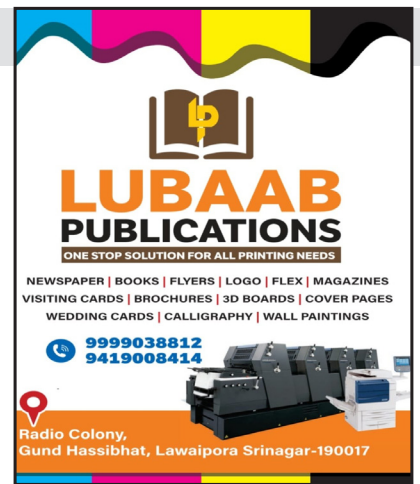


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16TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

HEADLINES TODAY

Voice To The Voiceless



LG Reviews Shrine Donations System, Emphasises Transparency and Accountability



■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JULY 16: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday chaired a high-

level meeting of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) to review the Offerings and Donations Management System at the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine, reaf-

firming the administration's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of transparency, accountability and

● Turn on Page 2

PM Modi to Launch Rs. 5,470 Crore Infrastructure Projects in Punjab Today

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

CHANDIGARH, JULY 16: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for infrastructure projects worth Rs. 5,470 crore during his visit to Punjab on Friday, with the main event scheduled at Jalandhar Cantonment Railway Station. The projects are expected to strengthen rail and road connectivity, improve passenger facilities and provide a major boost to economic development across the region.

A significant highlight of the visit will be the inauguration of 75 redeveloped railway stations across the country under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, built at a total cost of about Rs. 1,570 crore. The upgraded stations have been equipped with modern passenger amenities while preserving architectural features that reflect the local heritage. In Punjab, the redeveloped stations include Jalandhar Cantonment, SAS Nagar (Moh-



ali), Sri Muktsar Sahib and Sri Anandpur Sahib.

The Prime Minister will also inaugurate the Daulatpur Chowk-Kartoli rail line, developed at a cost of approximately Rs. 830 crore under the Nangal Dam-Talwara-Mukerian Rail Line Project. The new line is expected to improve rail

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Our Programme Will Not Change: Omar Abdullah Vows to Go Ahead with Delhi Protest on Statehood

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, JULY 16: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday reaffirmed that the National Conference's proposed protest in New Delhi on July 20 demanding the restoration of statehood will proceed as planned, asserting that any uncertainty over official permission would not deter the party from carrying out its programme.

Addressing reporters in Srinagar, Abdullah said the party's decision to travel to the national capital remains unchanged, although adjust-



ments could be made to the venue or the manner of the demonstration if necessary.

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J&K Shines in NEET-UG 2026 as Two Students Secure Places Among Nation's Best

Hadiya Nisar Ranks 99th, Zaidan Wani Secures AIR 124 in National Medical Entrance Examination

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, JULY 16: Jammu and Kashmir has made a strong mark on the national academic stage, with two students earning places among the country's top performers in the NEET-UG 2026 examination, the results of which were declared by the National Testing Agency (NTA) on Thursday. Leading the Union Territory's performance, Hadiya Nisar secured All India Rank (AIR) 99 with an impressive 99.9931 percentile, emerging as the highest-ranked candidate from Jammu and Kashmir and among the top 100 candidates in the country.

Another outstanding performer from the Union

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Special Court Frames Charges in Landmark Narco-Terror Case, Trial to Commence

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, JULY 16: In a major step against narco-terrorism and cross-border terrorism, the Special NIA Court has framed charges against 10 accused in a landmark case investigated by the State Investigation Agency (SIA), Kashmir, paving the way for the commencement of trial.

The case, registered as FIR No. 19/2022 at Police Station SIA Kashmir in October 2022, was initiated following intelligence inputs about an alleged cross-border conspiracy involving handlers based in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir and linked to the banned terrorist outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

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CS led panel deliberates over the 'Comprehensive Minor Mining Policy-2026'



■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 16: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today chaired a high-level meeting to deliberate upon the broad contours of the proposed Minor Mining Policy-2026, being for-

mulated by the Department of Geology & Mining to address existing policy gaps, strengthen regulatory mechanisms and establish a transparent, technology-driven and sustainable framework for scientific

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CS Reviews Achan Waste Management Facility

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 16: Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo today visited the Achan Integrated Waste Management Facility to review Srinagar's waste management infrastructure and assess the progress of key initiatives being implemented by the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) for scientific processing, treatment and

● Turn on Page 2

Roads and Tunnels Will Remain Indispensable in Future Wars: Rajnath Singh

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JULY 16: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday asserted that strategic infrastructure such as roads, tunnels, airfields and ports will continue to play a decisive role in future warfare, emphasising that military strength depends not only on advanced weapons but also on the ability to rapidly deploy troops and equipment.

Addressing the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) Strategic Infrastructure Conclave in New Delhi, Singh said that while warfare is increasingly being shaped by cutting-edge technologies and precision weapon systems, robust infrastructure will remain the backbone of operational readiness and national defence.

"Roads, tunnels, ports and airfields will continue to play

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Baramulla Police Makes DIO-Issued Media ID Mandatory for Access to VVIP, Public Events

■ HT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JULY 16: The District Police Headquarters (DPH) Baramulla has made it mandatory for all journalists to carry valid identity cards issued by the District Information Officer (DIO), Baramulla, for access to venues during VVIP and VIP visits, religious gatherings, public events, and other occasions requiring police deployment.

According to an official order, only media personnel possessing DIO-issued identity cards will be permitted entry into designated venues, deployment areas, media enclosures, and other restricted locations.

The directive instructs all police officers and personnel deployed

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Ladakh Begins India's Highest Lilium Farm

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

LEH, JUL 16: Development of India's highest commercial Lilium cultivation field has commenced at Choglamar in Leh, marking the beginning of a first-of-its-kind floriculture initiative of this scale in Ladakh, aimed at creating new avenues of livelihood through floriculture.

Over the last three days, more than 50 thousand premium Lilium bulbs have already been planted at the

● Turn on Page 2

Dr Jitendra Unveils First Phase of Advanced Road Technology Initiative

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JUL 16: The CSIR-Central Road Research Institute (CSIR-CRRI) today commenced its year-long Platinum Jubilee Celebrations (July 16, 2026 - July 16, 2027) with the launch of a nationwide first-phase implementation of advanced indigenous road infrastructure technologies across 16 towns or locations in the country, including Jammu. The initiative marks a significant step towards demonstrating and scaling up innovative, sustainable road construction and maintenance

technologies developed by CSIR-CRRI through strategic collaborations with industry and implementing agencies.

The celebrations were inaugurated by Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences; Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Department of Atomic Energy and Department of Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh, who called for stronger collaboration between scientific institutions, industry and State governments to ensure that home-grown technologies

are implemented on a much larger scale across the country.

Before inaugurating the celebrations, Dr. Jitendra Singh visited the technology exhibition and interacted with scientists, researchers and industry representatives. He reviewed a range of indigenous technologies developed by CSIR-CRRI in road engineering, pavement technologies, intelligent transportation systems, road safety and sustainable construction materials. The Minister also launched the Automatic Modified Mix Seal Surfacing

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

FROM THE PUBLISHER....

Misuse of the Name of **Headlines Today**
Will Invite Strict Legal Action

Dear Readers...

It has come to our notice that certain individuals are unlawfully misusing the name and identity of Daily Headlines Today and falsely claiming association with this newspaper to pursue personal interests and indulge in unethical journalism.

Headlines Today is a professional and independent news organisation committed to responsible journalism and the highest standards of media ethics. We have zero tolerance for sensationalism, misinformation, blackmail, extortion, paid news, or any other unethical practice.

The general public, government departments, law enforcement agencies and all institutions are hereby informed that only persons duly authorised by this office are entitled to represent Daily Headlines Today. Any individual claiming affiliation without valid authorisation is doing so illegally, and this newspaper shall bear no responsibility for their actions.

We urge all concerned to immediately report any misuse of our name, logo or identity. Strict civil and criminal legal proceedings will be initiated against any person found impersonating or misrepresenting this newspaper or using its name for unlawful or unethical purposes.

Our reputation is built on professionalism, credibility and public trust, and we are committed to protecting it at all costs.

Jehangir Bukhari,
Publisher & Editor (Headlines Today)

CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....

LG Reviews.....

financial integrity in the management of devotees' contributions.

The meeting, held at the Spiritual Growth Centre in Katra, focused on the collection, counting, accounting, safeguarding and utilisation of offerings and donations received at the shrine. The Lieutenant Governor reviewed the institutional framework and standard operating procedures governing every stage of the process to ensure complete transparency and public confidence.

A detailed presentation before the Board highlighted the robust systems established for handling offerings received through donation boxes, donation counters, online platforms and contributions in the form of precious metals. Officials informed the Board that multiple layers of verification, surveillance, banking safeguards and periodic audits have been put in place to ensure the secure and transparent management of all donations.

The Board was further informed that every financial transaction related to offerings is carried out strictly in accordance with prescribed banking norms, statutory provisions and the guidelines issued by the Government of India.

Special attention was also given to the handling of precious metal offerings. Officials outlined the stringent security measures adopted for their storage, transportation, processing and refining through government-approved institutions, including the Reserve Bank of India and the India Government Mint in Hyderabad.

After an extensive review, the Shrine Board expressed satisfaction with the existing arrangements and commended the comprehensive monitoring and security mechanisms that safeguard devotees' offerings. The Board observed that the systems in place ensure transparency, accountability and financial discipline while reinforcing public trust in the management of one of the country's most revered religious institutions.

The meeting was attended by Shrine Board members Mahamandleshwar Swami Vishveshvaranand Gijri Maharaj, Baleshwar Rai, Dr. Ashok Bhan, Sudha Murty, Gunjan Rana, Dr. K.K. Talwar, Kulbhushan Ahuja, Lalit Bhasin and Suresh Kumar Sharma. Also present were Principal Secretary to the Lieutenant Governor Dr. Mandeep K. Bhandari, SMVDSB Chief Executive Officer Sachin Kumar Vaishya, Additional Chief Executive Officer Alok Kumar Maurya and other senior officials, both in person and through virtual mode.

PM Modi to.....

connectivity between Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, benefiting the districts of Hoshiarpur and Una while enhancing access to important religious destinations and remote areas.

During the visit, Modi will flag off the Kartoli-Ambala train service, which will strengthen connectivity across Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. He will also launch the Amritsar-Chheharta to Varanasi train service, providing a direct rail connection between two of the country's most significant spiritual and cultural centres.

In the road sector, the Prime Minister will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for National Highway projects worth more than Rs. 3,070 crore. These include the inauguration of the 30.9-kilometre Package-6 of the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway, which is expected to reduce travel time, lower fuel consumption and improve freight movement.

He will also lay the foundation stone for the 25.2-kilometre six-lane Southern Ludhiana Bypass, a project designed to improve traffic flow, reduce travel time between Ludhiana and Bathinda and strengthen connectivity with key industrial and commercial centres.

Ahead of the Prime Minister's arrival, Punjab Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav reviewed security arrangements at Jalandhar Cantonment Railway Station. The district administration has declared Jalandhar a no-flying zone during the visit to ensure security.

The visit will be Prime Minister Modi's second trip to Jalandhar this year, following his visit to Dera Sachkhand Ballan in February. It also comes at a politically significant time as the Bharatiya Janata Party prepares for the 2027 Punjab Assembly elections.

Before reaching Jalandhar, the Prime Minister will visit Chandigarh, where he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for healthcare, education and road infrastructure projects worth more than Rs. 4,700 crore. These include the inauguration of the Advanced Mother and Child Centre and the Advanced Neurosciences Centre at the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, along with the foundation stone for a 150-bed Critical Care Block under the Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission.

The projects are expected to enhance healthcare services and reinforce the government's focus on improving transport and public infrastructure while supporting long-term economic growth. (Agencies)

Our Programme....

"Our programme will not change. The venue or the mode may change, but the programme to go to Delhi will not change," the Chief Minister said, making it clear that the party was determined to pursue its demand for the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood.

When asked whether the reported delay in granting permission for the proposed protest amounted to sabotage or an attempt to derail the programme, Abdullah declined to make such an allegation.

"I will not go into whether it is sabotage, diversion or anything else. You and I both understand it," he said.

The Chief Minister also ruled out the possibility of holding a symbolic demonstration at a private location, saying the objective was to raise the issue publicly in the country's capital.

"If that had been our intention, we could have held the protest within the premises of our own residence. Instead, we will go to Delhi and raise our voice there in whatever manner is possible. After that, we will decide the future course of action," he said.

The ruling National Conference has announced a sit-in protest in New Delhi on July 20, coinciding with

the opening day of the Monsoon Session of Parliament. The party says the demonstration is intended to remind the Union Government of its commitment to restore full statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, a promise that has remained unfulfilled since the erstwhile state was reorganised into a Union Territory in August 2019. (Agencies)

J&K Shines.....

Territory, Zaidan Wani, secured AIR 124, also with a 99.9931 percentile, further strengthening Jammu and Kashmir's presence in the national merit list.

The NTA's official state-wise toppers' list recognises the highest-performing candidates from every state and Union Territory based on their NEET-UG 2026 scores.

Notably, Hadiya Nisar and Zaidan Wani are the only candidates from Jammu and Kashmir to feature in the prestigious state-wise toppers' list, underscoring the Union Territory's growing academic excellence in one of India's most competitive entrance examinations for medical education.

Special Court.....

According to an official statement, the investigation established that the accused were part of an organised network that smuggled narcotic substances across the Line of Control into Jammu and Kashmir and channelled the proceeds to finance terrorist activities, sustain militant infrastructure and strengthen the terror network in the Union Territory.

The SIA investigation uncovered the larger conspiracy and identified the involvement of 16 accused, including four Pakistan-based handlers. Ten accused have been arrested and are now facing trial, while one local accused and four Pakistan-based accused remain absconding. One accused was killed in an encounter during the course of the investigation. The agency informed the court that it had filed six comprehensive charge sheets against all 16 accused and had also secured the arrest of three proclaimed offenders who had been evading law enforcement agencies.

After hearing detailed arguments from the prosecution, the Special NIA Court ordered framing of charges against the 10 accused under provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, and the Indian Penal Code. The charges include offences relating to waging war against the Government of India, criminal conspiracy, terrorist acts, raising funds for terrorist organisations, membership and support to banned organisations, destruction of evidence and forgery.

With the charges now formally framed, the trial will proceed with the recording of prosecution evidence before the competent court.

The SIA said legal proceedings against the absconding accused, including those based in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, are continuing in accordance with law. Proceedings for the attachment and forfeiture of properties allegedly linked to terrorist activities are also underway under the provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The agency described the court's order as a significant milestone in the prosecution of the case, stating that it reflects the strength of the evidence collected during the investigation. It reaffirmed its commitment to dismantling the financial infrastructure supporting terrorism by targeting the nexus between narcotics trafficking and cross-border terror financing and ensuring that all those involved are brought to justice.

CS led panel.....

management of minor mineral resources across Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting besides the ACS, Mining Department, Ashwani Kumar was attended by Administrative Heads from the stakeholder departments, Divisional Administration, Pollution Control Committee and other stakeholders.

A comprehensive presentation on the proposed policy framework was delivered by the CEO, Centre for Innovation, Technology Assessment and Good Governance (CTAG), outlining the deficiencies in the existing system, proposed policy interventions and the roadmap for creating a modern, efficient and legally compliant mining governance framework.

The Administrative Secretaries and Heads of the concerned departments actively participated in the deliberations and offered valuable suggestions for further strengthening the draft policy.

Addressing the meeting, the Chief Secretary emphasized that every proposed amendment must strictly conform to the provisions of the Central legislation governing minor minerals and withstand legal scrutiny. He directed that the policy should incorporate best practices adopted by progressive States, particularly Odisha, while suitably adapting them to the local requirements of Jammu and Kashmir.

Highlighting the need to protect the livelihoods of traditional mining communities, the Chief Secretary called for development of a transparent digital ecosystem that facilitates their participation while ensuring that mining rights remain non-transferable and cannot be sublet or misused.

The Chief Secretary further stressed that provisions relating to penalties, seizure and enforcement must be firmly rooted in law. He observed that while amendments to the Rules can be undertaken within the framework of the Central Act, all such changes must remain fully consistent with the statutory provisions.

Expressing serious concern over the growing menace of illegal mining, he directed the concerned departments to explore stronger deterrent measures against the habitual offenders, wherever permissible under the law, so as to effectively discourage violations.

Calling for a coordinated institutional approach, the Chief Secretary directed that extensive inter-departmental consultations be completed before finalizing the policy to ensure that all operational, legal and administrative aspects are comprehensively addressed.

He also instructed that a detailed Action Plan be prepared in advance, clearly outlining implementation

timelines, departmental responsibilities, technological interventions and the necessary amendments to the Rules for seamless execution of the proposed policy.

The presentation identified several critical gaps in the existing regulatory framework, including the absence of a mechanism for priority supply of minor minerals to Government infrastructure projects, lack of a standardized Request for Proposal (RFP) format containing comprehensive project-related information for prospective bidders, inadequate river-bed management practices and delays arising from approvals involving multiple departments, necessitating the establishment of a robust single-window clearance mechanism.

The meeting also deliberated upon issues concerning Environmental Clearances, the need for a transparent and legally compliant "Mine-to-Market" tracking system, periodic revision of penalties at defined intervals to maintain their deterrent value and introduction of third-party audits for extraction of minor minerals from private lands.

The stakeholder departments proposed several important measures for inclusion in the policy. These included ensuring priority allocation of minerals for Government development projects, creating an institutional mechanism for engaging traditional miners in dredging and desilting operations, adopting dynamic replenishment rates based on scientific assessments instead of static estimates and facilitating advance processing of statutory approvals, including Environmental Clearances, to ensure timely commencement of mining activities.

During the deliberations, the officers also highlighted the alarming scale of illegal mining and stressed the need for significantly strengthening enforcement mechanisms. Suggestions were made for incorporating special provisions to facilitate emergency extraction of minor minerals for irrigation and flood management works and establishing a well-defined mechanism for protection of whistleblowers and informers reporting illegal mining activities.

The meeting further underscored the necessity of strengthening the Department of Geology & Mining by enhancing its institutional capacity, enforcement capabilities and resource management systems to effectively regulate mining operations and curb illegal extraction. It was also decided that CTAG would prepare draft amendments incorporating the suggestions received from all stakeholder departments to facilitate formulation of a comprehensive, practical and future-ready policy.

CS Reviews.....

environmentally sound disposal of municipal solid waste.

The Chief Secretary was accompanied by Mandeep Kaur, Commissioner Secretary, Housing & Urban Development Department (H&UDD); Faz Lul Haseeb, Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation; Joint Commissioners of SMC and other senior officers.

During the visit, the Chief Secretary conducted a comprehensive inspection of the facility and reviewed every critical component of Srinagar's integrated solid waste management system. These included door-to-door waste collection, source segregation, transportation, scientific processing of municipal solid waste, biomining and scientific reclamation of legacy waste, leachate treatment systems, environmental monitoring protocols and compliance with the statutory environmental norms.

The Chief Secretary was briefed on the ongoing capacity augmentation, modernization of waste processing infrastructure, adoption of advanced technologies and initiatives aimed at improving the operational efficiency in line with the objectives of Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) 2.0 and national environmental standards.

Briefing the Chief Secretary, Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation, highlighted the Corporation's sustained efforts to transform the municipal solid waste management through infrastructure expansion, scientific processing, enhanced source segregation, optimized collection and transportation systems, mechanization and technology-driven monitoring. He informed that the SMC is implementing several strategic interventions to build a modern, efficient and environmentally sustainable waste management ecosystem capable of meeting the city's growing sanitation requirements.

The Commissioner further informed that the Corporation is undertaking the scientific bioremediation and reclamation of legacy waste at the Achan dumpsite under Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) 2.0, a landmark environmental initiative aimed at eliminating the decades-old accumulated waste, reclaiming valuable land resources, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, preventing groundwater contamination and significantly improving the environmental quality of the area. He added that the project represents a major step towards transforming Achan into a fully compliant, state-of-the-art integrated waste management facility based on sustainable technologies and global best practices. Appreciating the significant progress made by the Srinagar Municipal Corporation, the Chief Secretary emphasized the need for sustained institutional commitment towards scientific waste management, timely augmentation of infrastructure, accelerated remediation of legacy waste, strict environmental compliance and adoption of innovative technologies for efficient resource recovery and waste processing. He stressed that effective inter-departmental coordination, continuous monitoring and citizen participation would remain crucial for achieving the long-term environmental sustainability and improved urban sanitation.

The Chief Secretary reiterated that scientific management of municipal solid waste is fundamental to build resilient, healthy, and sustainable cities. He called upon all the stakeholders to work collectively towards achieving the highest standards of environmental governance, operational excellence and public service delivery while ensuring the protection of natural resources and public health.

The visit reaffirmed the Government of Jammu and

Kashmir's unwavering commitment, in partnership with the Srinagar Municipal Corporation and allied agencies, to strengthen the scientific waste management systems, promote environmental stewardship, advancing sustainable urban development and create a cleaner, greener and more resilient Srinagar for the future generations.

Roads and.....

an indispensable role in future wars," the Defence Minister said, stressing that infrastructure development is fundamental to military preparedness in an evolving security environment.

Highlighting the strategic importance of border connectivity, Singh remarked that the first line of defence often begins long before soldiers reach the battlefield.

"Sometimes, the first front of a war is not at the border itself, but on the road that carries our soldiers to the frontline. Those who build these roads contribute as significantly to national security as those who defend the nation's borders," he said.

Praising the Border Roads Organisation for its contribution to national security, Singh said the agency has evolved over the past six decades from a road construction organisation into one of the world's foremost strategic infrastructure institutions. He noted that the BRO has embraced advanced engineering techniques and modern technologies to execute complex projects in some of the world's most challenging terrains.

Referring to landmark projects including the Atal Tunnel, Sela Tunnel and Umling La Pass, the Defence Minister described them as enduring examples of engineering excellence and the dedication of BRO personnel.

He also highlighted the growing use of tunnelling technology, saying it has transformed infrastructure development by improving connectivity in mountainous regions while supporting both civilian and military mobility.

Underscoring the government's commitment to strengthening national infrastructure, Singh said significant investments have been made in road, rail, aviation and digital connectivity to ensure that remote border regions remain fully integrated with the rest of the country. He added that villages located along the international borders are being developed into thriving centres of growth under the government's border development initiative.

"A nation with strong infrastructure is a nation with a secure and prosperous future. The infrastructure we build today will shape the country's development for generations to come," he said.

Calling for greater cooperation among government agencies, industry, academic institutions and engineering professionals, the Defence Minister urged all stakeholders to work collectively towards creating a resilient and future-ready infrastructure ecosystem.

Director General Border Roads Lt Gen Harpal Singh said modern strategic capability is no longer measured solely by the scale of infrastructure created but by the efficiency of planning, speed of execution, quality of monitoring and long-term maintenance. He said the BRO is undergoing a technology-driven transformation with increased use of digital planning tools, artificial intelligence, mechanisation and modern construction practices to build resilient strategic infrastructure.

During the conclave, Rajnath Singh presented awards recognising excellence in infrastructure development, launched two digital platforms for project management and recruitment, and released three BRO publications as part of the organisation's continuing digital transformation.

Baramulla.....

on duty to carry out strict verification of media credentials at access control and checking points.

"No individual claiming to represent print, electronic, digital, or social media platforms shall be allowed access unless he or she produces a valid identity card issued by the DIO, Baramulla," the order states.

Supervisory officers have been directed to ensure strict compliance with the instructions. The police have warned that any violation of the order or attempt at unauthorized access will be viewed seriously and dealt with in accordance with the law.

The order has come into effect immediately and will remain in force until further orders.

Ladakh Begins.....

flower field, with the first bloom expected around the first week of September this year.

Spread over an area of 93,000 square metres, the Choglamsar Flower Field, on the banks of the River Sindhu, is being developed as one of the largest organised high-altitude floriculture parks in the country. At present, India's highest flower field is located at an altitude of 3200 meters at Mana in Uttarakhand, while the Choglamsar flower park sits at an altitude of nearly 3265 meters. The project is being implemented with scientific and technical support from the CSIR-Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology (CSIR-IHBT), Palampur. L-G Vinai Kumar Saxena had laid the foundation of the Choglamsar flower field on 22 June 2026.

The project aims to produce premium Lilium flowers and buds that command high prices in national and international markets and thus, create a new, sustainable source of income for Ladakh's farming community, through self-help groups and cooperatives.

This initiative is aligned with the Hon'ble Minister of Home Affairs and Cooperation, Amit Shah's vision of "Sahkar se Samridhi," which

seeks to strengthen cooperatives to create sustainable local employment and enhance the income of local communities, particularly women and farmers, engaged in cooperatives.

Conceived by LG, Saxena, the project aims at positioning Ladakh as an emerging centre of premium floriculture, while opening access to high-value domestic and international flower markets. This flower field will also emerge as a new recreational destination for tourists.

Under the project, the Agriculture department in the first year will develop the flower field and, at the time of bloom, transfer it to the selected Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and cooperative societies. The department will handhold the SHGs and the cooperatives in marketing flowers in national and international markets to maximise returns. Subsequently, from the next year, the cooperatives will themselves undertake commercial cultivation, harvesting and value addition of the Lilium flowers. For this, local farmers are being given structured training in scientific floriculture, modern cultivation practices, and establishing floriculture as a viable commercial enterprise.

Ladakh offers ideal agro-climatic conditions for Lilium cultivation. The bulbs perform exceptionally well under cold climatic conditions – between minus 4 degrees and 4 degrees – making them naturally suited to the region's high-altitude environment. An important advantage of Lilium cultivation is that in three years, the bulbs begin to multiply naturally, significantly enhancing future production and increasing farmers' returns without any additional investment.

"Ladakh's climate, which is often seen as a challenge, is in fact one of our greatest strengths. By introducing commercial cultivation of Lilium, we are opening a completely new avenue of income for our farmers, women and youth. Our vision is to transform Ladakh into a high-altitude floriculture hub, where scientific cultivation, value addition and market linkages generate sustainable livelihoods for local communities. This initiative will not only diversify agriculture but also empower Self-Help Groups, cooperatives and young entrepreneurs through high-value floriculture," said L-G Saxena.

Lilium is one of the world's most sought-after cut flowers because of its exceptional ornamental value and longer shelf life. The flowers are widely used in the floral industry and hospitality sector, with premium varieties priced between Rs 150 and Rs 200 per stick in domestic retail markets.

Dr Jitendra.....

(MSS+) Smart Mix Pro Mixing Plant, designed for the large-scale implementation of CSIR-CRRI's indigenous Modified Mix Seal Surfacing (MSS+) technology. He inaugurated the AI-enabled Network Survey Vehicle (NSV) for comprehensive road infrastructure assessment and dedicated the PATCH-FILL pothole repair technology, reinforcing the Institute's efforts towards smarter, safer and environmentally sustainable road infrastructure.

The programme was attended by Dr. (Mrs.) N. Kalaiselvi, Director General, CSIR & Secretary, DSIR; Dr. Ch. Ravi Sekhar, Director, CSIR-CRRI; former Directors of the Institute; senior scientists, academicians, industry leaders, policymakers, engineers, representatives of Central and State Government organisations and technology partners.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Jitendra Singh said that India's unprecedented infrastructure expansion under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has created a significant opportunity for scientific institutions to contribute cutting-edge technologies for roads, bridges and transportation systems. Referring to the country's expanding network of highways, airports, railways and urban infrastructure, he said research institutions must continuously deliver innovative, cost-effective and sustainable solutions capable of meeting India's growing infrastructure requirements.

The Minister said scientific research achieves its true purpose only when technologies move beyond laboratories and reach the field. He called for industry partners to be associated with technology development from the very beginning so that innovations evolve according to practical requirements and are commercialised faster. He also stressed greater convergence among scientific institutions working in related sectors and said wider outreach to stakeholders is essential for translating research into economic and social impact.

Dr. Jitendra Singh said indigenous technologies such as Steel Slag Roads, Modified Mix Seal Surfacing (MSS+), Bio-Binder, EcoFix, RejuPave and other sustainable pavement technologies demonstrate how scientific innovation can simultaneously strengthen infrastructure, promote environmental sustainability and support the national missions of Waste to Wealth, Circular Economy and Atmanirbhar Bharat. He said technologies that convert industrial waste into durable infrastructure represent the future of sustainable development.

Emphasising the need to accelerate implementation, the Minister said successful technologies must be propagated more extensively among States and implementing agencies. He suggested structured interactions with State Road Secretaries and Chief Engineers to facilitate wider adoption of proven indigenous technologies across the country and encouraged CSIR-CRRI to organise regular industry interactions so that scientific innovations continue to respond to field requirements while generating greater commercial value.

DC Srinagar reviews progress of works under District Capex Budget 2026-27

Emphasizes optimal use of working season, inter-departmental coordination & adherence to timelines for effective implementation of development projects

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR JULY 16: To review the progress of works taken up under the District Capex Budget 2026-27, a meeting of all executing agencies and line departments was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Akshay Labroo at the Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex, here today.

The meeting was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner, Rifat Aftab Qureshi, Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Assistant Commissioner Panchayats, Bashir Ahmad, Executive Engineers of R&B, PHE, PDD, SMC, UEED, Block Development Officers and all other District & Sectoral Officers.

At the outset, the Deputy Commissioner took a departmentwise detailed review of the progress

achieved in the submission of estimates, tenders floated and works allotted for works approved under the District Capex Budget for 2026-27.

The DC was informed that 463 development works have been approved under the District Capex Budget 2026-27. Of these, estimates for 433 works have been submitted by the executing agencies, while 377 works have already been tendered, reflecting significant progress in the implementation process.

Emphasizing the importance of timely execution, the Deputy Commissioner directed all executing agencies to expedite the tendering of the remaining approved works to ensure that projects commence without delay. He stressed that the ongoing working season should be utilized optimally to accelerate



the pace of development and deliver tangible benefits to the public.

The DC further instructed all departments to ensure that the sanctioned works are executed in a time-bound, transparent and quality-oriented manner, in accordance with prescribed technical standards to achieve the intended objectives and strengthen service delivery across sectors.

Highlighting the need for coordinated efforts, the Deputy Commissioner called upon all line departments and executing agencies to maintain close inter-departmental coordination, undertake proactive planning and ensure optimum utilization of available resources for the effective implementation of developmental projects across the district.

Kulgam Police Arrest Hit-and-Run Accused from Uttar Pradesh

Offending Vehicle Seized During Investigation

■ FAROOQ RATHER

KULGAM, JULY 16: Kulgam Police have achieved a major breakthrough in the investigation of the fatal hit-and-run case registered as FIR No. 176/2026 at Police Station Qazigund by arresting the accused from Uttar Pradesh and seizing the offending vehicle during the course of investigation.

The case pertains to a road traffic accident that occurred on 10 July 2026 near KP Colony, Vessu, where an unidentified vehicle struck an 11-year-old girl. The injured child was immediately shifted to Government Medical College (GMC), Anantnag, for treatment but later succumbed to her injuries.



Immediately after the incident, Police Station Qazigund registered FIR No. 176/2026 under the relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), and a dedicated investigation team was constituted.

During the investigation, Kulgam Police conducted sustained efforts by analysing CCTV footage, examining available evidence, and developing technical leads. Through meticulous investigation and continuous follow-up, the investigating team successfully identified the accused and traced the offending vehicle.

Acting promptly on the technical leads, a police team from Police Station Qazigund proceeded to Uttar Pradesh, where the accused namely "Arun Gupta S/O Lalit Ram Gupta R/O Behrinbagh, Barabanki Uttar Pradesh" was arrested with the assistance of the local police. The offending vehicle was also traced and seized during the investigation. Further investigation in the case is underway.

The investigation reflects the commitment of Kulgam Police to ensuring that offenders are brought to justice through a professional, technology-driven investigation and coordinated efforts, irrespective of where they attempt to evade the law.

SSP Kulgam, stated that the successful arrest demonstrates that offenders cannot evade the law by crossing state boundaries. He emphasized that the effective use of technical investigation and coordinated police action enabled Kulgam Police to identify and apprehend the accused.

The SSP further appealed to all motorists to drive responsibly, strictly adhere to traffic regulations, and never flee the scene of an accident. He advised that in the event of any road accident, drivers must immediately stop, render assistance to the injured, and promptly inform the nearest police station or emergency services. Leaving the scene of an accident not only attracts stringent legal consequences but can also deprive injured persons of timely medical assistance that may save lives.

Kulgam Police reiterated their commitment to ensuring justice for victims and taking strict legal action against those involved in hit-and-run incidents.

KU's CDOE marks 50 years with golden jubilee alumni meet

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR JULY 16: The Centre for Distance and Online Education (CDOE), University of Kashmir (KU), organised a Golden Jubilee Alumni Meet at the Main Campus to commemorate 50 years of the Centre's contribution to distance and online education.

The event witnessed participation of alumni, former directors, faculty members, administrators and students to reflect on the Centre's journey over the past five decades and discuss its evolving role in expanding access to higher education. The programme also provided an opportunity for alumni to reconnect with their alma mater and share their experiences of learning through the Centre.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice-Chancellor KU, Prof. Nilofer Khan, said that the Centre has played an important role in making higher education accessible to learners from diverse social and geographical backgrounds. "For five decades, the Centre has created opportunities for thousands of learners who aspired to pursue higher education despite various constraints. As higher education continues to evolve, CDOE has an important role in advancing inclusive, flexible and



technology-enabled learning," she said.

Dean Research KU, Prof. Bashir Ahmad Ganaie, said the Centre's sustained contribution to academic outreach reflects the University's commitment to widening educational opportunities.

Registrar KU, Prof. Naseer Iqbal, and Controller of Examinations, Prof. Majid Zaman, highlighted the Centre's steady growth over the years and acknowledged its contribution to the University's academic ecosystem. Dean, School of Open Learning KU, Prof. Mushtaq Ahmad Dar, and Director, Admissions & Competitive Examinations KU, Prof. Fayaz Ahmad, also shared their reflections on the Centre's journey and appreciated its role in extending educational opportunities to learners across the region.

Earlier, in his welcome address, Director, CDOE, Prof. Altaf Ahangar, traced the evolution of the Centre and highlighted key milestones in its fifty-year journey. He spoke about the Centre's transition from conventional distance education to online and blended learning models, while acknowledging the contributions of former administrators, faculty members and staff in shaping its growth. A highlight of the programme was the felicitation of former Directors and faculty members of CDOE in recognition of their significant contributions to the development and expansion of the Centre over the past five decades.

An interactive session with alumni was held during which participants shared their academic and professional experiences, recalled their association with the Centre and offered suggestions for strengthening alumni engagement and further enhancing the quality of distance and online education. The proceedings of the programme were conducted by Dr. Zubair Ahmad Dada, faculty member at CDOE KU.

Dr. Sheikh Arshid Elected PSA Pulwama District President in Democratic Polls

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

PULWAMA, JULY 16: The Private Schools' Association (PSA) on Thursday successfully conducted its Pulwama District President election in a transparent and democratic manner, electing Dr. Sheikh Arshid as the new District President.

The election, held under the supervision of District Election Commissioner Manzoor Ahmad Rather and Election Liaison Officer B.A. Shah, witnessed a keen contest between Dr. Sheikh Arshid and Sheikh Feroz Ahmad. Following the voting process, Dr. Arshid emerged victorious and was elected to lead the Association's Pulwama district unit.

The event was attended by eminent academicians, educationists, civil society members and senior PSA office-bearers from across Jammu and Kashmir, including Prof. G.M. Bhat, Eminent Scientist and former Head of the Department of Geology, University of Jammu; Dr. G.N. Var, Chief Patron of PSA and Joint Secretary of NISA; Mehboob Hussain, former Joint Director, School Education Department and Joint Secretary, JKBOSE; Bilal Ahmad Bhat, State President of PSA; and several district presidents and executive members of the Association.

Welcoming the participants, Abdul Rehman Ganai, Chairman and Secretary of Skylight Higher Secondary School, Pampore, highlighted the significant contribution of private schools to the education sector in Jammu and Kashmir. He said private educational institutions have played a vital role in producing doctors, engineers, civil servants and other professionals, while describing the Association's grassroots

electoral process as a landmark initiative for strengthening accountability and collective leadership.

Addressing the gathering, Prof. G.M. Bhat said committed and visionary leadership is essential for building a strong private education sector. Reflecting on his long academic career, he observed that the true purpose of education extends beyond imparting knowledge and lies in nurturing young minds with integrity, values and compassion. He congratulated the newly elected leadership and urged educators to remain united in serving society through quality education.

Delivering the keynote address, Dr. G.N. Var described education as a sacred responsibility entrusted by society. He said institutions working with honesty, commitment and compassion are making an invaluable contribution towards shaping future generations. Stressing ethical leadership, he remarked that while sincere institutions deserve encouragement, those misusing education for commercial interests have no place in the sector.

Former Joint Director School Education Mehboob Hussain praised the Association for institutionalising democratic practices, stating that accountable leadership and transparent governance are essential for improving educational standards and ensuring the welfare of students.

Senior trade union leader and JK Civil Society Forum Executive Member Mir Fayaz lauded the contribution of private schools towards nation-building, saying they have consistently complemented the government's efforts in providing quality education and deserve public support.

PSA State President Bilal Ahmad Bhat

said the Association has successfully completed democratic elections at the grassroots and district levels through independent election commissions across Jammu and Kashmir. He announced that elections for the Central Election Body would be held shortly, completing another important phase of the Association's organisational restructuring.

General Secretary (Organisation) Mohammad Syed Wani said the transparent electoral process has strengthened democracy, accountability and confidence among member schools. He urged the newly elected office-bearers to work collectively for the welfare of educational institutions, teachers and students.

Expressing gratitude after his election, Dr. Sheikh Arshid thanked member schools for their trust and pledged to work with dedication, transparency and inclusiveness. He said the victory belonged to every member institution and promised to safeguard the interests of private schools while promoting academic excellence and constructive dialogue.

Newly elected District Vice President Sheikh Feroz Ahmad also thanked the member schools for their confidence and reaffirmed his commitment to strengthening the Association at the grassroots level through unity, transparency and dedicated service.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks and a renewed commitment by the Association to strengthen democratic governance, ethical leadership and quality education across Jammu and Kashmir through collective participation and institutional transparency.

Secretary Transport reviews preparations for River Cruise Transport project on Jhelum

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 16: Secretary, Transport, Avny Lavasa, today reviewed the preparations for the proposed River Cruise Transport project being developed by the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) in collaboration with the Government of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Secretary was accompanied by the Regional Transport Officer, Kashmir and Joint Director, Transport Department.

During the visit, Avny Lavasa inspected the proposed river cruise route from Zero Bridge to

Pantha Chowk. She visited various proposed terminals to assess the progress of infrastructure and operational preparedness.

The inspection focused on the readiness of terminals, passenger embarkation and disembarkation facilities, navigational requirements, safety measures besides other essential infrastructure necessary for commencement of the river cruise service.

The Secretary emphasized close coordination among IWAI, the Transport Department and other stakeholder



agencies to ensure timely completion of the project and adherence to the highest standards of safety, operational efficiency and passenger convenience.

The River Cruise Transport project, being implemented by IWAI in partnership with the Government of Jammu & Kashmir, is expected to provide a sustainable and eco-friendly mode of transport while significantly enhancing the tourism potential of the River Jhelum and offering a unique travel experience to residents and visitors alike.

Agriculture Department Kashmir organizes training on AI-Enabled Crop Survey App for District Master Trainers

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 16: In a significant step towards strengthening technology-driven agricultural data collection, the Department of Agriculture, Kashmir, organized a one-day training programme on the AI-Enabled Crop Survey Application for District Master Trainers at the Mission Directorate Hall, Rajbagh, Srinagar. The training programme, conducted by experts from the Central Project Management Unit (CPMU), Government of India, was aimed at equipping District Master Trainers with the technical knowledge and practical skills required for the effective implementation of the AI-enabled crop survey application across the Kashmir Division.



The programme featured comprehensive technical sessions on AI-based crop survey methodology, operation of the mobile application, geo-tagging, image capture protocols, data validation, quality assurance, and real-time

reporting. Participants also underwent hands-on training to familiarize themselves with field-level operational procedures and best practices for conducting accurate and transparent crop surveys. District Master Trainers

representing all districts of the Kashmir division actively participated in the programme and interacted with CPMU experts to gain a deeper understanding of the application's features and its role in improving the reliability of crop survey data. The adoption of Artificial Intelligence in crop surveys is expected to enhance the accuracy, efficiency, and transparency of agricultural statistics, thereby facilitating informed planning and policy decisions.

Speaking on the occasion, senior officers emphasized that the successful implementation of the AI-enabled crop survey application will play a vital role in modernizing agricultural data collection and ensuring timely, scientific, and evidence-based assessment of crops across the region.

JMC conducts mega plantation drive at Shanti Park under 'Clean Jammu, Green Jammu' initiative

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JULY 16: Furthering its 'Clean Jammu, Green Jammu' initiative, the Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) today organised a mega plantation drive at Shanti Park, Ward No 61 (Patta Paloura), under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP). The drive was inaugurated by Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation, Dr Devansh Yadav.

Organised in collaboration with the Urban Forestry Division, Jammu, the drive is part of a city-wide green campaign spearheaded by Dr Devansh Yadav, with the goal of planting over 50,000 saplings across Jammu. The initiative aims to strengthen the city's green cover, improve air quality, enhance biodiversity and foster a more sustainable urban environment through public participation.

During the drive, around 2,100 saplings were planted at Shanti Park, adding a new green space to the city. The planta-

tion forms part of JMC's efforts to create environmentally resilient public spaces while addressing urban pollution and climate change. Dr Devansh Yadav highlighted the role of urban forestry in improving environmental health and quality of life. He appealed to residents, educational institutions, social organisations and youth groups to participate in the campaign and take responsibility for protecting the planted saplings to ensure their survival. Among those present were Joint Commissioner (Health & Sanitation) Abdul Sattar; Deputy Commissioner (North), JMC, Sanjay Badyal; Divisional Forest Officer, Jammu, Ashwani Sharma; Assistant Floriculture Officer Dr Rabia Khan; and Veterinary Assistant Surgeon Dr Priyanka Malhotra. Also present was former Councillor Mohinder Kumar along with officials of the Jammu Municipal Corporation and the Urban Forestry Division, Jammu, senior citizens, volunteers and local residents.

Secretary DLSA Ganderbal inspects Legal Aid Clinics

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

GANDERBAL, JULY 16: With a view to assessing the functioning of Legal Aid Clinics and ensuring effective delivery of legal aid services at the grassroots level, the Secretary, District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Ganderbal, conducted an inspection of the Legal Aid Clinics functioning under the jurisdiction of district Ganderbal.

During the inspection, the Secretary visited the Tehsil Legal Services Committee (TLSC), Kangan, Village Legal Care & Support Centre (VLC&SC), Gund, and the Legal Aid Clinic, Manigam, Thune.

The inspection focused on the overall functioning of the clinics, maintenance of statutory registers, visitors' registers and other records, availability of legal awareness material, display of information relating to free legal aid services, and accessibility of legal aid facilities to eligible beneficiaries.

The Secretary also interacted with the Para Legal Volunteers and other functionaries associated with the Legal Aid Clinics. During the inspection, it was observed that some Para Legal Volunteers were not available at their respective clinics as they were engaged in door-to-door legal awareness activities and identification of eligible girl children under the Pragma Scholarship Scheme, as part of the ongoing outreach initiatives of the Legal Services Institutions.

Emphasizing the importance of effective legal aid delivery, the Secretary directed the Para Legal Volunteers and clinic functionaries to maintain all prescribed registers, visitors' registers and records in a proper and updated manner, conduct regular legal awareness and outreach programmes, and ensure greater accessibility of free legal aid services to eligible persons.

The Para Legal Volunteers were further instructed to ensure timely follow-up of every legal aid application received at the clinics until its final disposal, so that no eligible beneficiary is deprived of legal assistance.

The Secretary also issued necessary directions for strengthening the functioning of the Legal Aid Clinics, enhancing public outreach, and ensuring effective implementation of the various legal aid and welfare schemes of the National Legal Services Authority and the Jammu & Kashmir Legal Services Authority.

DLSA Ganderbal, remains committed to strengthening the legal aid delivery mechanism, promoting legal awareness, and ensuring that free and quality legal services are accessible to every eligible citizen, particularly those residing in remote and underserved areas.

MSME-DFO Jammu organises one-day awareness programme on branding and marketing under PM Vishwakarma Scheme at Samba

■ NEWSPPOINT BUREAU

SAMBA, JULY 16: MSME-Development & Facilitation Office (MSME-DFO), Jammu, under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Government of India in association with the District Administration Samba today organised a one-day awareness programme on branding and marketing under the PM Vishwakarma Scheme at the Conference Hall, District Administrative Complex.

The programme aimed to create awareness among PM Vishwakarma beneficiaries, artisans and entrepreneurs about branding, digital marketing, financial inclusion, product packaging, Government support schemes and entrepreneurship

development to enhance their market competitiveness and income generation.

The programme commenced with an introductory address by Assistant Director, MSME-DFO Jammu, Arvind Kumar Sharma, who gave an overview of the PM Vishwakarma Scheme. He highlighted the Government of India's commitment to empowering artisans and craftspeople through end-to-end support including skill upgradation, toolkit incentives, credit support, branding and market linkages.

Chief Guest and Deputy Commissioner Samba Ayushi Sudan encouraged participants to make optimum use of Government initiatives and adopt innovation, digital platforms and branding strategies to expand



the reach of their products in national and international markets. She said branding and effective marketing are key to enhancing the value of traditional crafts and improving artisans' livelihoods.

Technical sessions were conducted by experts from various fields. Ajay Kumar of the PMU Team, Jammu, elaborated on the features and

benefits of the PM Vishwakarma Scheme. Functional Manager, District Industries Centre (DIC), Samba, Pallavi apprised participants about Union Territory Government schemes available for entrepreneurs.

Professor and Head, Department of Marketing Management, Central University of Jammu, Dr Naresh Kumar, delivered a ses-

sion on branding and digital marketing, highlighting strategies for small businesses and artisans. Kanav Kapahi demonstrated the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to help artisans strengthen product promotion, digital presence and business growth.

The sessions concluded with a presentation by Assistant Director, MSME-DFO Jammu, Anurag Sharma, who briefed participants on MSME schemes and Government support available for micro and small enterprises.

Around 200 participants including PM Vishwakarma beneficiaries, artisans, entrepreneurs and officials from Government departments, banking institutions and support organisations attended the programme.

SKUAST-K to lead India's first Centre of Excellence on antimicrobial resistance

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 16: Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-K) has secured the Department of Science and Technology (GoI)-funded Centre of Excellence (CoE) for antimicrobial resistance (AMR) research under the One Health framework.

This will be India's first Centre of Excellence for exploring challenges to identify Antimicrobial Resistance Drivers and Potential Antimicrobial Alternatives in a One Health Approach (CoE-AMRDPAA), placing SKUAST-K at the forefront of one of the world's most pressing scientific and public health priorities.

As a lead institution, SKUAST-K will function through a strategic partnership with some of India's premier institutions, including Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur, Institute of Microbial Technology (IMTECH), Chandigarh, and Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), Srinagar, integrating expertise in microbiology, genomics, biotechnology, engineering, artificial intelligence, clinical sciences and public health.

This recognition comes at a time



when SKUAST-K has emerged as one of the country's fastest-growing innovation-driven agricultural universities. During the past few years, the University has built a vibrant research ecosystem with 134 Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs), over 120 technology-based startups, internationally benchmarked laboratories in plant and animal biotechnology, genomics, molecular diagnostics, stem cell biology, precision agriculture and artificial intelligence.

Welcoming the approval, Vice-Chancellor, Prof Nazir Ahmad Ganai described the Centre as a defining milestone in SKUAST-K's journey towards becoming a globally recognised research and innovation university.

The Centre will be led by Prof Syed Mudasir Andrabi, Professor and Head, Division of Animal Biotechnol-

ogy, as the Principal Coordinator. Under his leadership, a multidisciplinary team of scientists from partnering institutions will undertake one of India's most comprehensive research programmes on antimicrobial resistance.

The Centre will investigate the emergence, evolution and transmission of antimicrobial resistance across humans, animals, agriculture, food systems and the environment through nationwide surveillance, advanced genomics, metagenomics and molecular epidemiology. Leveraging artificial intelligence and machine learning, the programme will develop predictive models, intelligent surveillance systems and evidence-based decision-support platforms to strengthen national preparedness against antimicrobial resistance.

An equally important focus of the Centre will be the discovery and development of next-generation alternatives to conventional antibiotics. Research will encompass antimicrobial peptides, phytochemicals, probiotics, biomaterials, nanotechnology-enabled therapeutics and other innovative interventions aimed at reducing dependence on antibiotics while improving human, animal and environmental health.

DDC Doda reviews District Advisory Committee meeting of Mera Yuva Bharat

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

DODA, JULY 16: District Development Commissioner (DDC) Doda and Chairman, District Advisory Committee (DAC), Krishan Lal today chaired a meeting of the District Advisory Committee to review implementation of the Mera Yuva Bharat (MY Bharat) initiative at the Conference Hall, DC Office Complex, Doda.

District Youth Officer, MY Bharat, Doda gave a PowerPoint presentation on the objectives of the initiative, registration process and progress achieved under the programme.



The DDC called for actively engaging youth in volunteerism, skill development, social awareness campaigns and other developmental activities. He said the energy and potential of young people should be channelised for nation-building through coordinated efforts by all stakeholder departments.

The committee discussed measures to increase youth registration on the MY Bharat portal, strengthen outreach in schools, colleges, ITIs and rural areas and encourage greater participation in government programmes.

The DDC directed the departments concerned to conduct awareness programmes and give wide publicity to opportunities under the MY Bharat initiative, and instructed the District Youth Officer to work closely with the School Education Department, Government Degree Colleges, ITIs and other educational institutions to motivate and register more youth.

Among those present were Chief Planning Officer Doda; General Manager, DIC, Doda; Assistant Commissioner Revenue (ACR) Doda; District Social Welfare Officer Doda; District Youth Officer, MY Bharat, Doda; District Employment Officer Doda; representatives of Government Degree Colleges and ITIs; officials of the Youth Services and Sports Department and other officers concerned.

Transport Commissioner reviews MVD functioning in Pulwama, Kulgam

Directs uploading of driving test, vehicle fitness results within 24 hours

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

PULWAMA, JULY 16: Transport Commissioner, Vishesh Paul Mahajan, today conducted an extensive review of the Motor Vehicles Department (MVD) in Pulwama and Kulgam districts, focusing on optimizing efficiency, transparency, and time-bound public service delivery.

During his visit to the ARTO office in Pulwama, the Transport Commissioner conducted on-spot inspections of the Driving

License, Permit, Registration, Accounts, and Establishment sections. Interacting with the staff, he emphasized that providing hassle-free, citizen-centric services must remain the department's top priority.

A key focus was evaluating online operations via the Sarathi and Vahan portals. After reviewing the records of vehicle fitness inspections and driving skill tests from the last three months, the Transport Commissioner directed that all results for driving tests and fitness inspections must

be uploaded online within 24 hours of execution to minimize manual interference and reduce office footfall.

Briefing the Transport Commissioner, ARTO Pulwama, Mohammad Shafait, reported that out of 8,693 applications received on the Vahan portal this year, the department achieved a high disposal rate by clearing 7,772 cases, with the remainder pending mostly due to documentation deficiencies.

He also added that over the last six months, strict field drives

resulted in the penalization of errant drivers, including the seizure of 35 vehicles, suspension of 49 driving licenses, and suspension of 307 registration certificates. Additionally, the department successfully conducted safety audits of 500 school buses across the district to ensure student safety.

Following the host district review, the Transport Commissioner evaluated the performance of MVD Kulgam in a meeting with ARTO Kulgam, Er. Nasir Khan, and departmental inspectors. He reiterated the mandate for absolute fairness in conducting tests and reminded the team that the 24-hour result upload timeline is non-negotiable across all jurisdictions.

Concluding his visit, the Transport Commissioner expressed overall satisfaction with the administrative performance and digital transition achieved by MVD Pulwama, urging both districts to continue making public services completely frictionless.

Play "Kath Walveran Hinz" Staged Successfully at Tagore Hall as Part of National Theatre Festival 2026

■ GULFAM BARJI

SRINAGAR, JULY 16: As part of the National Theatre Festival 2026, organised by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, and the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of "Vande Mataram" and Mahakavi Kalidas Jayanti, the Kashmiri-language play "Kath Walveran Hinz" was successfully staged today at Tagore Hall, Srinagar. The play was presented by Tulkul Arts and Media Collective in collaboration with the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages (JKAACL). It was directed by renowned theatre director Ravice Rashid (Rayees Wathori). The production portrayed the sacrifices of Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Baji Rawat and other freedom fighters who bravely fought against British colonial rule and laid down their lives for India's independence. The event was attended by Principal Secretary, Department of Culture, Shri Brij Mohan Sharma, and Secretary, JKAACL, Harvinder Kour, who graced the occasion as distinguished guests. Speaking on the occasion, Shri Brij Mohan Sharma highly appreciated the outstanding performances of the cast, with special praise for director Rayees Wathori for his dedication and creative vision in bringing the production to life. He described the play as an exceptional theatrical presentation and suggested that it should soon be staged in other districts of Jammu and Kashmir so that a wider audience could experience it. The proceedings of the event were conducted by Ane-

eqa Rashid Farash. The artists captivated the audience with their powerful performances, impactful dialogues, and compelling stage presentation from beginning to end. Performed in the Kashmiri language, the play not only reflected the region's rich cultural heritage but also effectively highlighted social values and human emotions, earning widespread appreciation from the audience. The programme witnessed the participation of a large number of writers, cultural personalities, theatre practitioners, artists, students, Police, and art enthusiasts. Participants observed that national-level theatre festivals of this nature play a vital role in connecting the younger generation with their language, culture, and performing arts.



CS stresses on accelerating simplification of government processes for 'Ease of Living' in J&K

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 16: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today chaired a high-level meeting attended by the former IAS Officer, P.W.C. Davidar, to deliberate over the roadmap for simplifying government processes across departments with the objective of ensuring greater 'Ease of Living' for citizens and creating a more efficient, transparent and technology-driven governance framework in the Union Territory.

The session focused on transforming service delivery by eliminating procedural complexities, reducing unnecessary compliances and re-engineering government processes to make public services faster, simpler and more accessible for citizens, businesses and government institutions alike.

P.W.C. Davidar, who is also the Advisor to the Government of Tamil Nadu on the 'SimpleGov' initiative, made a detailed presentation on the successful Tamil Nadu model of governance simplification and shared the methodology adopted by the State in streamlining administrative procedures through comprehensive process reforms and digital transformation.

During his presentation, Davidar highlighted that the simplification exercise should encompass all three categories of public services including the Government-to-Citizen (G2C), Government-to-Business (G2B) and Government-to-Government (G2G) with the primary objective of reducing compliance burdens while improving efficiency, transparency and service delivery.

He stressed the need to eliminate avoidable procedural requirements such as physical submission of certificates and documents, obtaining multiple No Objection Certificates (NOCs), licences, permissions and other repetitive compliances that often result in delays and inconvenience to citizens and businesses.

Davidar identified several systemic challenges that require immediate attention, including mandatory physical verification of applicants, lack of clearly defined eligibility criteria, excessive documentation requirements, acceptance of payments through physical modes, repetitive verification at multiple hierarchical levels, reluctance to adopt digital verification mechanisms, inadequate integration of government databases and difficulties in retrieving legacy records from departmental repositories.

Outlining the roadmap for reforms, he emphasized the need for a comprehensive review and re-engineering of existing administrative processes by replacing procedural complexities with citizen-centric governance practices. The roadmap envisages shifting from office-centric procedures to outcome-based governance while ensuring complete end-to-end digitisation of public services.

The meeting was informed that a robust, multi-tier monitoring framework is being established to oversee implementation of the SimpleGov initiative in the Union Territory. The proposed mechanism envisages a Screening Committee to examine reform proposals at the initial stage, while an Empowered Committee headed by the



Chief Secretary will provide overall policy direction, monitor progress and facilitate timely implementation across departments.

With regard to the approach for simplification, it was proposed that identification of applicants should be based on a single standardized authentication mechanism, while eligibility criteria should be clearly defined with emphasis on essential requirements and measurable outcomes. It was further suggested that all approvals and government orders be issued online in a standardised format incorporating QR Codes to enable instant verification of authenticity.

The meeting also discussed the legal framework necessary for institutionalising the reforms. It was emphasized that all simplified procedures should be duly backed by relevant Acts, Rules, Government Orders and notified guidelines to ensure legal sanctity, uniformity and ease of implementation.

As an alternative to conventional physical verification, the meeting advocated greater adoption of digital authentication tools such as e-KYC, Digital Signatures, Electronic Verification Codes (EVC), e-Sign, DigiLocker and other nationally recognised digital verification platforms for secure and seamless delivery of services.

It was further proposed that the Government issue a comprehensive Omnibus Order applicable across all departments, clearly laying down the objectives, implementation framework, timelines and responsibilities for simplification of government processes in a uniform and coordinated manner.

Addressing the meeting, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo observed that Jammu & Kashmir possesses the necessary administrative capability, institutional framework and political commitment to successfully implement large-scale governance reforms.

He noted that substantial groundwork has already been accomplished through the digitisation of nearly 1,500 government services, providing a strong foundation for the next phase of administrative transformation.

The Chief Secretary stated that constitution of a multidisciplinary core implementation team, issuance of a comprehensive omnibus order and

suitable amendments to existing rules and procedures would form the cornerstone of the reform initiative.

He further remarked that the proposed multi-layered monitoring mechanism would ensure effective coordination, accountability and timely execution of the reforms across departments.

Emphasising the importance of learning from successful models, Dulloo suggested that a team of officers from Jammu & Kashmir undertake an exposure visit to Chennai to study the implementation of the Tamil Nadu SimpleGov initiative firsthand. Such an interaction, he observed, would provide valuable insights into best practices and strengthen the Union Territory's strategy for achieving simpler, more transparent and citizen-friendly governance.

The Chief Secretary also emphasized that the SimpleGov implementation team should be multidisciplinary in nature by including professionals from the fields of Information Technology and Law to adequately address technological as well as legal aspects of governance reforms. He observed that such an integrated approach would help ensure that simplified procedures remain legally robust, technologically sound and user-friendly.

The Chief Secretary reiterated the Government's commitment to building a governance ecosystem that is efficient, transparent, technology-enabled and centred around the needs of citizens. He called upon all departments to work in close coordination and complete the identified reforms in a time-bound manner so that the benefits of simplified governance reach every citizen of the Union Territory.

During the meeting, Administrative Secretaries and senior officers from the Departments of Information Technology, Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Health & Medical Education, Planning, Development & Monitoring, and Housing & Urban Development presented the progress achieved so far in simplifying departmental services. They highlighted the reforms already undertaken, the challenges encountered during implementation and identified several additional services proposed to be simplified on priority.

JKAACL and Dogri Sahitya Sabha conclude month-long Dogra Folk Festival at Kuppar Pragalta

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JULY 16: The Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages (JKAACL) in collaboration with the Dogri Sahitya Sabha, Kuppar Pragalta, organised the valedictory function of the month-long Dogra Folk Festival at Kuppar Pragalta, Jammu. Dedicated to the traditional Dogra folk festival 'Rutt-Raade', the festival concluded with cultural performances and public participation.

The programme is part of the Academy's efforts to support organisations reviving the cultural traditions of the Dogra community.

The folk festival 'Rutt-Raade', once celebrated widely across the region, has gradually become rare. The Dogri Sahitya Sabha, under the leadership of its President Subash Sumbaria, has been working to revive this heritage, with the Academy extending support to the initiative every year.

MLA Jammu East Yudhvir Sethi was the Chief Guest. The programme was attended by personalities from the fields of Dogri literature, art and culture, besides local residents, writers, poets, scholars and folk artists.

The event commenced with a Dogri Kavi Sammelan, presided over by Senior Assistant Professor, Department of Dogri, University of Jammu, Dr Padam Dev Singh. The poetry session featured recita-



tions by poets including Randhir Singh Raipuria, Sansar Chand Kalotra, Rakesh Verma, Jagdish Singh, Amit Singh Salathia, Rampal Sharma, Gandharv Singh, Neha Sharma, Rajni Thapa, Abdul Qadir Kunduria and Rajendra Singh, among others. Editor (Dogri), JKAACL, Reeta Khadyal attended as Programme In-charge.

Following the literary session, folk music groups presented per-

formances based on the Rutt-Raade festival. Women from the participating folk groups also demonstrated the traditional art of decorating the Raade with indigenous motifs and folk designs.

JKAACL also organised an exhibition-cum-sale of its publications, displaying books and literary works in regional languages, which drew interest from visitors, writers and literature enthusiasts.

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HT EDITORIAL

Breaking the Narco-Terror Nexus Requires Relentless Resolve

The recent decision of a Special NIA Court to frame charges in a major narco-terror case investigated by the State Investigation Agency (SIA) Kashmir marks an important milestone in the fight against terrorism and organised crime. While the legal process has now entered a crucial stage, the case also serves as a reminder of the evolving nature of security threats confronting Jammu and Kashmir.

Modern terrorism is sustained not only by weapons and ideology but also by sophisticated financial networks. The alleged use of narcotics trafficking to generate funds for terror activities represents one of the most dangerous forms of organised crime, as it simultaneously fuels drug addiction among the youth and finances violence against the nation. This dual threat makes the battle against narco-terrorism far more complex than conventional law enforcement challenges.

Over the past few years, security and investigative agencies have increasingly focused on dismantling the financial architecture that sustains terrorism. Tracking illicit money flows, disrupting smuggling routes, and identifying those who facilitate such networks are as important as neutralising armed militants. A comprehensive approach that combines intelligence, investigation, legal prosecution, and financial scrutiny is essential to ensuring long-term peace and stability.

However, enforcement alone cannot eliminate the menace. Society has an equally vital role to play. Families, educational institutions, religious leaders, and civil society organisations must remain vigilant against the growing threat of drug abuse, which often becomes an entry point for larger criminal enterprises. Public awareness and community cooperation can significantly strengthen the efforts of security agencies.

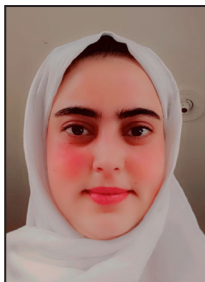
At the same time, the rule of law must remain paramount. Every accused is entitled to a fair trial, and it is ultimately the courts that will determine guilt or innocence based on the evidence presented. A robust judicial process not only upholds constitutional values but also reinforces public confidence in the justice system.

The fight against narco-terrorism is not merely a security operation; it is a battle to protect the future of society. Every successful effort to disrupt the nexus between drugs and terrorism weakens the ecosystem that seeks to undermine peace and stability. Sustained coordination among investigative agencies, the judiciary, policymakers, and the public will remain indispensable in ensuring that such networks find no space to thrive.

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HT FRIDAY COLUMN...

Islam: A Faith of Justice, Compassion and Responsible Self-Defence



■ **BISMA ASHRAF LONE**

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate.

Islam is often discussed through the lens of isolated verses or historical events, leading to misconceptions about its teachings on peace, justice, and the use of force. A careful reading of the Qur'an, however, reveals a consistent ethical framework that places mercy, justice, and human dignity at the heart of the faith. While Islam recognises the right of individuals and communities to defend themselves against aggression, it also establishes clear moral boundaries that prohibit injustice, excess, and revenge.

The Qur'an permits fighting only as a means of legitimate self-defence and the protection of fundamental rights. It does not sanction unprovoked aggression, conquest, or persecution. Rather, the use of force is allowed solely to repel attacks, safeguard the oppressed, reclaim rights unjustly taken away, and protect places of worship. Even in times of conflict, Muslims are commanded to exercise restraint and remain conscious of their moral responsibilities before God.

A defining feature of the Qur'anic approach is its insistence that hostility must cease once aggression ends. If an adversary seeks peace or abandons hostilities, believers are instructed to respond with forgiveness and reconciliation rather than retaliation. This emphasis on mercy underscores that the ultimate objective of conflict is not destruction but the restoration of justice and peace.

Islamic teachings therefore reject both passivity in the face of oppression and unchecked violence in response to it. Instead, they advocate a balanced approach in which courage is exercised alongside compassion, and strength is tempered by restraint. True victory, according to the Qur'an, is measured not by domination but by the restoration of peace and the preservation of human dignity.

Beyond matters of conflict, Islam establishes justice as the foundation of social life. The Qur'an

The Qur'an permits fighting only as a means of legitimate self-defence and the protection of fundamental rights. It does not sanction unprovoked aggression, conquest, or persecution. Rather, the use of force is allowed solely to repel attacks, safeguard the oppressed, reclaim rights unjustly taken away, and protect places of worship. Even in times of conflict, Muslims are commanded to exercise restraint and remain conscious of their moral responsibilities before God

acknowledges that wrongdoing may require measured redress, but it consistently discourages vengeance and excess. Justice is presented as a moral obligation that must always be accompanied by fairness, accountability, and compassion.

The protection of rights extends to every member of society. Muslims are encouraged to defend themselves and their communities when peaceful means have failed, yet they are equally reminded to respect the beliefs and practices of others. Religious freedom, respect for sacred spaces, and the sanctity of human life are recurring themes throughout the Qur'anic message.

Charity and generosity also occupy a central place within Islam's moral vision. The Qur'an repeatedly encourages believers to spend in the cause of good, support the vulnerable, and strengthen social bonds through acts of kindness. These values serve not only as expressions

of faith but also as practical means of building resilient and harmonious communities.

Equally significant is the Qur'an's emphasis on personal righteousness. While rituals such as prayer and facing the Ka'bah in Makkah symbolise unity and obedience, the Qur'an makes it clear that outward acts of worship derive their true value from sincere faith and righteous conduct. Good character, honesty, compassion, and service to humanity are presented as the true indicators of spiritual excellence.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was entrusted not only with conveying divine revelation but also with teaching wisdom, purifying hearts, and demonstrating through his own life the practical application of Qur'anic principles. His example continues to guide Muslims in balancing devotion with compassion, justice with mercy, and conviction with humility.

The Qur'an also encourages believers to remain steadfast through prayer, remembrance of God, and gratitude. Faith is portrayed not merely as a set of rituals but as a comprehensive way of life that shapes moral character, strengthens resilience during adversity, and promotes responsibility towards both God and fellow human beings.

At its core, Islam presents a vision of society in which justice is inseparable from compassion. Rights are accompanied by responsibilities, strength is restrained by ethical principles, and peace remains the preferred outcome whenever possible. The faith neither glorifies conflict nor ignores injustice; instead, it seeks to establish a moral order where disputes are resolved fairly, the vulnerable are protected, and reconciliation is always given precedence over hostility.

In an age where religious teachings are frequently misunderstood or selectively interpreted, the Qur'an's balanced message remains profoundly relevant. It calls upon humanity to resist oppression without becoming oppressive, to uphold justice without abandoning mercy, and to pursue peace with sincerity and dignity. These enduring principles continue to define Islam as a faith that seeks not only the protection of rights but also the cultivation of compassion, harmony, and lasting peace.

The author is pursuing M.Sc. in Biotechnology. She writes on religion, ethics, science, and society, promoting informed dialogue rooted in justice, compassion, and peace. She can be reached at bismaashraf1one@gmail.com.

Impact of social media on our society



■ **SAHIL MANZOOR BHATTI**

Print media has always played an effective role in developmental works, followed by electronic media — and now social media. Social media has a significant role in today's world, but unfortunately this platform is running without limits. Many people still do not know how to use it responsibly. Therefore, it must come under law, and stringent action should be taken against those who misuse it to spread false information, abusive content, and disturb the peace of society.

Every human being should first be civilized and have the basic knowledge of how to communicate thoughts with others in an impressive and respectful way. The world today is heading towards other planets, where there is no component that supports life — no water, air, fertile land, or suitable temperature. Human beings believe that nothing is impossible. Even when we are assigned simple tasks, our people encourage us by saying, "This is not rocket science, you can do it!"

We encourage our youth — regardless of age or gender — to take part in development. In our country, every individual can contribute at any level, in any field. The sky is the limit. There are people who relentlessly strive to turn the impossible into possible for the upliftment of the nation and humanity at large. Great minds never limit themselves; they think beyond their own kith and kin, and work for the welfare of all. Development is certain for any nation whose citizens take responsibility to stay informed and contribute.

Today, I want to share my opinion on why social media platforms are promoting what they should



not be promoting. The world has immense goals and visions for innovation and inventions, aiming to benefit humanity. Every individual must become part of this journey — stay updated and encourage those who devote themselves to nation-building. At the same time, it is painful that many educated youth are sitting idle, blaming the system and spoiling the nation's dignity.

An intelligent person is not one who scores 100 out of 100, but one who becomes a ray of hope for thousands. Intelligent people always find a way to support the hopeless and struggling.

On social media, people are ready to do anything foolish just for likes, views, or to go viral. They use abusive language, promote senseless trends and waste precious time. When we, as humans, have goals like making Mars habitable, we must be vigilant, smart, and hopeful. Our body language, thoughts, and actions must be graceful and meaningful.

Kashmir is known as "Resh Waer," the valley of

Sufi saints. These saints spread the message of peace, brotherhood, and humanity taught by Prophet Muhammad (SAW). But unfortunately, some people are now spoiling the sweetness of our language by using abusive words on social media and sharing them proudly.

Social media, if used properly, is a powerful platform. In earlier times, people with talent in poetry, singing, drawing, mimicry, etc., did not get a platform to showcase their abilities, but today everyone has an opportunity to create a channel or account and present their thoughts and talents for the benefit of humanity. Every account holder must feel responsible and condemn senseless content. We should stop sharing videos and posts that contain vulgar language or stupidity, and instead promote positive, educational, and uplifting material.

sahilmanzoor411990@gmail.com



Dr. Mustafa Kamal: The End of an Era, the Legacy of a Visionary Statesman Lives On



■ REYAZ BADANA

The passing of Dr. Sheikh Mustafa Kamal on 14 July 2026 marked the end of an important chapter in the political history of Jammu and Kashmir. His demise was mourned not only by political colleagues and party workers but also by countless people who had come to know him as a humble, accessible, and committed public figure. For decades, Dr. Mustafa Kamal remained an active participant in the democratic and political life of the region, earning recognition for his dedication to public service and his unwavering concern for the welfare of the people.

Born in 1942, Dr. Mustafa Kamal belonged to the renowned Abdullah family, one of the most influential political families in Jammu and Kashmir. He was the son of Sher-e-Kashmir Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and Begum Akbar Jehan Abdullah, the younger brother of Dr. Farooq Abdullah, and the uncle of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah. While his family background naturally placed him close to public life, he gradually established his own identity through years of political engagement, organisational work, and interaction with the people.

Before entering active politics, Dr. Mustafa Kamal qualified as a medical doctor (MBBS). Medicine is a profession built upon compassion, service, and dedication, and these qualities remained visible throughout his public career. Although he eventually chose politics as his life's mission, the spirit of serving humanity that defines the medical profession continued to shape his personality and approach to leadership. He believed that leadership should be measured by one's ability to understand people's hardships and work sincerely

to improve their lives.

Dr. Mustafa Kamal entered active politics during the early 1980s and soon emerged as one of the prominent leaders of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference. In 1983, he became a member of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Council, and in 1987, he was elected to the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly from the Gulmarg constituency. Over the years, he served as a Cabinet Minister and later as the Additional General Secretary of the National Conference, contributing to the organisation and participating actively in the political discourse of the region.

Throughout his political journey, Dr. Kamal remained deeply committed to democratic values and constitutional politics. He believed that political leadership should remain accountable to the people and that governance must always focus on improving the lives of ordinary citizens. His speeches and public interventions frequently highlighted issues relating to education, healthcare, infrastructure, rural development, employment, and the strengthening of democratic institutions. He consistently advocated for development that would benefit people across all sections of society.

One of the defining characteristics of Dr. Mustafa Kamal's public life was his accessibility. Despite holding important political responsibilities, he remained approachable and willing to listen to the concerns of ordinary citizens. Whether meeting villagers, interacting with party workers, speaking to journalists, or attending public gatherings, he was known for treating people with courtesy and respect. Many who met him remembered his calm manner, patience, and willingness to engage in meaningful conversation rather than political rhetoric alone.

His commitment to the people of Jammu and Kashmir extended beyond political responsibilities. Dr. Mustafa Kamal understood the importance of social harmony and believed that the region's strength lay in its rich cultural diversity and traditions of coexistence. He repeatedly emphasised the values of communal harmony, mutual respect, and peaceful dialogue. He believed that lasting peace and sustainable develop-



ment could only be achieved through unity, understanding, and democratic engagement.

Dr. Kamal's public life reflected not only political experience but also personal integrity. He was often regarded as a leader who carried himself with simplicity and dignity. Those who knew him personally frequently described him as humble, soft-spoken, and respectful in his dealings with people. Even his political opponents generally acknowledged his experience and his willingness to participate in democratic debate with civility.

Leadership is often tested during difficult periods, and Dr. Mustafa Kamal witnessed many significant political developments throughout his long public career. He remained actively involved during changing political circumstances, continuing to express his views and participate in democratic processes. His resilience and consistency over several decades made him one of the senior political voices of Jammu and Kashmir.

Beyond politics, Dr. Mustafa Kamal believed that public service required empathy and compassion. His medical background strengthened his understanding of human suffering, and he carried that perspective into public life. He recognised that development was

not limited to roads and buildings alone but also included better healthcare, quality education, social justice, and opportunities for young people. He consistently expressed concern for the welfare of rural communities and those who lacked access to essential services.

Dr. Mustafa Kamal's life also serves as an important lesson for younger generations entering public life. He demonstrated that lasting respect cannot be achieved merely through holding public office. Instead, it is earned through honesty, patience, humility, and sustained commitment to serving society. His career reflected the belief that politics should remain a platform for addressing public concerns rather than advancing personal interests.

His love for Jammu and Kashmir remained evident throughout his life. He envisioned a region where peace, development, education, healthcare, and economic opportunities reached every citizen. While political opinions often differ in a democratic society, his commitment to the welfare and progress of Jammu and Kashmir remained a constant feature of his public life. He consistently encouraged democratic participation and constructive dialogue as the means to address the region's challenges.

The legacy of Dr. Mustafa Kamal cannot be measured solely by the offices he held or the positions he occupied. His true contribution lies in the relationships he built, the trust he earned, and the years he devoted to public life. His political journey reflected dedication, perseverance, and an enduring belief in public service. He remained committed to the ideals of democracy and continued to work for what he believed would benefit the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Following a prolonged illness, Dr. Sheikh Mustafa Kamal passed away on 14 July 2026 in Srinagar at the age of 84. His death marked the conclusion of a long and distinguished public career that spanned several decades. Tributes poured in from political leaders, colleagues, and citizens, reflecting the respect he had earned through his years of service and public engagement.

History remembers individuals not only for their political achievements but also for the values they leave behind. Dr. Mustafa Kamal's life reflected service, dignity, perseverance, compassion, and a sincere commitment to public welfare. His memory will continue to inspire those who believe that politics should remain rooted in humanity, democratic values, ethical leadership, and a genuine desire to improve society.

As Jammu and Kashmir bids farewell to one of its senior political figures, the legacy of Dr. Mustafa Kamal will continue to live on through the ideals he upheld and the example he set. His life reminds us that true leadership is measured not by power or popularity, but by integrity, humility, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to the people.

May Almighty Allah forgive his shortcomings, grant him the highest place in Jannat-ul-Firdous, and bless his family, friends, colleagues, and countless admirers with patience and strength. His contributions to the political and public life of Jammu and Kashmir will always be remembered with respect, gratitude, and honour.

The author is a regular contributor of Daily Headlines Today

Amarnath Yatra: A Testament to Faith and Cross-Community Hospitality

■ IMRAN RAINA

Each summer, tens of thousands of devotees climb into the high Himalayas to perform the Amarnath Yatra, one of Hinduism's most venerated pilgrimages. The destination is a natural ice Shivaling that forms in a cave at about 3,888 metres — a sight devotees say affirms the cyclical mystery of creation and dissolution. The physical hardships of the path—steep climbs, thin air, and unpredictable mountain weather—give rise to a distinctive culture of mutual aid, where faith becomes a bridge rather than a barrier. Beyond its spiritual magnetism, the Yatra has become a stirring example of communal harmony, with local Muslim communities playing a central role in welcoming and supporting pilgrims of all faiths.

Long treks over rough terrain, unpredictable mountain weather, and thin air test even seasoned pilgrims. Yet what many remember most vividly is the hospitality encountered along the routes. In the Kashmir Valley, where the primary route runs from Pahalgam and the alternate route from Baltal, Muslim residents of villages and transient settlements set up langars — community kitchens — provide shelter, medical aid, warm clothing, and transportation. These acts are not token gestures but often lifesaving interventions carried out with generosity and dignity.

From the arrival points in Jammu and Baltal to the final ascent, the pilgrimage is supported by a vast and well-coordinated ecosystem. Government agencies, the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board, local civil society, police and disaster response teams provide security, medical care, and logistical support. Muslim residents of the Kashmir valley have long been central to this network, offering food, shelter, guidance, and even physical assistance to pilgrims irrespective of their religion. These acts, repeated year after year, have fostered bonds of trust and goodwill that transcend ritual boundaries.

Hospitality along the route takes many practical forms. Community kitchens oper-



ated by individuals or groups serve thousands of meals daily—simple, nourishing fare that sustains pilgrims on long stretches without facilities. Local transporters and mule owners help carry luggage and supplies; porters and hotels ensure rest and recovery for weary travelers. Volunteers and local youth groups maintain cleanliness, distribute drinking water, and guide pilgrims at difficult stretches. Medical volunteers and government teams run first-aid stations and ambulance services,

often performing life-saving interventions in challenging conditions. The cumulative effect is a safety net that blends formal administration with informal generosity, ensuring the yatra continues even in the face of natural obstacles.

Local Muslim volunteers and faith-based organizations coordinate with district administrations and the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board to run relief tents, first-aid posts, and supply points. Motorable stretches are used to ferry elderly and infirm

pilgrims; horses and palki-bearers assist those who cannot walk. Throughout the trek, Muslims and Hindus pray side by side, share meals, and exchange blessings. For many pilgrims, being handed a hot meal by a Kashmiri Muslim family on a cold night becomes as important a memory as glimpsing the ice Shivaling.

This cross-cultural cooperation has deep roots. Kashmir's syncretic traditions — historically reflected in Sufi shrines, shared cultural festivals, and norms of mutual

respect — find renewed expression during the Yatra. Religious identities blur into simple human concern when a pilgrim collapses from exhaustion or a storm makes movement perilous. Local hospitality is often private and informal: a family inviting a group into their home to dry their clothes, an imam arranging blankets for freezing volunteers, or a small-town baker offering freshly baked bread to those in need. Such gestures consistently remind observers that faith can inspire compassion across communal lines.

The regional administration, police, and voluntary organizations also play essential roles in ensuring safety and order. Yet the Yatra's smooth functioning often depends on the local population's goodwill. Muslim hoteliers, taxi drivers, shopkeepers, and cooks depend on the Yatra economically and treat pilgrims as guests. In many cases, these relationships are reciprocal: pilgrims donate to local charities, contribute to upkeep of roads and services, and speak of their experience back home, fostering goodwill beyond the valley.

The Amarnath Yatra's narrative of faith is therefore inseparable from a parallel story of human solidarity. In a region too often portrayed through conflict, the pilgrimage highlights everyday cooperation that counters stereotypes and builds mutual respect. It is a reminder that religious devotion need not isolate communities but can become a bridge — where shared hardships and shared hospitality create bonds that endure long after the last chant fades from the caves.

As the pilgrimage continues each year, it stands not only as a testament to spiritual yearning but also as a living example of how communities can welcome strangers, protect life, and honor dignity across faiths — a message that resonates well beyond the Himalayan slopes.

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Foods you must avoid giving your children during winters



When it comes to a proper diet for your children during the winter season, choosing from a plethora of products can feel downright confusing. Picking just one from rows of dry fruits, meats, dairy products or oil can appear a daunting task for some of us.

Today, we bring to you some of foods that your kids should avoid eating during winters

to stay healthy during this season. Let us take a look at the foods which kids should avoid eating during winters.

○ Fried food and items:

Deep-fried foods – mostly the ones that are fried in fats and oils derived from animal products – can be a severe problem in kids

during winters. Such foods are very harmful for your kids and must be avoided from being served to them. Fried food causes thickening of saliva and mucus and may lead to an uneasy feeling

○ Sugary foods:

Simple sugars are simply bad for your

children during winter and during most of the time of the year. Too much of sugar in a child's body can reduce the count of white blood cells in it, thereby exposing him or her to viral and bacterial infections.

Highly refined and processed chemical foods, be it a cake or sweetened cereals, sodas, cold drinks, candies, chocolate, or any other processed food products must be avoided at all cost.

○ Histamine-rich foods:

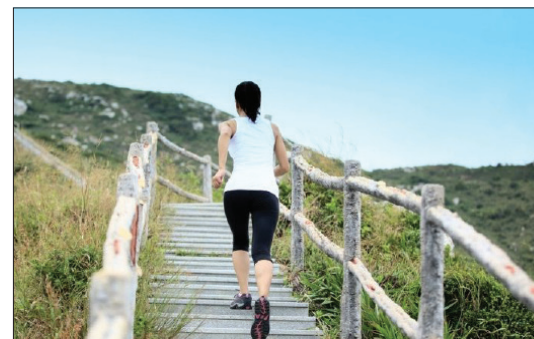
Histamine is known to help your body fight allergies. However, such foods are not good to be consumed by kids during winters. This is because histamine-rich foods induce mucus production, which can cause difficulty in swallowing food and lead to aggregation of other throat problems during winter. Histamine is found in foods like tomatoes, avocados, eggplant, mayonnaise, mushrooms, vinegar, buttermilk, pickles among other items.

○ Dairy products:

Avoid dairy products such as cheese, cream during winters to avoid the production of mucus in your children. Such products contain animal proteins which can be harmful to kids during winter. It can lead to congestion and their condition

Courtesy Healthline

Test your heart health by climbing four flights of stairs



Climbing four flights of stairs in less than a minute indicates good heart health, according to research presented at EACVI—Best of Imaging 2020, a scientific congress of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC).

While climbing a stair you push down to lift your entire body up a stair. This activity can not only increase the strength of the body muscles but also indicate the condition of their heart health.

"The stairs test is an easy way to check your heart health," said study author Dr. Jesús Peteiro, a cardiologist at University Hospital A Coruña, Spain. "If it takes you more than one-and-a-half minutes to ascend four flights of stairs, your health is suboptimal, and it would be a good idea to consult a doctor."

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between a daily activity—i.e. climbing stairs—and the results obtained from exercise testing in a laboratory. "The idea was to find a simple and inexpensive method of assessing heart health," said Dr. Peteiro. "This can help physicians triage patients for more extensive examinations."

The study included 165 symptomatic patients referred for exercise testing because of known or suspected coronary artery disease. Symptoms included chest pain or shortness of breath during exertion. Participants walked or ran on a treadmill, gradually increasing the intensity, and continuing until exhaustion. Exercise capacity was measured as metabolic equivalents (METs). After resting for 15 to 20 minutes, patients were asked to climb four flights of stairs (60 stairs) at a fast pace without stopping, but also without running, and the time was recorded.

The researchers analysed the relationship between METs achieved during exercise testing and the time it took to climb four flights of stairs. Patients who climbed the stairs in less than 40-45 seconds achieved more than 9-10 METs. Previous studies have shown that 10 METs during an exercise test is linked with a low mortality rate (1 percent or less per year, or 10 percent in 10 years). In contrast, patients who took 1.5 minutes or longer to climb the stairs achieved less than 8 METs, which translates to a mortality rate of 2-4 percent per year, or 30 percent in 10 years.

During the treadmill test, the researchers also generated images of the heart to assess its function during exercise -- if the heart works normally during exercise this indicates a low likelihood of coronary artery disease. They then compared these findings to the results of the stair climb. Some 58 percent of patients who completed the stair climb in more than 1.5 minutes had abnormal heart function during the treadmill examination. In contrast, just 32 percent of those who climbed the stairs in less than one minute had abnormal heart function during the treadmill examination.

Dr. Peteiro noted that the correlation between the stairs time and exercise capacity (i.e. METs) would be similar in the general population. But the corresponding mortality rates and heart function by imaging would be more favourable than for patients with symptoms and suspected or confirmed coronary artery disease.

Courtesy Healthline

Sugar-sweetened drinks are linked to obesity in children and adults: Study

Yes, you read it right! Analysis of new studies, including 250,000 people, has confirmed that sugar-sweetened drinks are linked to overweight and obesity in children and adults. A new review of the latest evidence on sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs), which includes 30 new studies, published between 2013 and 2015 (and none of them industry sponsored), has brought in such conclusion.

It also says that countries, which have not already done so, should take action to reduce the consumption of the so-called 'empty calories' that these drinks contain.

The review is written by a team of authors, including lead author Dr Maria Luger, Special Institute for Preventive Cardiology And Nutrition SIPCAN, Salzburg, Austria, EASO President Elect Dr Nathalie Farpour-Lambert (University Hospitals of Geneva, Switzerland) and Dr Maira Bes-Rastrollo, University of Navarra, Spain, and Carlos III Institute of Health, Spain.

"The evidence base linking SSBs with obesity and overweight in children and adults has grown substantially in the past 3 years," explained Dr Farpour-Lambert. "We were able to include 30 new studies not sponsored by the industry in this review, an average of 10 per year. This compares with a previous review that included 32 studies across the period 1990-2012." "This new, more recent evidence suggests that SSB consumption is positively associated with obesity in children.

Courtesy Healthline

Three super foods that can help you lose belly fat fast



LONDON: Super foods can help you to detox after overindulging during the festive period and a nutritionist has answered debate over which 'super food' is best, analysing the benefits of green tea, turmeric and cocoa just in time for New Year's resolutions to come into effect.

All three foods have different health benefits - green tea is a natural antioxidant, turmeric is an anti-inflammatory and cocoa is known for its cardiovascular benefits.

But, according to nutritionist Georgios Tzenichristos, the overall winner was green tea.

It contains 7 percent of the active molecule EGCG, while turmeric only contains 2 percent of the molecule curcumin and cocoa contains 0.5 percent flavanols.

Green tea's polyphenols help to speed the metabolism and boost fat-burning during exercising.

Georgios said, "If I had to choose one of those famous super ingredients, that would be the humble green tea. A cup is easy to prepare, costs next to nothing and provides you with a whopping 7 percent active molecules (EGCG), the most of any other drink or food."

Meanwhile, Cocoa that is high in flavanols, or plant chemicals, is good for the heart and brain.

According to research from Harvard Medical Schools, it can ward off diseases and help to cut cholesterol.

It's also believed that consuming the sweet treat aids serotonin production in the brain. This feel-good chemical helps to regulate the mood and suppress your appetite. To reap the benefits, it's best to consume dark chocolate that contains a high percentage of cocoa.

Turmeric has been one of the top health trends of 2017 - and Starbucks even added the ingredient into one of their menu items.

The spice contains curcumin, a powerful antioxidant. This substance helps to rejuvenate the liver and eliminate toxins.

There are several ways to work turmeric into your everyday diet. You can take it in capsules, sprinkle it onto your food for flavour or add it to hot drinks.

Mr Tzenichristos also pointed out that green tea is easy to prepare, while turmeric can be difficult and stains teeth, and cocoa often needs large amounts of milk and sugar, or a protein shake to mask the unpalatable taste.

Courtesy EMJ

Study finds nanowire device to detect cancer with a urine test



WASHINGTON D.C: In a new research, a group of researchers have developed a nanowire device that can detect microscopic levels of cancer markers in the urine, an advance that could help non-invasively diagnose the deadly disease.

Cells communicate with each other through a number of different mechanisms.

A less familiar mode of cellular transport is the extracellular vesicle (EV), which can be thought of as small "chunks" of a cell that are able to pinch off and circulate throughout the body to deliver messenger

cargo to other cells.

These messengers have become increasingly recognised as crucial mediators of cell-to-cell communication.

The scientists have developed a novel medical device that can efficiently capture these EVs, and potentially use them to screen for cancer.

Talking about the research, study's lead author Takao Yasui explained, "EVs are potentially useful as clinical markers. The composition of the molecules contained in an EV may provide a diagnostic signature for certain diseases. The ongoing challenge for physicians in any field is to find a non-invasive diagnostic tool that allows them to monitor their patients on a regular basis -- for example, a simple urine test."

Yasui further added, "The content of EVs in urine is extremely low, at less than 0.01 percent of the total fluid volume. This is a major barrier to their diagnostic utility. Our solution was to embed zinc oxide nanowires into a specialized polymer to create a material that we believed would be highly efficient at capturing these vesicles. Our findings suggest that the device is indeed quite efficient. We obtained a collection rate of over 99 percent, surpassing ultracentrifugation as well as other methods that are currently being used in the field."

To test the practicality of their device, researchers compared the microRNAs of EVs isolated from healthy patients with those isolated from patients who were already diagnosed with bladder, prostate, and other forms of cancer.

The technique required only one millilitre of urine and found a substantially greater number and different types of microRNAs compared with the standard ultracentrifugation approach.

Courtesy EMJ

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School, Higher Education Departments issue framework for Academic, Content Audit of Educational Resources

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 16: The School Education Department and the Higher Education Department have issued comprehensive circulars prescribing a structured institutional framework for the academic evaluation, content verification and periodic review of books and other educational resources across schools, colleges, universities and public libraries in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

The initiative has been taken in view of recent concerns regarding books available in the institutional libraries and the procurement of educational material by schools, colleges, public libraries and universities in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, and in pursuance of Government directions.

The circulars are aimed at strengthening institutional mechanisms governing the evaluation, recommendation, circulation, retention and periodic review of educational material to ensure that academic resources available in educational institutions possess established academic merit, factual authenticity, pedagogical relevance and educational value, while remaining consistent with the Constitution of India, the laws in force, the National Education Policy, the applicable regulatory framework and the curricular standards prescribed by the competent authorities.

Under the framework, all Government and recognised private schools, Government and recognised private colleges, and universities functioning under the administrative jurisdiction of the respective Departments

and Public Libraries have been directed to undertake a comprehensive Academic and Content Audit of books, reference material, journals, research publications, dissertations, theses, digital repositories and other educational resources available in their libraries and academic units, irrespective of the year of procurement, adoption or inclusion.

The circulars further provide that no publication or academic material containing factually inaccurate, misleading, distorted, inflammatory, unlawful or otherwise objectionable content, including material that directly or indirectly promotes, glorifies, legitimises or justifies terrorism, violent extremism, secessionism, radicalisation or any activity prejudicial to the sovereignty, unity, integrity and security of the Nation, shall be procured,

prescribed, recommended, retained, circulated, published, hosted or otherwise made available in educational institutions.

To ensure effective implementation, the Government has institutionalised multi-tier academic and content scrutiny mechanisms across the school and higher education sectors. These mechanisms provide for systematic academic evaluation, content verification, quality assurance, periodic review and institutional oversight through committees constituted at the institutional, district, directorate, university and administrative department levels, while respecting the statutory and academic autonomy of universities within the framework of the applicable laws and University Grants Commission regulations.

The circulars also assign clearly defined responsibilities

to the Vice Chancellors, Principals of Colleges, Chief Education Officers, Zonal Education Officers and Heads of Institutions (Hols), librarians, School Managements and other academic authorities entrusted with academic governance to ensure meticulous implementation of the prescribed framework within the stipulated timelines. Institutional heads shall be responsible for ensuring compliance within their respective jurisdictions, and any omission, negligence or deviation from the prescribed procedures shall be viewed with utmost seriousness.

The initiative is intended to reinforce academic standards, strengthen institutional accountability, preserve the integrity of the educational ecosystem and establish a transparent, objective and uniform framework for the periodic academic.

SDRF Jammu conducts water search and body recovery operation, participates in railway mock drills

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JULY 16: An SDRF team from Battalion Headquarters today conducted a water search and body recovery operation at Ranbir Canal, Jammu. The SDRF Control Room received information from Police Post Talab Tillo, Jammu that a ten-year-old boy, Neel Kumar, son of Raju, resident of Suraj Nagar, Jammu, had drowned in the Ranbir Canal near Rajpura. An SDRF team was immediately mobilised with water rescue equipment to carry



out the search.

The team, led by DySP Lalit Kumar under the overall supervision of Commandant SDRF Jammu Mohd Aslam, recovered the boy's body after an intensive search operation. The body was handed over to the local police for further legal formalities.

The SDRF team also participated in a joint mock drill conducted by the Government Railway Police (GRP) Sub-Division Jammu at Railway Station Jammu, Bajalta, Sangar and Manwal, to strengthen emergency preparedness and inter-agency coordination in the event of an untoward incident or terror attack. The exercise involved the SDRF, GRP, Special Operations Group (SOG) and other stakeholder agencies.

The SDRF team took part in mock drills for two consecutive days. Since the launch of SANJY-2026, SDRF has been conducting mock drills at various railway stations, railway tracks and other designated locations to strengthen coordination and operational readiness among participating agencies, as part of the role assigned to SDRF 2nd Battalion Jammu in such exercises.

DC Poonch reviews progress of CAPEX Budget works; stresses timely tendering and expedited execution

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

POONCH, JULY 16: Deputy Commissioner Poonch Ashok Kumar Sharma today chaired a meeting to review the physical and financial progress of developmental works under the CAPEX Budget 2026-27. He reviewed the status of ongoing and newly sanctioned works to ensure timely execution.

The meeting was attended by officers from several line departments, including the Ground Water Department, School Education Department, Health Department, Irrigation & Flood Control (I&FC), Jal Shakti (PHE), Youth Services & Sports, Rural Development Department (RDD) and other executing agencies.

The Deputy Commissioner also reviewed progress of works under DDC, BDC, PRI, APDP, Samagra Shiksha and other developmental schemes.

The Deputy Commissioner directed all departments to complete tendering by the end of the month and ensure no project is delayed due to procedural bottlenecks.

He said executing agencies must adhere to prescribed timelines and expedite execution of developmental works.

The Deputy Commissioner instructed departments to accelerate the pace of fund utilisation in line with the progress of works and directed the School Education Department to expedite ongoing and newly approved works and achieve targets under Samagra Shiksha within the time-frame.

Departmental officers concerned briefed the chair on the physical and financial status of works under their jurisdictions, highlighting achievements, pending projects and issues requiring intervention.

The meeting was attended by ACP; Chief Education Officer; Chief Medical Officer; Executive Engineer, PWD (R&B); I&FC; JSD; REW; JPDC; Jal Shakti; DYSSO and other officers concerned.

DC Kathua reviews implementation of Solid Waste Management Rules; calls for strict enforcement and public participation

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KATHUA, JULY 16: Deputy Commissioner Kathua Rajesh Sharma today chaired a meeting to review implementation of the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules across urban and rural areas of the district.

The meeting discussed aspects of scientific waste management, including source segregation, collection, processing and disposal of solid waste. The Deputy Commissioner called for coordinated efforts among stakeholders to implement the SWM Rules and directed the departments concerned to intensify public awareness campaigns on responsible waste management.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the officers concerned to ensure strict enforcement against unauthorised disposal of waste and take action against defaulters violating the prescribed norms. He also directed timely submission of progress reports for monitoring implementation.



The status of Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) in the district was also reviewed. It was informed that there are three operational MRFs, in Kathua, Parole and Billawar.

The Deputy Commissioner called for strengthening the facilities and ensuring their optimum utilisation.

The meeting also reviewed compliance by Bulk Waste Generators. Four industrial estates have been identified under this category. The Deputy Commissioner directed the agencies concerned to ensure strict adherence to waste management regulations by these establishments.

The Deputy Commissioner called for regular training and orientation programmes for field functionaries and stakeholders to strengthen implementation of the SWM Rules at the grassroots level.

District Panchayat Officer Kathua Ajeet Kumar informed the meeting that tendering for door-to-door waste collection services would commence shortly, to streamline collection and improve sanitation management across the district.

HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENT ENHANCES OFFICERS' CAPACITY FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF HADP, JKCIP

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 16: Department of Horticulture (Planning & Marketing), today organised a One-Day Capacity Building and Orientation Programme for ground-level officers and officials at the Conference Hall of the Directorate of Horticulture (Planning & Marketing), Rajbagh, Srinagar.

The programme aimed at strengthening the effective implementation of flagship schemes such as the Holistic Agriculture Development Pro-

gramme (HADP) and Competitiveness Improvement of Agriculture and Allied Sectors Project in Jammu and Kashmir (JKCIP), besides enhancing awareness regarding the e-SAM portal and cyber security practices.

The programme witnessed the participation of officers and officials from the Department across Kashmir Division.

Deputy Director, Horticulture (Planning & Marketing), Kashmir, Ayaz Ahmad Natnoo, highlighted the importance of continuous capacity building for ensuring

efficient implementation of government schemes and digital governance initiatives.

During the technical sessions, experts from the Mission Directorate deliberated on various operational and field-level challenges being faced during the online implementation of HADP and JKCIP projects. The experts provided practical solutions, clarified procedural issues, and guided the participants on streamlining project processing, documentation, monitoring, and timely implementation to ensure maximum benefits reach the

farming community.

A dedicated session by IT and Cyber Security experts focused on the significance of the e-SAM (Electronic Scheme Administration and Monitoring) Portal as a unified digital platform for transparent, efficient, and real-time monitoring of scheme implementation. The participants were sensitised about cyber security best practices, safe handling of official digital data, password management, phishing prevention, and secure use of government digital infrastructure. The experts also explained

the concept and importance of Vulnerability Assessment and Penetration Testing (VAPT) in identifying and addressing security vulnerabilities in digital systems and applications. They emphasised that periodic VAPT audits and adherence to cyber security protocols are essential for safeguarding government information systems and ensuring secure delivery of citizen-centric services.

The programme concluded with an interactive session wherein participants raised field-level issues.

DLSA Reasi organises legal awareness programmes across district

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

REASI, JULY 16: Under the chairmanship of District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Reasi Chairman and Principal District and Sessions Judge Reasi Khalil Choudhary and the guidance of DLSA Reasi Secretary Pooja Gupta, Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs) organised legal awareness programmes at four locations in the district today. PLVs of Front Office Mahore organised an awareness programme on the "Role of Legal Services" to educate the public about legal services and the role of Legal Services Institutions in ensuring access to justice, particularly for weaker and marginalised sections. Participants were informed about free legal aid, legal advice, legal representation, mediation and Lok Adalats available under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, the eligibility criteria for free legal aid and welfare schemes and legal awareness initiatives undertaken by DLSA Reasi and NALSA.

A similar awareness programme on the "Role of Legal Services" was organised at the Legal Aid Clinic, Chapano, for local residents. Participants were informed about the constitutional mandate of equal

access to justice and legal aid schemes for women, children, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, disaster victims, industrial workmen, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and economically weaker sections. Resource persons explained the functioning of Legal Aid Clinics, free legal representation, counselling, mediation and conciliation services and the NALSA toll-free helpline 15100.

PLVs of TLSC Katra organised an awareness programme on "Say No to Drugs" at Panchayat Karua to sensitise local residents, particularly youth, about the harmful effects of drug abuse and the importance of a healthy, drug-free life. The PLVs highlighted the physical, psychological, social and legal consequences of drug addiction, urged vigilance against substance abuse and informed participants about free legal aid available through DLSA Reasi.

PLV Wazir Ahmed Khan along with other Para Legal Volunteers, conducted a Nukkad Natak on Road Safety Rules at the Legal Aid Clinic, Kunderdhan, under the supervision of TLSC Mahore. The performance educated participants on road safety rules, including wearing helmets

Speaker stresses priority protection of bridges; calls for expeditious, quality execution of works

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 16: Speaker, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather, today reviewed the flood protection measures at Apazari Nallah being executed under NABARD besides assessing the restoration of flood-damaged spots under SASCI-II.

During the meeting held in this regard, the Speaker was informed that the anti-erosion and urgent flood protection works at Apazari Nallah have been sanctioned at an estimated cost of over Rs. 7.31 crore while the restoration of flood-damaged spots has been taken up at an estimated cost of over Rs. 1.54 crore.

The officers apprised the Speaker that the projects comprising a series of protective interventions included crate works, check crates, reinforced concrete walls and cut-off walls. The special focus is being placed on safeguarding the bridge foundations and preventing erosion caused by flash floods and high



water discharge.

Emphasizing the importance of protecting the vital public infrastructure, the Speaker said that safeguarding the bridges against erosion and flood damage must remain a top priority, particularly in vulnerable areas.

He directed the Executive Engineers to undertake regular field visits to the nallah, identify all the vulnerable stretches and ensure that appropriate preventive measures are implemented well in time.

The Speaker stressed that all the works should be executed with the highest standards of quality and completed within the stipulated timeframe so that the intended benefits reach the people without delay. He also instructed the concerned officers to closely monitor the progress of the projects and maintain strict supervision during execution.

Highlighting the public importance of these works, the Speaker said that the bridge protection and

flood mitigation measures would benefit nearly 40,000 people residing in around 15 villages, including Badipora, Nowpora, Choudrigund, Hafroo, Loolipora, Watkaloo, Chak Banagund and Sogam besides several adjoining habitations.

He observed that the projects would significantly enhance the safety and resilience of the road network, ensure uninterrupted connectivity and provide long-term protection to public infrastructure from recurring flood-related damage.



SEZ DUTY RELIEF COULD HURT MSMES WITHOUT SAFEGUARDS, WARNS THINK CHANGE FORUM

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JUL 16 : A temporary policy allowing Special Economic Zone (SEZ) manufacturers to sell a portion of their output in the domestic market at concessional customs duty rates could unintentionally disadvantage Indian manufacturers, particularly MSMEs, unless adequate safeguards are introduced, according to a new white paper released by Think Change Forum (TCF).

TCF launched its white paper, "SEZs at the Crossroads: Rethinking India's Special Economic Zone Framework," at a policy discussion held at the India International Centre, here.

The study analyses India's SEZ framework in the wake of the Government's 2026 decision allowing eligible SEZ manufacturing units to clear goods into the Domestic Tariff Area (DTA) at concessional customs duty rates.

Under the temporary framework applicable from April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2027, eligible SEZ units can sell into the domestic market up to 30pc of their highest annual FOB export value from the preceding three financial years, subject to conditions including minimum value addition.

TCF cautioned that while the relaxation may be intended as a temporary response to global trade uncertainty and export-market



pressures, it creates a new policy vulnerability for Indian domestic producers.

SEZ units already benefit from duty-free inputs, simplified compliance and other fiscal advantages. If such units are allowed concessional access to domestic markets on an automatic or blanket basis, they could introduce lower-cost goods into sectors where Indian manufacturers, particularly MSMEs, operate with higher input duties, GST working-capital costs, borrowing costs and compliance burdens.

The study also flags a major enforcement concern. With customs policing and audit systems already stretched, allowing India's 276 operational SEZs to divert up to 30pc of output into the domestic market could create dry-port-like clearance gateways without

adequate oversight.

This is especially risky for categories already vulnerable to smuggling, tax arbitrage, misclassification and diversion.

Experts at the roundtable therefore recommended that the Government identify vulnerable product categories and issue an absolute negative list covering sin goods, liquor, beer, spirits, tobacco products, high-value luxury items and other high-risk goods. Such a negative list would prevent any misinterpretation and misuse of the policy framework

According to TCF's market-displacement analysis, every Rs 1,000 crore worth of concessional SEZ goods entering concentrated domestic industrial clusters could potentially displace approximately Rs 420 crore of MSME

market share.

The white paper notes that this is not only a pricing issue, but a structural risk: if the DTA window becomes a regular market-access route, SEZs could gradually shift from export-oriented enclaves into duty-advantaged domestic supply platforms, weakening local manufacturers and distorting the level playing field.

TCF said the 30pc DTA facility should not be treated as an automatic entitlement for all eligible SEZ units or product categories. Instead, it should be applied selectively, with safeguards such as product-level disclosure, full duty parity in sensitive sectors, customs-GST data matching, related-party transaction scrutiny, independent audit and post-clearance verification.

The relaxation should remain strictly limited to its one-year window and be discontinued thereafter unless a transparent review establishes that it has not harmed domestic production or weakened export discipline.

The white paper underlines that the original purpose of SEZs was to create globally competitive export platforms that bring foreign exchange into India. That purpose must be preserved. SEZs should not evolve into duty-advantaged industrial islands competing in domestic markets without the same tax, customs and compliance obligations faced by Indian producers outside

Auto industry posts record Q1 sales across key segments: SIAM

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JULY 16 : India's automobile industry posted a strong performance in the first quarter of the current financial year, with passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles and three-wheelers recording their highest-ever April-June sales, supported by lower GST rates, affordable financing and steady domestic demand.

According to the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), released here on Wednesday, passenger vehicle sales rose 25.9 per cent year-on-year to a record 12.74 lakh units during the April-June quarter of FY2026-27.

Utility vehicles continued to dominate the segment, accounting for nearly 68 per cent of total passenger vehicle sales, while exports also touched a record 2.22 lakh units, driven by robust demand from Latin America and improving shipments to Europe and Japan.

The two-wheeler segment also registered its best-ever first-quarter performance, with sales increasing 20.3 per cent to 56.29 lakh units.

Scooter sales outpaced motorcycles, helped by lower GST rates, while exports surged 36.6 per cent to an all-time high of 15.5 lakh units on the back of strong demand from Latin America, South Asia and Africa.

Three-wheeler sales climbed 29.7 per cent to a record 2.14 lakh units during the quarter, supported by higher demand for both passenger and goods carriers. Exports jumped 57.7 per cent to their highest-ever first-quarter level, aided by improving overseas demand.

Commercial vehicle sales also touched a record 2.65 lakh units in the quarter,

registering an 18.3 per cent increase over the year-ago period. Growth led by goods carriers, supported by replacement demand and higher activity in sectors such as mining and cement. Commercial vehicle exports also rose sharply by 43.3 per cent.

During June alone, passenger vehicle sales stood at 3.88 lakh units, up 24.1 per cent from a year earlier. Two-wheeler sales rose 18.6 per cent to 18.51 lakh units, while three-wheeler sales increased 26.1 per cent to 77,951 units.

SIAM President Shailesh Chandra said the record quarterly performance across vehicle segments came despite disruptions arising from developments in West Asia.

He attributed the growth to supportive domestic demand, lower GST rates, easier financing, a favourable base and the launch of new models.

He added that the industry would continue to monitor geopolitical developments and the progress of the monsoon because of their impact on rural demand.

SIAM Director General Rajesh Menon said all vehicle segments registered strong double-digit growth in the April-June quarter compared with the same period last year, reflecting broad-based recovery across the industry.

Looking ahead, SIAM said lower vehicle costs due to GST changes, easier financing and improving monsoon conditions are expected to support demand during the festive season.

However, it cautioned that commodity prices remain a key concern, and the industry is closely watching the evolving geopolitical situation in West Asia. UNI

India-UK CETA can unlock multi-sectoral growth opportunities for exports: PHDCCI

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JUL 16 : India-UK Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) can unlock new growth opportunities for Indian exports across manufacturing, technology, and services, said PHDCCI in its report released here on Wednesday.

The chamber noted in its market intelligence series that the United Kingdom continues to remain one of India's most important export destinations.

During FY2024-25, India's exports to the UK reached USD 14.55 billion, generating a trade surplus of nearly USD 6 billion.

The agreement is expected to provide renewed momentum by reducing market access bar-

riers and improving customs procedures. It will also facilitate greater integration of bilateral value chains.

As per the PHDCCI report, India's export basket to the UK is increasingly shifting towards higher-value manufacturing products, which is supported by industrial policies, production-linked incentive schemes, and improving global competitiveness.

Segments such as smartphones, pharmaceuticals, aluminium oxide, petroleum products, engineering goods, machinery components, footwear, and processed agricultural products are emerging as major drivers of export.

The report noted that India's competitiveness has strengthened significantly in smart-

phones, aluminium oxide, pharmaceuticals, jewellery, footwear, and auto components.

PHDCCI noted that the Trade Complementarity Index has consistently remained above 63, which indicates substantial scope for expanding bilateral trade under preferential tariff access.

Moreover, the Trade Intensity Index also remained close to one, which suggests that actual trade flows are approaching their potential.

PHDCCI President Rajeev Juneja said, "The India-UK CETA has the potential to transform bilateral trade from a traditional goods-based relationship into a technology-driven strategic economic partnership."

Juneja noted that India's growing competitiveness in manufacturing, combined with the

UK's strengths in innovation and advanced technologies, can create significant opportunities for expanding exports. It will also help in attracting investment and integrating into global value chains.

Beyond merchandise trade, the PHDCCI report underscored the growing importance of services exports.

Digital Delivery continues to account for the majority of UK services imports from India. It reinforces India's competitive strength in information technology professional services and knowledge-based industries.

PHDCCI identified significant opportunities for bilateral collaboration in advanced technologies. With the help of the UK-India Technology Security

Initiative, both countries are strengthening cooperation in semiconductors, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, telecommunications, biotechnology, critical minerals, and advanced materials.

Dr Ranjeet Mehta, SG and CEO of PHDCCI, said, "The agreement provides an important platform for Indian industry to diversify export markets, increase value addition and strengthen competitiveness in high-growth sectors such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, speciality materials and digital services."

"Effective utilisation of the agreement will require greater awareness of Rules of Origin, regulatory standards and market-specific compliance requirements," Mehta added. UNI

Dalmia Bharat lays foundation for Rs 3,100 crore cement plant in Andhra's Kadapa

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

KADAPA (ANDHRA PRADESH), JUL 16 : Dalmia Bharat Limited on Wednesday laid the foundation stone for its second manufacturing unit in Kadapa, Andhra Pradesh, with an investment of Rs 3,100 crore.

The foundation stone was laid in the presence of Andhra Pradesh Minister for Information Technology Nara Lokesh, Dalmia Bharat Managing Director and CEO Puneet Dalmia, senior government officials, and company executives.

In a release, the company said the project will establish a next-generation integrated manufacturing facility designed to produce one of the world's greenest cements. The investment is part of the expansion plans announced by the company in 2025.

Scheduled for commissioning in the third quarter of FY2027-28, the Kadapa unit will be Dalmia Bharat's largest integrated manufacturing facility in southern India with a clinker capacity of 6.1 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) and cement manufacturing capacity of 9.6 MTPA.

The company said the project is expected to generate around 1,000 direct and indirect employment opportunities.

Addressing the event, Lokesh said Dalmia Bharat shares Andhra Pradesh's vision of building a globally competitive, future-ready economy through sustainable industrialisation.

He welcomed the company's continued investment in the state and said the project would help create jobs, strengthen local communities, and enhance the state's industrial base.

Puneet Dalmia said Andhra Pradesh has been an integral part of the company's growth for over a decade and attributed the fresh investment to the state's investment-friendly ecosystem, policy stability, transparent governance, infrastructure, and ease of doing business.

He said the new facility reflects the company's long-term commitment to low-carbon cement manufacturing and aims to set new benchmarks in efficiency and sustainability while supporting India's infrastructure and climate goals.

Home Credit India to acquire 100 pc stake in Varthana Fin

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

CHENNAI, JULY 16: Home Credit India, part of TVS Venu, has agreed to acquire 100 per cent stake in Varthana Finance Private Limited through an all-cash transaction, subject to receipt of applicable regulatory approvals, including approval from the Reserve

Bank of India, and fulfilment of customary closing conditions.

The proposed acquisition marks another step in TVS Venu's long-term approach to build and scale high-quality financial services businesses that serve India's evolving credit needs across customer segments. With the addition of Varthana's specialised education-finance franchise to its growing financial services platform, the Group will expand its presence into a complementary secured and longer-tenure lending segment.

The transaction will strengthen TVS Venu's position in India's financial services sector and create opportunities to support Varthana's next phase of growth, according to a company statement issued on Wednesday.

Sudarshan Venu, Chairman, TVS Motor Company, said, "India's financial services sector continues to offer significant opportunities for long-term growth, driven by rising formalisation, expanding credit access and the increasing need for specialised lending solutions. As we continue to build and scale our financial services platform, we remain focused on supporting high-quality institutions that address important customer needs across segments."

Steve Hardgrave, Whole-time Director and Executive Vice Chairman, Varthana, said, "We look forward to joining forces with TVS as we continue to support private schools throughout the country. The TVS legacy of trust that has empowered millions of customers across India is closely aligned with Varthana's mission and values. UNI

Stock Markets give up sharp morning gains, Sensex sheds 130 points

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JUL 16: The Indian Stock Markets on Wednesday ended marginally lower after giving up most of their sharp morning gains.

At close, Sensex rose 130 points, or 0.17%, to close at 77,185.43, while the Nifty 50 ended at 24,078.50, rising 26 points, or 0.11%.

The overall market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms rose to Rs 481 lakh crore from Rs 479.5 lakh crore in with investors' wealth grew by about Rs 1.5 lakh crore.

Among the sectors, the ones ending with healthy gains were Nifty PSU Bank was up 0.95%, Consumer Durables up by 0.73%, and Oil and

Gas up by 0.69%, Nifty Bank climbed 0.51%, while the Financial Services index rose by 0.59%.

On the losing end were Nifty Metal cracked by 1.11%. IT, FMCG, Media, and Realty indices fell 0.67%, 0.49%, 0.46%, and 0.38%, respectively.

Indian rupee closed at 96.2550 per dollar against its previous session close of 96.20.

On Nifty, the top gainers were UltraTech Cement, Eternal, and HDFC Life Insurance Company, while Hindalco Industries, Power Grid Corporation of India, and Tata Steel ended as the top laggards in the index.

Shares of cement companies like UltraTech Cement, Ambuja Cements,

Shree Cement and other cement rose up to 3 percent.

UltraTech Cement rose 3 percent, while Shree Cement gained 2.5 percent and Ambuja Cements advanced 1.4 percent.

Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities on Rupee said, "Rupee traded largely flat near 96.25, as the Dollar Index slipped below \$101 after softer-than-expected US CPI data, providing some relief to emerging market currencies."

However, persistent FII outflows and elevated crude oil prices continued to keep the domestic currency under pressure, limiting any meaningful recovery." UNI

Amazon to invest Rs 1 lakh cr in Telangana by 2034: Revanth Reddy

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

HYDERABAD, JULY 16: Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Wednesday said Amazon is expected to invest Rs 1 lakh crore in Telangana by 2034, describing the foundation-laying ceremony for the company's data centre at Future City as a major milestone in the state's drive to attract global investments and establish Future City as an international business hub.

Addressing the gathering after laying the foundation stone, the Chief Minister said the proj-

ect would catalyse attracting more Fortune 500 companies to Telangana.

He recalled that the 'Telangana Rising Global Summit', held in December 2025, witnessed participation from corporate representatives of major companies from 108 countries.

Revanth Reddy said the state's 'Telangana Rising-2047' vision aims to transform Telangana into a USD 1 trillion economy by 2034 and a USD 3 trillion economy by 2047, while increasing the state's contribution to India's GDP from 5 per cent to 10 per cent as part

of the Centre's Viksit Bharat 2047 mission.

Stating that investments and employment generation are key to achieving this goal, he assured industries of world-class infrastructure, speedy clearances and all necessary support.

He said the government conducts monthly reviews of industrial projects and would hold a dedicated monthly review of Amazon's investments.

The Chief Minister said the state had introduced sector-specific policies under the Telangana Rising initiative for indus-

tries, tourism, energy, healthcare and sports, besides establishing the Young India Skill University to create a skilled workforce.

He added that investments by global companies like Amazon would encourage more industries to establish operations in Telangana.

Revanth Reddy said the government is committed to transforming Hyderabad into a pollution-free city by expanding the Metro Rail network, rejuvenating the Musi River, relocating industries from the city, converting RTC buses into electric bus-

es and retrofitting nearly two lakh diesel auto-rickshaws into electric vehicles.

He noted that the state had waived registration tax on electric vehicles despite an annual revenue loss of Rs 1,500 crore.

The Chief Minister also expressed gratitude to farmers who parted with their land for the Regional Ring Road, radial roads and Future City projects.

He directed officials to resolve pending issues, ensure fair compensation and create employment opportunities for affected families. UNI





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HT - SPORTS**12**

Bumrah slips back into ODI groove with magic undimmed

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

MUMBAI: Jasprit Bumrah did Jasprit Bumrah things at Edgbaston: being the point of difference. It was for Bumrah just another day at the job, which normally is a good day. But Tuesday was an important day even for the best fast bowler of our times.

Bumrah had not played the 50-overs format since the 2023 ODI World Cup final against Australia at his home ground in Ahmedabad. In that period, India played 26 ODIs. With two T20 World Cups in the last three years, Bumrah was preserved for the shortest format, rightly. A decision that played a major hand in India becoming the first team to defend successive T20 world titles. So having not bowled in the 50-overs format since November 19, 2023, how would Bumrah fare today? That was a question even India captain Shubman Gill agreed on Monday the team was keenly waiting to see answered. Usually watching Bumrah in any format, virtually every ball he delivers is by itself compelling.

One reason Bumrah is so exciting is he doesn't really hide what he is going to do. Forget the batters and the opposition, even you, if you have watched him closely for several years, know his routines. With moisture abundant in the Edgbaston pitch, Bumrah got stuck into Ben Duckett straight away. Duckett, who has also faced Bumrah in Test cricket, was aware of the drill: out-swingers pitched on the hard length and then suddenly that darting inswinger, delivered from the same angle to leave the batter gasping.

The inswinger here came on the fifth ball. Bowling from over the stumps Bumrah launched a full, swinging delivery that hit Duckett's back heel and left the England opener off balance. Bumrah appealed with gusto, but he knew the ball had pitched outside the leg stump.



Stuart Broad, an astute observer, well-versed with his one-time opponent, pointed out on air Bumrah's inswinger comes in far more quickly than the away-going delivery. Those are the subtleties with which Bumrah makes batters sweat while pushing us on the outside to edge of our seats.

Just like that, Bumrah had slipped back into peak bowling mode with that teasing grin, having left the batter looking hapless. In his second over he pinged Duckett's index finger on his left hand with the delivery that Bumrah usually uses regularly in Test cricket: banging a length and the ball kicking off. (You can read more on the science behind it here). Duckett, a tough competitor, could not stop wincing and received treatment twice.

ICC adds Super Series and Super Seven twist to 2027 ODI World Cup

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

AHMEDABAD: The 2027 ODI World Cup, to be co-hosted by South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia, will be a 14-team event but will include a Super Series round before the group stages, and a new Super 7 before the semi-finals. The new structure, announced by the ICC on Wednesday following the body's Annual Conference in Edinburgh over the week-

end, was introduced, the ICC said, to "enhance consequence" in the early stages. Teams qualifying 12th to 14th will play the Super Series round. One team from the three will progress to the Group round, becoming one of 12 teams split across two groups. The top three from each group along with the next-best ranked team across both groups will then qualify for the Super 7, from which the top four go through to the semis.

A 14-team event in 2027 means the ICC sticks to a decision made in June 2021 to expand the marquee 50-team event, after 10-team events in the 2019 and 2023 editions. But the introduction of the round robin Super Series from which one team goes through, means 12 teams will play in what becomes the meat of the tournament, the group round where 30 games take place. In the original format of this event, two groups

of seven would lead to a Super 6 stage, before the semis and final.

The restructure comes after concerns were expressed about the possibility of too many dead rubbers and resulting empty stadiums at the ICC's annual conference. Prompted by the number of foregone conclusions at the recent T20 World Cup and to ensure more jeopardy in the early stages of the tournament, the ICC have decided to introduce a knockout

phase earlier, rather than change the number of the teams.

"The structure has been designed to strengthen the competitive narrative across every stage of the event, with matches from Round 1 and Round 2 carrying higher consequence with a highly competitive Super 7 stage witnessing 7 qualifying teams going through a round-robin stage to qualify for the semi-finals," the ICC said.

Jonathan Trott joins Ireland as consultant amid England links

■ AGENCIES

AHMEDABAD: Jonathan Trott has taken on a "short-term consultancy" role with Ireland's men ahead of their ODI series against his old team Afghanistan next month. The news comes at a time when Trott has been linked with the vacancy as England's Test coach, following Brendon McCullum's sacking. Trott, the former England batter who made 13 international hundreds, will spend 14 days working with Ireland, including the first two fixtures of their five-match ODI series against Afghanistan which starts on August 5. "The upcoming ODI series against Afghanistan is critical to [the] Ireland Men's squad's preparations for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Qualifier in early 2027,"

A Proud Moment for Bijhama!

■ HT SPORTS DESK

URI: The 3rd Edition of the Varmul Gindo Festival-cum-District Level Table Tennis & Badminton Championship commenced today with great enthusiasm at HSS Bijhama, Uri.

The first phase of the championship was inaugurated by Bijhama's prides, IAS officer Mr. Raja Azhar Asif, in the presence of distinguished guests, school administration, participants, parents, and dignitaries from across the tehsil. Addressing the gathering, he highlighted the importance of sports in shaping disciplined, confident, and healthy youth, while appreciating the organizers for hosting such a meaningful event. The Head of the In-



stitution, Mr. M. Younis Kukroo, lauded the organizers for the successful conduct of the championship. The occasion was also graced by Advocate Sajid Naseer Khan, Mr. Abdul Qayoom (J&K Sports Council), Mr. Khazir Mohammad, and a large gathering of sports enthusiasts.

The second phase of the championship will begin tomorrow at the Indoor Sports Complex, Khawaja Bagh, Baramulla. Best wishes to all the participants. May the spirit of sportsmanship, excellence, and fair play shine throughout the championship!

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