eisenberg. Werthman says a healthy diet is "a big component" of that equation, but noted that men, especially those in the process of trying to have children, should exercise regularly as well as avoid alcohol and tobacco.

Kirkpatrick agreed. "Eating a diet high in nutrient density, such as the Mediterranean diet, as well as regular exercise, adequate sleep, stress management, maintaining a healthy weight, and abstaining from tobacco and alcohol, may all play a role in better reproductive health," she said.

Werthman noted that heat sources such as saunas and hot tubs can temporarily impact sperm quality and quantity.

"All these things affect the reproductive system," he said. "The body is an integrated system."

Courtesy Healthline

Blood cancer symptoms on skin that you should never ignore

The skin is the largest organ in the body and can often reveal signs of underlying health conditions, including blood cancers such as leukemia and lymphoma. According to The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, changes in the skin, rashes, or unusual lesions may sometimes be the first indications of these cancers. While many skin changes are harmless or caused by infections or medications, certain patterns may signal blood cancer. Recognising these symptoms early can lead to timely diagnosis and treatment, making awareness critical. Understanding which skin changes to monitor can help patients and caregivers seek medical attention before complications escalate.

Common skin symptoms of blood cancer
Blood cancers can produce visible skin symptoms including:

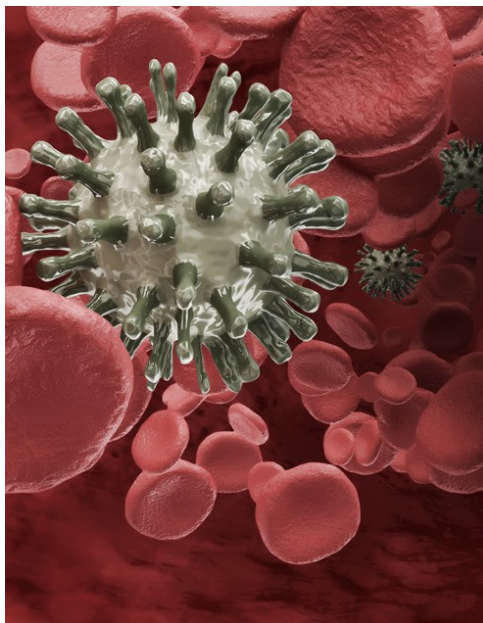
- **Petechiae:** Tiny red, brown, or purple spots caused by broken capillaries due to low platelet counts.
- **Purpura:** Larger blotchy bruises or discolorations that do not fade when pressed.
- **Rashes:** Patches on the skin that may be itchy or scaly.
- **Easy bruising and bleeding due to impaired clotting is common.**

These symptoms often result from blood abnormalities caused by leukemia or lymphoma rather than dermatological conditions alone.

Leukemia and skin signs

Sometimes, leukemia cells can leave the blood and bone marrow and settle in the skin. This is called leukemia cutis. When this happens, it can cause raised bumps, patches, nodules, or sores on the skin.

Another common sign of leukemia is petechiae, which are tiny red or purple spots that usually appear on the arms, legs, or torso. These spots don't turn white when pressed, which helps distinguish them from ordinary rashes.



Other skin changes, such as larger bruises (purpura) or unusual rashes, may appear early in leukemia or indicate the disease is progressing. These happen because leukemia affects the blood, making it harder for the body to clot properly or fight infections.

Cutaneous T-cell lymphoma (CTCL) and other blood lymphomas

Blood cancers like CTCL, a type of skin lymphoma, can show up as dry, scaly, itchy patches or plaques. These often appear on parts of the body that don't get much sun.

Other changes may include:

- **Red, pink, brown, or grey patches**
- **Lumps or bumps that can sometimes break open**
- **Thickened skin on the palms or soles**
- **Hair loss in affected areas and swollen lymph nodes**

Widespread redness of the skin (erythroderma) in more advanced cases

These symptoms happen because lymphoma affects the immune system and the lymphatic system, which can cause the skin to react in these ways. Early recognition is important because these signs can easily be mistaken for eczema, infections, or other skin problems.

Petechiae: the "hidden" rash

- **Petechiae are not a typical rash. They are tiny red or purple spots caused by small blood vessels (capillaries) breaking under the skin.**
- **They often appear on the feet, legs, arms, or hands**
- **They are caused by low platelet counts, a common effect of leukemia, which makes the blood less able to clot**

Even though they may look like harmless spots, petechiae can be an early warning sign of blood cancer, so noticing them and checking with a doctor is important.

Blood cancers can present with noticeable skin symptoms such as petechiae, purpura, rashes, nodules, plaques, or itching. The type and severity vary depending on the blood cancer subtype and disease stage. Early recognition of these signs is crucial for timely diagnosis and treatment. Periodic skin examinations, awareness of unusual changes, and prompt consultation with a healthcare provider can improve outcomes. According to The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, understanding these symptoms and seeking medical attention without delay is an essential step in managing blood cancers effectively. Raising public awareness about these warning signs can play a vital role in saving lives through earlier detection and intervention. Ultimately, vigilance and education remain the strongest tools in reducing the burden of blood cancers worldwide.

TOI Lifestyle Desk

DR TASADUK HUSSAIN ITOO

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CS reviews roadmap for commercial cultivation of Medicinal & Aromatic Plants in J&K

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 13: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today convened a meeting to evaluate the roadmap prepared by the Agriculture Production Department (APD) for promotion of commercial cultivation of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs) in Jammu and Kashmir, aimed at unlocking the sector's vast economic potential and transforming the Union Territory to become a hub in high-value Himalayan medicinal plants.

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, Agriculture Production Department; Vice Chancellors of SKUAST-Kashmir and SKUAST-Jammu; Commissioner Secretary, Forests; Principal Chief Conservator of Forests; MD, HADP; Director Agriculture, Kashmir/Jammu; Representatives from CSIR-IIIM, Jammu; Senior Faculty from Agriculture Universities and other senior officers of the Agriculture Production Department, Forest Department.

The Chief Secretary observed that Jammu and Kashmir possesses immense natural advantages in terms of biodiversity, climate and availability of several high-value medicinal plant species which provide a strong foundation for developing a globally com-

petitive medicinal plant economy.

He said the sector has enormous potential to diversify agriculture, enhance farmers' incomes, generate employment for rural youth and women, promote entrepreneurship and significantly strengthen the Union Territory's bio-economy.

He stressed that the roadmap should be implemented with clearly defined timelines, measurable outcomes. He directed the Agriculture Production Department to work in close coordination with the Forest Department, AYUSH, research institutions and the private sector to build a complete value chain from cultivation to global markets.

The Chief Secretary further underscored the importance of attracting private investment in cultivation, processing and value addition while ensuring scientific conservation of valuable medicinal plant resources. He called for adopting cluster-based cultivation models and facilitating stronger market linkages so that farmers receive higher returns from cultivation of medicinal and aromatic plants.

While speaking the ACS, Agriculture Production Department, Dr Ashish Chandra Verma outlined a comprehensive Rs. 150 Cr mission proposed



to be implemented over six years for developing an integrated ecosystem encompassing conservation, scientific cultivation, quality planting material, research, processing, value addition, branding, marketing and exports of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants.

He further maintained that although Jammu and Kashmir possesses one of the richest repositories of Himalayan medicinal plants, its current contribution to the national MAP sector remains below potential due to limited organised cultivation, inadequate processing infrastructure, dependence on wild collection, fragmented marketing systems and limited industry participation. The road-

map seeks to address these challenges through a comprehensive strategy integrating conservation, cultivation, processing, research and marketing.

Detailing out further MD, HADP, Dr. Sagar Doifode Datatray informed that the proposed mission comprises six major intervention areas, namely conservation and cultivation, establishment of processing infrastructure, branding and marketing, translational research and development, monitoring and evaluation, and capacity building of stakeholders.

Elaborating it, the MD made out that the roadmap proposes geo-spatial mapping of MAP-rich niche zones across Jammu

and Kashmir, restoration of 1,500 hectares of degraded forest ecosystems, establishment of 51 specialised MAP nurseries, expansion of cultivation outside forest areas, strengthening of 225 Biodiversity Management Committees and financial support for 500 farmers to obtain Good Agricultural and Collection Practices (GACP) and Organic Certification.

Regarding value addition, it was informed that the mission envisages establishment of six primary processing centres in the private sector besides creation of two advanced extraction units too. These facilities would substantially strengthen processing capac-

ity, improve product quality, reduce post-harvest losses and facilitate production of high-value herbal extracts and active pharmaceutical ingredients.

The meeting was further informed by the Nodal Officer, MAP in APD, Dr Abhimanyu that nearly 40 per cent of the total project cost has been earmarked for branding and marketing initiatives, including establishment of two FPO/MFP Parks, two mega MAP clusters in Public-Private Partnership mode, two model MAP villages, creation of an Export Promotion Cell, development of a dedicated digital marketing platform and constitution of a Herbal Innovation Fund to support 80 start-ups in the

medicinal plants sector.

The presentation also highlighted proposals for development of scientifically validated cultivation technologies, standardisation of 40 Packages of Practices, screening of 40 medicinal plant species for active pharmaceutical ingredients, commercialisation of 40 APIs, filing of nine patents and conservation of nearly 165 medicinal plant species through collaborative research involving SKUAST-Jammu, SKUAST-Kashmir and CSIR-IIIM Jammu.

The Department informed the meeting that successful implementation of the roadmap is expected to expand the area under MAP cultivation to over 1,700 hectares, support establishment of 80 start-ups and 25 export-oriented enterprises, besides benefiting over 5,000 farmers and entrepreneurs directly while generating substantial indirect employment across the value chain.

The Chief Secretary reiterated that the proposed roadmap represents a transformative opportunity to harness Jammu and Kashmir's unique biodiversity for sustainable economic growth while ensuring scientific conservation of its invaluable medicinal plant wealth creating new avenues of prosperity for farmers, entrepreneurs and rural communities.

DC chairs District Level Committee meeting on Change of Land Use

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

RAMBAN, JULY 13: A meeting of the District Level Committee on Change of Land Use (CLU) was convened under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Ramban, Mohammad Alyas Khan, in his office chamber to review the status of Change of Land Use (CLU) cases across the district.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Varunjeet Singh Charak, Assistant Commissioner Revenue Shokat Hayat Mattoo; ACD Sheraz Ahmed, GM DIC Ravinder Anand; DFOs, CHO, Executive Engineers of PMGSY, PWD, Jal Shakti and JPDCL; officials from NHAI and BRO along with other concerned officers.



During the meeting, the Committee reviewed 15 applications for land use change, deliberating on each case with thorough scrutiny of documents and verification for compliance with existing rules. Decisions were taken after confirming adherence to land conversion regulations.

The meeting also reviewed revenue records, status of No Objection Certificates (NOCs) and overall progress in disposal of CLU cases. He also directed the officers to ensure that no construction work should be undertaken without proper approval of the committee.

Emphasizing transparency, efficiency and accountability, the Deputy Commissioner directed all departments to strictly follow provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Land Revenue Act and relevant guidelines. He further stressed the need to expedite the processing of NOC and adopting a proactive approach to ensure timely disposal of cases and improved public service delivery across the district.

Satish Sharma reaffirms commitment to people-centric governance; assures swift redress of public issues

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JULY 13: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Information Technology, Youth Services & Sports, and Science & Technology, Satish Sharma, today met several deputations from different districts of the Jammu division and held detailed interactions on a wide range of public issues concerning infrastructure, civic amenities, public services and developmental requirements.

The deputations, comprising representatives of social organisations, trade bodies, youth groups and local residents, apprised the Minister of issues pertaining to road connectivity, drinking water supply, power infrastructure, sports facilities, ration distribution, digital services, employment opportunities and other development-related matters. They also put forth several area-specific demands aimed

at improving the quality of life of the people.

Giving a patient hearing to each deputation, Satish Sharma reiterated the Jammu and Kashmir Government's unwavering commitment to ensure transparent, accountable and people-centric governance. He said the present dispensation is working with the sole objective of taking governance to the grassroots and ensuring that every citizen has access to quality public services and modern infrastructure.

"The government is committed to deliver state-of-the-art facilities across Jammu and Kashmir. Our focus is not merely on creating infrastructure but on ensuring that every development initiative directly benefits the people and improves their quality of life," the Minister said.

He emphasized that public participation remains the cornerstone of effective governance and said regular interaction with



citizens helps the government understand ground realities and

formulate policies that are responsive to people's aspirations.

He assured the deputations that all genuine issues raised during the meeting would be examined on priority and taken up with the concerned departments for early resolution.

The Minister further stated that under the leadership of the Chief Minister, the government is making sustained efforts to strengthen the public infrastructure, improve service delivery, promote digital governance and create greater opportunities for youth through enhanced sports infrastructure, technology-driven initiatives and inclusive development programmes.

Satish Sharma also stressed that every department has been directed to adopt a responsive and citizen-friendly approach while implementing welfare and development schemes. He said timely redress of public grievances remains one of the government's foremost priorities.

DC Doda reviews arrangements for Independence Day-2026 celebrations

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

DODA, JULY 13: Deputy Commissioner Doda Krishan Lal today chaired a meeting to review the preparations for the smooth and successful celebration of Independence Day 2026 in the district.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner directed all concerned officers to ensure that all necessary arrangements at the main venue, Sports Stadium Doda, are completed well in advance. He stressed the importance of close coordination among all departments to ensure the successful and dignified conduct of the national event.

The Deputy Commissioner instructed the Executive Officer, Municipality Doda, to ensure proper sanitation and cleanliness at the venue and its surrounding areas. The Executive Engineer, PDD Doda, was directed to make arrangements for uninterrupted power supply and illumination of all important Government buildings, bridges and the main celebration venue.

The Information Department was directed to ensure the installation of a proper Public Address System for the smooth conduct of the function. The Chief Education Officer and the District Cultural Officer were directed to oversee cultural programmes and other ceremonial activities showcasing the patriotic spirit and rich cultural heritage of the district.

The Jal Shakti Department was instructed to ensure the availability of adequate drinking water facilities at the venue. The concerned officers were also directed to ensure the proper display of National Flag in accordance with the Flag Code of India.

The Deputy Commissioner further reviewed arrangements related to felicitation of distinguished individuals and presentation of awards during the function. The Police Department was directed to make comprehensive security, traffic regulation and parking arrangements to ensure the safety and convenience of participants and the general public.

The Chief Medical Officer, Doda, was instructed to ensure adequate medical facilities, including deployment of medical teams, ambulance services and emergency healthcare arrangements at the venue.

Besides, directions were issued to the concerned departments to make adequate arrangements for seating, stage decoration, barricading, refreshments for participants and all other essential services to ensure the smooth and successful conduct of the Independence Day celebrations.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasized timely completion of all assigned tasks and directed officers to maintain close coordination for the successful conduct of the celebrations.

DDC Doda reviews action taken on public grievances raised during Block Diwas at Malanoo

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

DODA, JULY 13: District Development Commissioner (DDC) Doda Krishan Lal, today chaired a review meeting to assess the action taken on the public grievances and developmental issues raised during the Block Diwas cum-Public Outreach Programme held at Malanoo on July 11, 2026.

The meeting witnessed a detailed department-wise review of the grievances and development-related demands projected by the public. Concerned officers apprised the Chair of the action taken so far and highlighted various bottlenecks affecting the timely execution of development works and the resolution of public grievances.

Taking serious note of complaints regarding alleged fake beneficiaries under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY), the DDC directed the Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department to publish the list of AAY beneficiaries for verification at the grassroots level, ensuring greater transparency and accountability.

Reviewing issues related to the education sector, the DDC instructed the School Education Department to ensure regular attendance of teachers and students in educational institutions and strengthen monitoring mechanisms to improve academic standards.

Regarding the replacement of wooden

electricity poles, the DDC directed the Power Development Department to intervene immediately and expedite the execution of the replacement works to ensure reliable and uninterrupted power supply to the affected areas.

On the issue of potholes and road maintenance, the DDC instructed the R&B and PMGSY Departments to undertake the necessary repair works on priority and improve the condition of roads for the convenience and safety of commuters.

The functioning and infrastructure of health institutions in the area also came under review. The DDC directed the Health Department to address existing deficiencies and ensure the availability of essential healthcare services, adequate medical staff and medicines at all health institutions.

Reviewing the status of PMAY-G cases, the Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD), Doda, informed the Chair that the verification of beneficiaries is presently underway. The DDC directed the concerned officers to complete the verification process expeditiously so that eligible beneficiaries receive the benefits without unnecessary delay.

The issue of the Kahara-Jai Road was also discussed during the meeting. The concerned officers informed the Chair that the project is presently facing issues relating to forest clearance.

Hyderabad-based Marri Retail Limited received Sebi nod to float its IPO

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

HYDERABAD, JULY 13: Marri Retail Limited on Friday said it has received Sebi observations for its Initial Public Offering (IPO).

The Hyderabad-based company has filed its draft red herring prospectus with Sebi on February 2, 2026.

The IPO, with a face value of Rs 2, is a mix of fresh issue of shares aggregating up to Rs 522 crore and offer-for-sale of 27,000,000 equity shares by promoter-Marri Venkat Reddy.

The proceeds from its fresh issuance worth Rs 115.6 crore will be utilised for repayment/

prepayment, in full or part, of all or certain outstanding borrowings availed by the company, Rs 250.5 crore for capital expenditure to be incurred towards opening of 10 new apparel stores, one new apparel store with jewellery SIS (Integrated Retail Store) and two new standalone jewellery stores (the Jewellery Stores), Rs 35.8 crore expenditure for lease/sub lease rent payments for certain of the company's existing stores and warehouse, and general corporate purposes, the company said in a release here.

The company, in consultation with the book-running



lead managers, may consider a pre-IPO Placement for up to Rs 104.4 crore.

The pre-IPO placement if completed, the fresh issue size will be reduced.

The Offer is being made through the book-building process, wherein not more than

50% of the net offer is allocated to qualified institutional buyers, and not more than 15% and 35% of the net offer is assigned to non-institutional bidders and retail individual bidders respectively.

Marri Retail is an apparel and jewellery retailer operating stores under multiple brands, offering a comprehensive and well-diversified product portfolio across a wide range of price points, including premium, mid-premium and value.

The company commenced apparel retail business as a proprietorship under the brand name 'Jeans Corner' in 1999 and entered the large-format

retail segment by launching the first shopping mall under the "The Chennai Shopping Mall" brand in Hyderabad in 2013.

The company has 34 stores across 26 districts in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra.

The company operates its stores under multiple brands, including, The Chennai Shopping Mall, JCMall, J.C. Brothers and Jeans Corner in the apparel category, and The Chennai Shopping Mall Jewellers in the jewellery category.

The equity shares are proposed to be listed on BSE and NSE. (UNI)

AP Hoteliers urge govt. to restore GST Input Tax Credit

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

VIJAYAWADA, JULY 13: Andhra Pradesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry Federation and AP Star hotels association on Friday appealed to the government to restore the GST Input Tax Credit to the hospitality sector and reduce GST on commercial LPG cylinders from 18 percent to 5 percent.

The representatives of APCCIF and AP Star hotels association met AP Tourism Minister Kandula Durgesh here and submitted a representation



seeking his support to fulfill their demands. They appealed to the Minister to take the issue of reducing GST on commercial LPG cylinders to the Central government. They said that the hoteliers are incurring huge losses, compared to those who are using piped natural gas.

They also explained to the Tourism Minister the significance of restoring the GST input tax credit to the hospitality sector. With the removal of Input Tax Credit, the maintenance cost of hotels and restaurants has increased considerably, they said, adding that the rents of buildings have also increased by 20 percent.

Responding to the grievances of the hoteliers, the Minister assured that the State government would take the issues to the notice of the Central government.

Furthermore, the delegation thanked the Minister Kandula Durgesh for extending full support to the "Andhra Pradesh Travel Agents Meet/Inbound Tourism Conclave" jointly organized by Tours and Travels Association of Andhra Pradesh (TTAA), Andhra Pradesh Star Hotels Association (ASHA), Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce & Industry Federation and Association of North Andhra Domestic & Inbound Tourism on July 14 here under the auspices of the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Department.

AP Chambers Advisor Lakshminarayana, President P Bhaskara Rao, AP Star Hotels Association President RV Swamy, General Secretary S Murthy Chitturi and Joint Secretary M V Pawan Karthik were among those who were part of the delegation. (UNI)

Visakhapatnam to pursue green growth without compromising on pollution control: MP Sribharat

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

VISAKHAPATNAM, JULY 13: Visakhapatnam MP M. Sribharat on Friday said the city's development would be guided by a vision of becoming one of India's leading green cities, asserting that there would be no compromise on pollution that threatens public health.

Speaking at a high-level review meeting on air pollution control chaired by Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board (APPCB) Chairman Krishniah, the MP said industrial growth and environmental protection must go hand in hand.

The meeting, attended by public representatives, district officials, APPCB members, industry representatives and officials of various departments, reviewed measures to curb air

pollution in the city.

Industries identified as major contributors to pollution were directed to submit detailed action plans within 60 to 90 days outlining measures to reduce emissions and furnish monthly progress reports on their implementation. The meeting also decided to strengthen the city's air quality monitoring network by establishing three additional advanced Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Stations and six more ambient air quality monitoring stations.

Sribharat suggested that air quality data generated by the monitoring stations should be made available to the public to ensure transparency and encourage greater public participation in pollution control.

Officials reiterated that while



the government remained committed to promoting industrial growth and investments, strict action would be taken against industries violating environmental norms, including suspension of operations wherever necessary.

To reduce dust pollution, the meeting decided that trucks transporting bulk materials must cover their loads during transit.

Industries were also urged to utilise Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds for re-

pairing and maintaining roads damaged by industrial transportation.

In view of the high pollution levels recorded during November and December last year, the meeting resolved to initiate preventive measures well in advance to minimise the risk of severe smog during the upcoming winter season.

Sribharat said the health of citizens would remain the government's top priority and stressed that transforming Visakhapatnam into a green city would require coordinated efforts by the government, industries and the public. He added that the implementation of pollution control measures would be reviewed every three to six months to monitor progress and ensure accountability. (UNI)

Telangana: Five SCCL mines earn Centre's prestigious 5-Star rating

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

HYDERABAD, JULY 13: Five mines of The Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) have been selected for the prestigious 5-Star Rating under the National Coal Mine Rating Programme conducted by the Ministry of Coal for the assessment year 2024-25. According to the Ministry of Coal, RK Newtech and RK-6 mines in the Srirampur Area, JVR OC-II in the Sathupalli Area, Khairguda Open Cast in the Bellampalli Area and RG OC-I in the Ramagundam-III Area secured the coveted rating.

Of the 382 coal mines across the country that participated in the programme, only 50 were awarded the 5-Star Rating, with SCCL accounting for five of them.

It had secured four 5-Star ratings last year, making this year's achievement its best-ever performance, the state-owned mining said in a release

here on Friday.

Telangana Deputy Chief Minister and Energy Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu congratulated the officers, employees and workers of the award-winning mines and urged other Singareni mines to adopt similar best practices.

The annual rating exercise, conducted by the Coal Controller Organisation (CCO) under the Ministry of Coal, assesses mines on seven broad parameters covering 50 performance indicators, including scientific mining, operational efficiency, mine safety, workers' welfare, environmental protection and development of nearby villages.

Coal mines securing more than 90 percent marks across the prescribed parameters are eligible for the 5-Star Rating after a detailed on-site verification by an expert team from the Coal Controller Organisation.

SCCL officials said the recognition

reflects the company's continued commitment to operational excellence, sustainable mining practices, safety standards, employee welfare and environmental conservation.

In addition to the five 5-Star mines, 17 other SCCL mines secured the 4-Star Rating by scoring between 80 and 90 per cent. While the 4-Star rating does not carry an award, it recognises mines that have achieved a high level of performance and narrowly missed the 5-Star benchmark.

Congratulating the company, Bhatti Vikramarka said SCCL had successfully implemented best practices in discipline, mine safety, employee welfare and environmental management while ensuring uninterrupted and safe coal production to meet the State's energy needs. He expressed confidence that more Singareni mines would achieve the prestigious 5-Star Rating in the coming years through sustained excellence. (UNI)

Centre reviews AP FCV tobacco marketing season

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

HYDERABAD, JULY 13: A high-level team from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, led by Additional Secretary Nitin Kumar Yadav, on Friday reviewed the ongoing Andhra Pradesh Flue Cured Virginia (FCV) Tobacco Marketing Season 2025-26 and discussed measures to strengthen procurement, exports and growers' welfare.

The meeting, attended by tobacco growers,



manufacturers, exporters, dealers, trade associations and officials of the Tobacco Board, reviewed the prevailing market situation and reiterated the Centre's commitment to protecting the interests of FCV tobacco farmers.

Discussions focused on expediting procurement, facilitating exports and strengthening the overall marketing ecosystem for FCV tobacco.

The meeting also reviewed initiatives relating to restructuring of the Tobacco Board, enhancement of benefits under the Growers' Welfare Fund, simplification of registration procedures, digitalisation of services and introduction of AI-based tobacco grading.

Stakeholders also discussed expanding export opportunities in overseas markets and promoting crop diversification in suitable areas.

Nitin Kumar expressed confidence that coordinated efforts by all stakeholders would improve the long-term sustainability and global competitiveness of India's FCV tobacco sector. (UNI)

Equity Mutual Fund inflows rise 26pc to Rs 28,973 Cr in June: AMFI

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JUL 13: Investor confidence in equity mutual funds remained strong in June despite heightened market volatility, with net investments into equity-oriented schemes rising significantly from the previous month.

According to data released by the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI), equity mutual funds recorded net inflows of Rs 28,973 crore in June, up 26 per cent from Rs 22,908 crore in May.

Although the mutual fund industry reported an overall net outflow of Rs 52,949 crore during the month, the figure improved from the Rs 64,131 crore net outflow seen in May.

The broader outflow was primarily driven by heavy re-



demptions from debt mutual funds, which witnessed net withdrawals of around Rs 1.09 lakh crore.

Despite the outflows, the industry's total assets under management (AUM) continued

to expand, rising to Rs 82.22 lakh crore at the end of June from Rs 81.6 lakh crore a month earlier, reflecting gains in market value as well as sustained investor participation.

The latest numbers indicate

that investor demand for equity funds has remained robust throughout 2026. Net inflows stood at Rs 38,440 crore in April, Rs 40,450 crore in March, Rs 25,978 crore in February and Rs 24,028 crore in January.

Among equity categories, mid-cap funds emerged as the biggest draw for investors, garnering net inflows of Rs 6,090 crore in June. They were followed by small-cap funds with Rs 5,602 crore, flexi-cap funds with Rs 5,231 crore, and large-cap funds with Rs 2,067 crore in net investments. However, some segments remained under pressure. Dividend yield funds and Equity-Linked Savings Schemes (ELSS) continued to witness net outflows during the month.

Meanwhile, investor sentiment towards gold improved sharply. Gold exchange-traded funds (ETFs) registered net inflows of Rs 3,443 crore in June, reversing the Rs 725 crore net outflow recorded in May, indicating renewed interest in the asset class amid uncertain market conditions. (UNI)

