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Chinar Book Festival Is a Movement to Build a Community of Readers, Writers and Thinkers: LG Manoj Sinha

Says J&K Aims to emerge as a national hub of knowledge, culture and creativity; urges youth to read beyond textbooks

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 18: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday described the Chinar Book Festival as a movement to build a vibrant community of readers, writers and thinkers, saying the initiative reflects the vision of transforming Jammu and Kashmir into a national centre of knowledge, culture and creativity.

Addressing the third edition of the Chinar Book Festival in Srinagar, the Lieutenant Governor congratulated the National Book Trust and the organisers for successfully establishing the event as a major literary platform in the region. "This festival is more than just an



event. It is a movement to build a vibrant community of readers, writers and thinkers. Our goal is to transform Jammu and Kashmir into a national hub for knowledge, culture and creativity," Sinha said, expressing hope that the festival would encourage young people to cultivate the habit of daily reading, preserve endangered languages and embrace literature as a means of promoting diversity and mutual respect.

Highlighting the enduring significance of books, the Lieutenant Governor said literature has the power to stimulate critical thinking, challenge beliefs and inspire personal growth. He said

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'Zero Tolerance Against Terrorism Is Our Line of Action': Rajnath Singh

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JULY 18: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday asserted that India's policy of zero tolerance against terrorism is backed by decisive action, declaring that the country will target terror infrastructure wherever necessary. He also underscored India's growing stature as a global security partner, driven by rapid progress in indigenous defence manufacturing and expanding strategic capabilities.

Addressing an event in the

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Heavy Rain Alert for J&K; MeT Warns of Flash Floods, Landslides Till July 23

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, JULY 18: The Meteorological Department has issued a weather alert for Jammu and Kashmir, forecasting a prolonged wet spell from July 19 to July 23, with the Jammu region expected to bear the brunt of heavy to extremely heavy rainfall.

According to the MeT Department, July 18 is likely to remain generally hot and humid, with scattered spells of rain or intense thundershowers expected during the late afternoon, evening,

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Amarnath, Mata Vaishno Devi Yatras suspended amid weather alert

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, JUL 18: The annual Amarnath Yatra continued on Saturday with 16,039 pilgrims paying obeisance at the

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India's First Private Orbital Rocket Set for Historic Maiden Launch : PM Modi

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JULY 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday described the maiden orbital launch of Vikram-1, India's first privately developed launch vehicle by Skyroot Aerospace, as a landmark moment in the country's space journey.

In a post on X, the Prime Minister said the launch marks "a historic new frontier for India's space journey" and highlighted the growing role of the private sector in advancing India's space ambitions. Designed as a four-stage

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Skyroot's Vikram-1 Launch Reiterates India's Entry Into Global Space Economy: Jitendra Singh

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

NEW DELHI, JUL 18: Union Minister Jitendra Singh said the successful launch of Skyroot Aerospace's Vikram-1, India's first privately developed orbital-class rocket, on Saturday reiterates the country's entry into the global space economy.

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DGP reviews SANJY security arrangements

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 18: Director General of Police (DGP) Jammu and Kashmir, Nalin Prabhat, accompanied by Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir Zone, visited Shadipora on Friday to review the security arrangements for the ongoing Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra (SANJY) and assess the prevailing operational situation in the area.

During the visit, the DGP conducted a comprehensive review of the security grid, operational preparedness, and deployment of police and other security forces to ensure the safe and smooth conduct of the annual pilgrimage. Senior officers briefed him on the prevailing security scenario, ongoing counter-terrorism operations,

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Govt Extends Summer Vacation Till July 22 as Heatwave, Weather Alerts Persist

Schools Across Kashmir Division and Jammu Winter Zone to Reopen on July 23, Subject to Further Orders

■ HT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JULY 18: The Jammu and Kashmir Government on Saturday extended the ongoing summer vacation in all government and recognised private schools across the Kashmir Division and the Winter Zone of Jammu Division by three more days, citing the prevailing heatwave and an adverse weather forecast.

According to the order, schools that were scheduled to reopen on July 20 will now remain closed until July 22, with classes set to resume on July 23, subject to any further directions from the government.

The decision was taken as a precautionary measure in view of the continuing spell of extreme heat and weather advisories issued by the Meteorological Department. Authorities said the extension is aimed at safeguarding the health and well-being

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Jammu admin cracks down on drug peddlers

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JULY 18: Under the directions of District Magistrate Jammu Dr Rakesh Minhas and in coordination with SSP Jammu Joginder Singh, joint teams of the District Administration and Jammu Police Saturday carried out a demolition drive against properties of drug peddlers in Jammu and Bishnah tehsils, dismantling several illegal structures built with proceeds of the drug trade.

With today's combined operations at Bishnah and Nikki Tawi, the District Administration and Jammu Police demolished illegal properties worth a cumulative nearly Rs.3 crore linked to drug trafficking, besides recovering heroin and illegal weapons from the accused.

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5 yatris injured in Udhampur accident

LG reviews situation

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

UDHAMPUR, JULY 18: Five pilgrims, including the driver, were injured after a vehicle carrying devotees to the Shri Amarnath cave shrine met with an accident near Sangoor Chowk in Udhampur district on Saturday.

Officials said the Baltal-bound Innova, carrying seven occupants, reportedly collided with a parked dumper after the driver attempted to overtake another vehicle.

Five of the seven occupants sustained injuries in the collision. They were evacuated from the spot and shifted to the Government Medical College (GMC), Udhampur, where they are undergoing treatment.

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LG Saxena Orders Strict Prohibition on Use and Sale of Chemical Fertilisers In Ladakh

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

LEH, JUL 18: The Union Territory of Ladakh has taken a decisive leap towards becoming India's largest certified organic region by enforcing a complete ban on the use and sale of any chemical/synthetic fertiliser for agricultural practices in Ladakh.

This landmark decision, aimed at transforming Ladakh into a fully organic region, comes at the direction of Lieutenant Governor, Vinai Kumar

Saxena. With the order coming into force, the procurement, distribution, sale, marketing and use of chemical/synthetic fertilisers will be strictly prohibited with immediate effect, across the Union Territory. Any violation in this regard, will attract a minimum fine of Rs 10,000. South Asians & Diaspora

"The Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh imposes prohibition on the procurement, distribution,

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Omar Seeking Statehood to Restore Abdullah Family's 'Royal Lifestyle,' Not for People: Sunil Sharma

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, JULY 18: Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly and senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Sunil Sharma on Saturday launched a sharp attack on Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, alleging that his demand for the restoration of statehood is intended to revive the Abdullah family's "royal lifestyle"

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CS assesses the 'Data Management Strategy' for J&K

Directs creation of integrated data ecosystem for seamless citizen services

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 18: In a significant step towards advancing digital governance and ensuring hassle-free delivery of public services, Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, chaired a high-level meeting to review the proposed 'Data Management Strategy and Action Plan' aimed at creating a secure, interoperable and citizen-centric data ecosystem across Government departments in Jammu and Kashmir.

The proposed initiative seeks to establish an integrated framework for secure sharing and harmonization



of government data, enabling departments to access authenticated information through authorized digital platforms instead of repeatedly seeking the same documents from citizens. The initiative is expected to

substantially improve inter-departmental coordination, eliminate duplication of records, enhance transparency and ensure faster, more efficient delivery of welfare benefits and public services.

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CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....

Chinar Book.....

that writing, supported by imagination, remains one of humanity's greatest strengths, while literary festivals create inclusive spaces where books become accessible and meaningful to society.

Sinha observed that within a short span, the Chinar Book Festival has evolved into a vibrant intellectual movement and a nationally recognised platform for the exchange of ideas, debates and knowledge.

Drawing a parallel between writers and the iconic Chinar tree, he said both symbolise patience, resilience and endurance, adding that restoring Jammu and Kashmir as a leading centre of education, literature and youth empowerment is a shared responsibility.

The Lieutenant Governor also praised the festival's efforts to revive the ancient Sharada script and promote cultural integration through initiatives such as Tamil-Kashmiri literary dialogues, saying these initiatives embody the spirit of national unity while strengthening links between regions, languages and generations.

Emphasising that the true value of a book festival lies beyond commercial success, Sinha said its achievements should be measured by the ideas, discussions and collaborations it inspires.

"If a discussion that begins here reaches a college or university, if ideas generated at the festival become the foundation for future collaborations, or if a young reader discovers a book that changes the course of life, then the objectives of the festival have truly been fulfilled," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor urged young people to read at least one book outside their academic curriculum every month and encouraged aspiring writers to develop the discipline of writing at least one page every day.

He said the Chinar Book Festival should continue to serve as a platform connecting libraries, book clubs and literary communities across Jammu and Kashmir throughout the year while fostering exchanges among literature, music and the visual arts.

During his visit, Sinha toured various book stalls, interacted with exhibitors and released several publications in different languages. He also directed the organisers to hold a similar book festival in the Jammu region.

Among those present were Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, National Book Trust Chairman Prof. Milind Sudhakar Marathe, Commissioner Secretary, School Education and Higher Education, Ram Niwas Sharma, National Book Trust Director Yuvraj Malik, Chief Convener of the Chinar Book Festival Dr. Amit Wanchoo, National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language Director Dr. Md. Shams Equbal, along with noted literary personalities, students, book lovers and senior civil and police officers.

'Zero Tolerance.....

national capital, Singh said India has made its stand on terrorism unequivocally clear before the international community. "Zero tolerance against terrorism is not merely a statement for us, but a line of action," he said, adding that India would "strike against terrorism not just at the doorstep but by entering the house." Referring to Operation Sindoor, he said the operation demonstrated the country's resolve and capability to respond decisively to terrorist threats.

The Defence Minister highlighted the remarkable progress made under the government's drive for self-reliance in defence production. He said India is now exporting defence equipment to nearly 100 countries, while annual defence production has reached a record Rs 1.78 lakh crore.

"India is no longer manufacturing defence equipment only for its own requirements. It is emerging as a credible security partner for the world, with its strategic role expanding from the Indian Ocean to the Indo-Pacific," Singh said.

Expressing confidence in the sector's future, he said India is on course to achieve Rs 3 lakh crore in annual defence production by 2029. He stressed that dependence on foreign countries for critical military systems limits strategic autonomy, and reiterated the government's commitment to building a self-reliant defence industrial base.

Singh described Operation Sindoor as a significant demonstration of India's technological capabilities, stating that advanced indigenous systems, including Akashteer, the Akash missile system, and BrahMos, along with other modern military equipment, played an important role during the operation.

He said the operation reflected the armed forces' ability to adapt to evolving warfare and effectively deploy advanced technologies, attributing this transformation to sustained efforts made over the past 12 years.

Highlighting the growth in defence exports, Singh said exports have increased dramatically from Rs 686 crore in 2013-14 to more than Rs 38,000 crore in 2025-26, describing it as evidence of India's rising global credibility in defence manufacturing. The Defence Minister also maintained that promoting indigenous defence production has been one of the government's most significant initiatives towards strengthening national security, saying the current approach reflects confidence in India's technological capabilities and industrial potential.

Heavy Rain.....

and early morning hours.

From July 19 to 23, the weather is expected to remain generally cloudy, accompanied by widespread rain and thundershowers across most parts of the Union Territory. The department has

warned of heavy rainfall, brief but intense showers, and torrential rain in several districts during the period.

The forecast indicates heavy to very heavy rainfall over Jammu, Kathua, Samba, Rajouri, Doda, Ramban, and Kishtwar, while Reasi and Udhampur are likely to experience extremely heavy rainfall, particularly during the late afternoon, evening, and night or early morning hours.

The weather is expected to improve from July 24 to 27, with only isolated spells of rain or thundershowers at a few places.

The MeT Department has cautioned that the upcoming wet spell could trigger flash floods, landslides, mudslides, and shooting stones in vulnerable areas. It has also warned of a significant rise in water levels in rivers and streams, increasing the risk of minor flooding and water-logging in low-lying areas.

Authorities have advised the public to remain vigilant, monitor weather updates, and avoid unnecessary travel to vulnerable locations during periods of intense rainfall.

The advisory also urges farmers to suspend all agricultural operations between July 19 and 23 in view of the adverse weather conditions.

Officials have asked all concerned departments to remain prepared to respond to any weather-related emergencies during the forecast period. (GNS)

Amarnath.....

holy cave shrine, taking the total number of pilgrims to 3,76,779 since the pilgrimage commenced on July 3. However, amid inclement weather alert authorities suspended Amarnath and Mata Vaishno Devi Yatras temporarily as a precautionary measure.

According to official data accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), those who offered prayers on Saturday included 11,785 male pilgrims, 3,527 female pilgrims, 235 children, 103 sadhus, 19 sadhvis, five transgender devotees and 365 security personnel.

3,632 PILGRIMS ARRIVE IN KASHMIR
Meanwhile, the 17th batch of 3,632 pilgrims left the Bhagwati Nagar Yatri Niwas in Jammu early Saturday under multi-layer security arrangements and arrived in Kashmir.

Officials said the Baltal-bound convoy, carrying 1,008 pilgrims, departed at 2:40 a.m., while the Pahalgam-bound convoy, with 2,624 pilgrims, left at 3:12 a.m.

The batch travelled in 148 vehicles, including 82 buses, 17 medium motor vehicles (MMVs), 47 light motor vehicles (LMVs) and two two-wheelers.

The batch comprised 2,650 male pilgrims, 858 female pilgrims, 104 sadhus, 19 sadhvis and one child. With this, the total number of pilgrims who have departed from the Jammu base camp for the ongoing Yatra has reached 1,12,760.

AMARNATH YATRA SUSPENDED TEMPORARILY

Meanwhile, authorities have temporarily suspended the Amarnath Yatra from both the Pahalgam and Baltal routes from Sunday, July 19, following an adverse weather forecast issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

According to an official statement, the decision has been taken as a precautionary measure to ensure the safety and well-being of the pilgrims.

"In view of the forecast of inclement weather over the next few days and considering the safety and well-being of the pilgrims, the Shri Amarnathji Yatra shall remain temporarily suspended from both the Pahalgam and Baltal routes with effect from July 19, 2026," the statement said.

Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg said no onward movement of pilgrims will be allowed from the Baltal and Nunwan/Chandanwari base camps from Sunday.

The administration said the Yatra will resume only after a comprehensive assessment of weather conditions and confirmation that both routes are safe for pilgrims. Fresh updates regarding the resumption of the pilgrimage will be issued in due course.

SHRIMATA VAISHNO DEVI YATRA SUSPENDED

Meanwhile, in view of the inclement weather advisory issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Yatra shall remain temporarily suspended as a precautionary measure to ensure the safety and well-being of pilgrims. The decision has been taken in the interest of public safety following forecasts indicating unfavourable weather conditions in the region. Devotees are advised to cooperate with the authorities and avoid undertaking the pilgrimage until further orders.

Pilgrims are requested to remain updated through official communication channels for the latest information regarding the resumption of the Yatra—(KNO)

India's First.....

rocket, Vikram-1 aims to provide rapid, reliable and on-demand satellite launch services, reflecting India's expanding capabilities in commercial space technology.

Modi said the mission showcases the talent, determination and entrepreneurial spirit of India's youth, adding that recent reforms in the Indian space sector have created new opportunities for innovation, investment and enterprise.

Extending his best wishes to the Skyroot Aerospace team, the Prime Minister said he hoped the mission would "soar high, create history and inspire a generation of innovators."

He also encouraged citizens, particularly young people, to follow the landmark launch and express their support for the mission. (Agencies)

Skyroot's Vikram.....

Speaking to reporters after the launch, the minister said it would not have been possible if India had not opened up the space sector for private players.

"Thanks to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for unlocking India's space sector and allowing private players like Skyroot within the four walls of Sriharikota (from where the launch took place)," Singh said.

Unlike other test flights of orbital-class rockets, Vikram-1 carried actual payloads to space, he said, adding that it carried technology demonstration payloads from Grahaa Space, CosmoServe and DCubed, among others.

Vikram-1 is a seven-storey-tall, multi-stage orbital launch vehicle built with an all-carbon composite structure and powered by in-house developed propulsion systems, including 3D-printed engines and high-thrust solid-fuel rocket boosters.

During its mission "Agaman" on Saturday, Vikram-1 targeted an orbit at an altitude of 450 kilometres with a 60-degree orbital inclination.

The engineering data collected during this test flight will be analysed to validate guidance and navigation systems, and to guide future refinements for commercial satellite missions.

The launch marks Skyroot's second mission following the successful suborbital flight of Vikram-S, the first private rocket to reach space from Indian soil, on November 18, 2022. (Agencies)

DGP reviews....

area domination measures, and coordination among various security agencies.

Nalin Prabhat emphasized the need for maintaining a high level of vigilance, operational readiness, and seamless coordination among all security agencies. He directed officers to remain alert to evolving security challenges and ensure foolproof arrangements for the safety of pilgrims and the general public.

The DGP also interacted with officers and personnel deployed at Shadipora, appreciating their professionalism, commitment, and dedication in maintaining peace, ensuring the secure conduct of the Amarnath Yatra, and carrying forward ongoing anti-terror operations across the Kashmir Valley.

The visit forms part of the Jammu and Kashmir Police's continuous efforts to strengthen the security framework, review field-level preparedness, and ensure effective operational response during the ongoing Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra-2026. (KNC)

Govt Extends.....

of students, teachers and other school staff. The move comes amid unusually high temperatures across the Kashmir Valley over the past several days. The India Meteorological Department has also warned of the possibility of heavy rainfall and localized flash floods in parts of Jammu and Kashmir in the coming days, prompting the administration to exercise caution.

The School Education Department has advised parents, students and school managements to follow official advisories and await further instructions regarding the reopening of educational institutions. It said any additional decisions, if necessitated by changing weather conditions, will be communicated through the competent authority.

Jammu.....

At Ismailpur Kothey in tehsil Bishnah, SDM Jammu South Manu Hansa and SP South Vaibhav Meena supervised demolition of a double-storey structure worth approximately Rs.1.5 crore.

Among those present were Tehsildar Bishnah, SDPO Gandhinagar and the SHOs of Bishnah and Gangyal police stations.

At Nikki Tawi area in tehsil Jammu Khas, another joint team demolished properties belonging to two more drug peddlers.

The team razed to the ground a structure spread over approximately 2.5 kanals and valued at around Rs. 90 lakh.

In a parallel action, the team demolished commercial structures, vacating approximately 5 marlas of land valued at around Rs. 40 lakh.

These two operations removed illegal properties worth around Rs. 1.30 crore, linked to drug trafficking, from the Nikki Tawi area under provisions of the NDPS Act. ACR Jammu Dr Rajesh Kumar and SP South Vaibhav Meena supervised the drive, which was held in the presence of Tehsildar Jammu Paramdeep Singh, SDPO East, SDPO South, SHO Gangyal, SHO Satwari, Naib Tehsildar, besides other officials.

5 yatris.....

Police have taken cognizance of the incident and initiated proceedings to ascertain the circumstances leading to the accident.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha reviewed the situation after a Shri Amarnathji Yatra convoy vehicle met with an accident near Jakhani in Udhampur earlier this morning.

The Lieutenant Governor spoke with Deputy Commissioner Udhampur, Minga Sherpa and medical officials, and directed for best possible medical care for the injured undergoing treatment at GMC Udhampur.

In a post on X, the Lieutenant Governor has said: "Spoke with the Deputy Commissioner of Udhampur and medical officials and inquired about the health condition of Shri Amarnathji Yatra pilgrims injured in the unfortunate road accident near Jakhani, Udhampur earlier this morning. Five pilgrims from Uttar Pradesh and a driver from Ganderbal sustained injuries and

are currently undergoing treatment at GMC Udhampur. Senior officials have been directed to ensure all necessary assistance and the best possible medical care is provided for their swift recovery. I pray to Baba Barfani for the safety, well-being and smooth journey of all devotees."

LG Saxena.....

sale, marketing and use of chemical/synthetic fertilizers for agricultural practices in the Union territory of Ladakh, with immediate effect, with the objective to safeguard organic certification, protect soil and water resources, promote sustainable agricultural practices and to establish Ladakh as a model organic region, thereby, ensuring the long-term sustainability and resilience of its agricultural sector," the order said.

Farmers and agriculture units have been advised to use only on-farm/off-farm organic inputs for agricultural practices in the Union territory of Ladakh.

The decision marks a major milestone in Ladakh's journey towards sustainable agriculture, reinforcing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of promoting natural farming, environmental conservation, improving soil health and climate-resilient agriculture. The Prime Minister, during the recent NITI Aayog Governing Council Meeting in New Delhi, had also urged the states and the UTs to promote organic farming across the country.

Taking a cue from the PM's call, the Ladakh Administration implemented the ban on the use of chemical fertilisers in the region. The move is aimed at safeguarding Ladakh's fragile Himalayan ecosystem, preserving soil and water resources, strengthening organic value chains, and establishing the Union Territory as a model organic region.

"Ladakh has been blessed with a pristine environment, rich biodiversity, unique agro-ecological conditions and traditional farming practices that have remained largely free from excessive chemical intervention. The prohibition on chemical and synthetic fertilisers marks a transformative step towards making Ladakh a fully organic Union Territory. This initiative will protect our fragile Himalayan ecosystem, enhance the value of Ladakh's organic produce, improve farmers' incomes through premium markets and establish Ladakh as a global model of environmentally sustainable high-altitude agriculture," said L-G Saxena.

Notably, Ladakh has been actively promoting organic agriculture in view of its unique agro-ecological conditions and traditional farming practices for ages. In order to develop Ladakh as a certified organic region, organic certification activities have been undertaken, and so far, 207 revenue villages of Ladakh have already been brought under Organic Certification.

The Agriculture Department has been designated as the nodal department for the implementation of the order. The Departments of Horticulture, Cooperatives and Rural Development & Panchayati Raj have been directed to facilitate the transition through awareness programmes, capacity building and improved availability of organic inputs. The enforcement agencies will ensure compliance, and strict penalties will be imposed for violations.

Omar Seeking.....

rather than serve the interests of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Addressing reporters in Srinagar, Sharma asserted that the demand for statehood has always been part of the BJP's political commitment and not an agenda pursued by the National Conference (NC). He alleged that the constitutional changes of August 2019 had curtailed the political privileges enjoyed by the Abdullah family and claimed that the present campaign for statehood is motivated by personal and political interests.

"The BJP never promised statehood to the Abdullah family. Our commitment has always been to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and we will restore statehood at the appropriate time," Sharma said.

The Leader of Opposition accused the National Conference government of attempting to divert public attention from what he described as its failure to fulfil promises made during the 2024 Assembly election campaign. According to Sharma, the government has failed to address public concerns despite being in office, while essential services continue to remain inadequate. He said residents are still grappling with problems relating to electricity, drinking water, road infrastructure, education and healthcare, alleging that the government has failed to deliver on its electoral commitments.

Sharma further alleged that, after failing to meet public expectations, the ruling party had shifted the political narrative towards the issue of statehood to deflect criticism over its performance.

On the security situation, the BJP leader defended the Centre's decision to retain control over law and order in the Union Territory, saying the existing arrangement has contributed significantly to peace and stability.

He claimed there had been no civilian killings in Jammu and Kashmir during the past one-and-a-half to two years and asserted that no local youth had joined terrorist ranks during the same period. While acknowledging that infiltration attempts from across the border continue, Sharma said the local support structure for terrorism has been effectively dismantled.

He maintained that transferring control of the police and security apparatus to the elected government at this stage could adversely affect the security environment.

"Law and order should remain with the Centre until terrorism is completely eradicated and the overall security situation stabilises further," Sharma said.

Reaffirming the BJP's position, Sharma said the party remains committed to restoring statehood to Jammu and Kashmir but reiterated that the decision would be taken at an appropriate time, taking into account national security considerations and the prevailing situation on the ground.

CS assesses.....

potential can only be realised when such information is managed under a common governance framework and shared securely across departments for improving public service delivery.

The Chief Secretary further stressed that the Government's endeavour is to ensure that citizens are not required to submit the same information repeatedly for availing benefits under different schemes.

He reiterated that the objective is to build an integrated digital governance ecosystem where authenticated data, once available with the Government, can be securely utilised by authorized departments for delivery of eligible services, while fully safeguarding privacy, confidentiality and data security, he added.

The Chief Secretary directed all Administrative Departments to extend full cooperation in implementation of the strategy and ensure standardization of departmental datasets in accordance with the prescribed data governance framework.

Atal Dulloo also called for adoption of uniform metadata standards, robust quality assurance mechanisms and secure interoperability protocols to facilitate seamless exchange of information across departments.

During the meeting, a detailed presentation was made by the Planning Department on the five strategic pillars of the proposed Data Management Strategy comprising Data Governance & Standards, Base Registries & Unique Identifiers, Interoperability & Harmonization, Data Security & Privacy and Institutional Capacity & Coordination.

The strategy aims to establish a "Single Source of Truth" by preserving original departmental datasets while enabling secure, API-based exchange of information among authorized users, thereby supporting evidence-based governance, efficient planning and better monitoring of developmental programmes.

The Chief Secretary also reviewed the proposed initiative involving integration of the Civil Registration System (CRS) with J&K Bank for automatic initiation of insurance claims under PMJJBY and PMSBY immediately after issuance of a death certificate. Once operational, the mechanism will enable eligible claim settlements without requiring bereaved families to submit separate applications, thereby reducing procedural delays and ensuring timely financial assistance.

The meeting also discussed integration of the Civil Registration System with the Health, Social Welfare and School Education Departments to enable automatic activation of welfare interventions from birth onwards.

Under this mechanism, registration of every birth would trigger enrolment for nutrition support, immunization and other eligible welfare schemes, while subsequent integration with APAAR ID would facilitate seamless linkage with school admissions, scholarships and other educational entitlements.

The Chief Secretary further reviewed the proposal for creation of an integrated institutional database of schools, hospitals, Anganwadi centres and other public institutions through adoption of common geographical identifiers to facilitate better planning, infrastructure mapping and resource allocation.

The Chief Secretary directed the concerned departments to prepare a time-bound implementation roadmap with clearly defined milestones for phased rollout of the strategy and emphasized strict adherence to data privacy, cyber security and governance standards at every stage.

He expressed confidence that the proposed initiative would mark a significant step towards building a modern, integrated and citizen-centric governance ecosystem in Jammu and Kashmir. He said the initiative would strengthen evidence-based planning, improve inter-departmental coordination and ensure seamless delivery of Government services and welfare benefits by enabling secure and efficient sharing of authenticated data across departments.



Div Com Kashmir reviews preparations for Independence Day Celebrations

Calls for advance Planning and Timely mobilization of resources

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 18: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, on Friday chaired a high-level meeting to review the preparedness of various departments for the forthcoming Independence Day celebrations, emphasizing the need for advance planning, inter-departmental coordination, and timely mobilization of resources to ensure the smooth conduct of the national event.

The meeting was attended by Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir, V.K. Birdi, Deputy Commissioners of all districts, and Heads of Departments (HoDs) of the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Roads & Buildings (R&B), Power Development Department (PDD), Education, Culture, Jal Shakti, Health, Information, Hospitality & Protocol, Traffic Police, Fire & Emergency Services, Door-darshan, SKICC, and other concerned departments.

The Divisional Commissioner conducted a comprehensive review of arrangements relating to security, logistics, protocol, medical and emergency services, venue management, full-dress rehearsal, event execution, and post-event coordination.

To ensure seamless arrangements, Garg directed the Chief Engineer, R&B, to make comprehensive arrangements for tentage, seating, stage and dais, besides installing LED screens at the venue. The Chief Engineer, PDD, was instructed to ensure uninterrupted power supply with adequate generator backup and illumination of important government buildings.

The Chief Engineer, Jal Shakti, was directed to ensure an adequate supply of drinking water and installation of RO units at the venue. The Floriculture Department was tasked with decorating the dais and making floral arrangements at the Balidan Stambh, while the Police Department was instructed to facilitate the showering of flower petals through drones during the celebrations.

The Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation, was directed to ensure proper sanitation, adequate toilet facilities, and effective dewatering arrangements in the event of rainfall.

The Police Department was instructed to put in place fool-proof security arrangements to ensure the peaceful and smooth conduct of the Independence Day function.



The Information Department was directed to install a synchronized public address system in coordination with the R&B Department and Police to ensure uninterrupted proceedings besides installation of hoardings.

The Divisional Commissioner further directed the Departments of Culture, Youth Services & Sports, and the J&K Sports Council to prepare cultural programmes and performances. He also instructed the concerned

departments to organize contingents comprising personnel from the Police, other security agencies, NCC, schools, colleges. In addition, schools, colleges, and the Information Department were asked to organize quiz and singing competitions as part of the celebrations.

The Fire & Emergency Services Department was directed to deploy fire tenders and ensure emergency preparedness, while the Hospitality & Protocol Department was instructed to make appropriate arrangements for refreshments and other protocol-related requirements.

The Deputy Commissioners were directed to make similar comprehensive preparations in their respective districts to ensure that Independence Day is celebrated with patriotic fervour, enthusiasm, and dignity across Kashmir.

Speaking during the meeting, IGP Kashmir V.K. Birdi stressed strict adherence to the prescribed protocol for flag-hoisting ceremonies at all venues. He also called upon officers to deploy nodal officers and sensitize participants and dignitaries about the laid-down protocols to ensure the successful and orderly conduct of the celebrations.

Govt. Degree College Sumbal Organises Grand Drug De-Addiction Awareness Programme Under Nasha Mukti Bharat Abhiyan

HT NEWS NETWORK

SUMBAL, JULY 18: Government Degree College Sumbal today successfully organised a comprehensive Drug De-Addiction Awareness Programme under the Nasha Mukti Bharat Abhiyan, reaffirming its unwavering commitment to creating a drug-free, healthy, and enlightened society. The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, faculty members, distinguished guests, and experts from various departments.



The event commenced with the College Tarana, followed by a warm welcome address by Mr. G. A. Qureshi, Honey Treasurer, Indian Red Cross Society J&K. A special video message from the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir highlighted the urgent need for collective action against drug abuse.

The programme was further enriched by the insightful address of Mr. Murtaza Ahmad Sheikh (JKAS), SDM Sumbal, who urged the youth to become ambassadors of a drug-free society. One of the major highlights of the event was the special address delivered by the Principal of Government Degree College Sumbal, Prof. (Dr.) Shabeena Iqbal Shawl.

Prof. (Dr.) Shabeena Iqbal Shawl, an exceptional academic leader, visionary educationist, and a source of inspiration for students and faculty alike, delivered a powerful and thought-provoking address emphasizing that education is the strongest weapon against the menace of drug addiction. She passionately encouraged students to uphold moral values, discipline, and social responsibility while actively participating in nation-building initiatives. Under her dynamic, compassionate, and farsighted leadership, Government Degree College Sumbal has emerged as a centre of academic excellence, innovation, and community engagement. Her tireless dedication, exemplary commitment to student welfare, and unwavering pursuit of excellence continue to inspire everyone associated with the institution.

The programme also featured the release of the 100 Days of Awareness, Action and Impact under the Nasha Mukti Bharat Abhiyan. Mr. Mohammad Nawaz Khanday, SDPO Sumbal, delivered an informative session on combating drug trafficking, stressing the importance of community participation and strict law enforcement.

A documentary showcasing the remarkable activities undertaken under the Nasha Mukti Bharat Abhiyan by Government Degree College Sumbal was screened, reflecting the institution's sustained efforts in spreading awareness against drug abuse.

An enlightening lecture on drug de-addiction was delivered by Dr. Mohammad Ramzan Bahar, who explained the harmful physical, psychological, and social consequences of substance abuse and motivated students to adopt healthy lifestyles. Mr. Sahil Dar, First Aid Trainer, conducted an informative session on First Aid Awareness and the Red Cross Movement in Jammu & Kashmir, equipping students with essential life-saving skills.

The programme concluded with a formal Vote of Thanks by Dr. Zahid Zaffar, Head, Department of Urdu and Member, NMBA, who expressed sincere gratitude to all the dignitaries, speakers, faculty members, organising committee, and students for making the event a grand success. The proceedings were ably moderated by Mr. Faizan Mushtaq, student of Government Degree College Sumbal.

The event stood as a shining example of Government Degree College Sumbal's steadfast commitment to social responsibility, youth empowerment, and nation-building. Through the visionary guidance and inspirational leadership of Prof. (Dr.) Shabeena Iqbal Shawl, the college continues to set remarkable benchmarks in academic excellence, character building, and public service, making it one of the leading institutions dedicated to shaping responsible, enlightened, and socially conscious citizens.

Zero Tolerance Against Illegal Mining: Dozens of Illegal Ramps Demolished in Pulwama

HT NEWS NETWORK

PULWAMA, JULY 18: Reinforcing the district administration's zero-tolerance policy against illegal mining, a major joint enforcement operation was carried out across several vulnerable locations in Pampore and Kakapora on the directions of the Deputy Commissioner, Pulwama.

The coordinated drive, conducted by the Flood Control Department, Geology & Mining Department, Revenue Department, and Police, was supervised by Executive Engineer Flood Control, Farooq Ahmad. During the operation, dozens of illegally constructed access ramps used for unauthorized extraction of sand and minerals were demolished at Hatiwara, Alochi Bagh, Samboora, and Ukhoo Kakapora.

Officials said the action reflects the district administration's firm resolve to protect rivers, embankments, and public infrastructure from environmental degradation caused by illegal mining. Such unauthorized activities not only damage fragile ecosystems but also pose a serious threat to flood protection structures and public safety. The district administration has reiterated that no individual or group involved in illegal mining will be spared, and strict legal action will continue against violators. The administration also appealed to the public to cooperate with enforcement agencies and report any illegal mining activities.

Newly Posted Information Department Officers Assume Charge at JDI Kashmir

Shabir Ahmad Bhat takes over as Field Publicity Officer; Parvaiz Ahmad Lone assumes charge as Youth Information Officer

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 18: Following the recent reshuffle in the Jammu and Kashmir Information Department, Shabir Ahmad Bhat on Saturday assumed charge as Field Publicity Officer (FPO), Kashmir, while Parvaiz Ahmad Lone took over as Youth Information Officer, Kashmir, at the Joint Directorate of Information (JDI), Kashmir.

The newly posted officers were welcomed by Joint Director Information Kashmir Syed Shahnawaz Bukhari, Deputy Director Information (Headquarters) Kashmir, the Deputy Director Public Relations, the Cultural Officer, Kashmir, and other senior officials of the department.



Soon after assuming office, the officers held introductory meetings with officials of their respective wings and reviewed the functioning of their offices. They also took stock of ongoing activities and public outreach initiatives.

Emphasising a collaborative and result-oriented work culture, the officers urged officials to perform their duties with renewed commitment and a strong sense of responsibility to further strengthen the department's outreach across the Kashmir region.

They assured the staff of their full support and cooperation in the effective discharge of their responsibilities and stressed the need for close coordination to enhance the department's public communication and outreach efforts.

Handwara Police Intensifies Anti-Drug Campaign, Destroys Wild Cannabis in Pharou Area

DR.AB QAYOOM

HANDWARA, JUL 19: In a continued effort to eradicate drug abuse and curb the illegal cultivation of narcotic plants, Handwara Police carried out a wild cannabis (bung) destruction drive in the Pharou area under the Nasha Mukti Jammu Kashmir Abhiyaan. The operation was conducted on the directions of SSP Handwara, Sahil Sarangal (IPS), as part of the district police's sustained campaign against narcotics. A police team from Police Post Chogal undertook the drive across different villages of the Pharou area and destroyed large quantities of wild cannabis plants growing over a considerable stretch of land.

The initiative aims to prevent the misuse of naturally grown cannabis for the production and

trafficking of narcotic substances while reinforcing the district police's commitment to creating a drug-free society. Police officials said such drives are being conducted regularly to identify and eliminate wild cannabis growth in vulnerable areas, thereby reducing the chances of its illegal exploitation. The destruction drive also reflects the broader objectives of the Nasha Mukti Jammu Kashmir Abhiyaan, which focuses on prevention, awareness, enforcement, and community participation in combating the menace of drug abuse.

SSP Handwara, Sahil Sarangal (IPS), reiterated that Handwara Police is committed to taking stringent action against all forms of drug-related activities. He appealed to the public to actively cooperate with law enforce-



ment agencies by reporting illegal cultivation of narcotic plants, drug peddling, or any suspicious activities in their localities. He emphasized that community support is essential to making the anti-drug campaign more effective and ensuring a safer, healthier future for the younger generation.

Handwara Police has been consistently intensifying its anti-narcotics operations through awareness programmes, enforcement drives, and community outreach initiatives, reaffirming its resolve to make the police district free from the menace of drugs. SSP Handwara, Sahil Saran-

gal (IPS), reiterated that Handwara Police is committed to taking stringent action against all forms of drug-related activities. He appealed to the public to actively cooperate with law enforcement agencies by reporting illegal cultivation of narcotic plants, drug peddling, or any suspicious activities in their localities. He emphasized that community support is essential to making the anti-drug campaign more effective and ensuring a safer, healthier future for the younger generation. Handwara Police has been consistently intensifying its anti-narcotics operations through awareness programmes, enforcement drives, and community outreach initiatives, reaffirming its resolve to make the police district free from the menace of drugs.

Sakeena Itoo chairs district level farmers' awareness programme at D K Marg Kulgam

Lays foundation stone for development projects

HT NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM, JULY 18: Minister for Education, Health & Medical Education and Social Welfare, Sakeena Itoo, today presided over a district level farmers' awareness programme organised by the Department of Horticulture, Kulgam, under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture" (CSS-MIDH) at DK Marg in D.H. Pora.

The programme was organised to create awareness among the orchardists and farmers about modern horticultural practices, scientific interventions and various government schemes aimed at enhancing the farmers' productivity and income.

Speaking on the occasion,

the Minister stressed the need to provide farmers with proper technical guidance and continued institutional support to enhance productivity and improve livelihoods.

The Minister also inspected an exhibition comprising stalls established by the Department of Horticulture and various allied departments.

The stalls showcased departmental schemes, technological interventions and services available to the farmers while technical experts provided on-the-spot guidance and addressed field-level queries.

The participants were also briefed about the flagship schemes being implemented by the Department of Horticulture for the bene-



fit of orchardists.

During the technical session, the experts from SKUAST-Kashmir apprised the participants of the University's research and extension initiatives for the farming community. They delivered an informative lecture on integrated insect pest management, emphasising scientific, eco-friendly and sustainable approaches for effective pest control in fruit crops.

The Department of Horticulture displayed a wide range of locally grown and exotic fruits, quality planting material and different fruit varieties, highlighting Kulgam's rich horticultural potential.

An innovative Horticulture Help Desk was also established to provide technical guidance, grievance re-

dressal and information on departmental schemes.

On the occasion, publication, "Building a Greener, Prosperous Kulgam," documenting the achievements made under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) during the last three years was released.

The Minister also listened to various public issues and demands raised by the people and assured them of appropriate redress.

Later, the Minister laid foundation stone for the Horticulture Development Office Complex and an additional classroom at Government Middle School Kounsarbal and Babapora.

During her visit, Sakeena Itoo also inaugurated Rapid Sand Filtration (RSF) Plant at Ahmadabad Trangzadoo.

Speaker visits fire affected families at Pakherpora; asks for immediate relief, damage assessment, rehabilitation measures

HT NEWS NETWORK

BUDGAM, JULY 18: Speaker, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather, today visited Pakherpora in Budgam district to meet the families affected by the unfortunate fire incident that caused extensive damage to the residential houses and property.

Expressing profound grief over the incident, the Speaker interacted with the affected families, enquired about their well-being and assured them of all possible support during this difficult time.

During his visit, the Speaker directed the district administration to undertake an immediate



and comprehensive assessment of the damage to residential houses, household belongings and other property so that the extent of the losses is accurate-

ly determined.

Taking note of the immediate hardships being faced by the affected families, whose houses have been rendered

uninhabitable, the Speaker instructed the administration to make prompt arrangements for temporary accommodation by providing tents and ensuring the supply of free ration and other essential relief material without delay.

The Speaker further emphasized that the damage assessment process should be completed on a priority basis to facilitate the timely disbursement of admissible relief and compensation to the affected families. He directed the concerned officers to ensure that no affected household is deprived of the assistance to which it is entitled.

Reiterating the commitment to the welfare of the affected

families, the Speaker directed the District Administration to extend immediate relief and all possible assistance, besides taking every necessary measure for their rehabilitation and restoring normalcy at the earliest.

SDM Chadoora, Executive Engineer R&B Charar-i-Sharief and BDO Phakerpora accompanied the Speaker during the visit.

The Speaker also visited the family of police personnel who lost his life in an accident at Bailey Bridge Chadoora to express his deepest condolences and sympathy with the bereaved family. He prayed for the strength to the family to bear this irreparable loss.

ADDC Jammu reviews Mission YUVA implementation, DLIC approves 253 cases

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JULY 18: Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Jammu, Sher Singh today chaired a review meeting of Mission YUVA in the district to assess the progress of implementation and discuss strategies for achieving success across all key parameters laid down by the UT Administration.

During the meeting, the ADDC undertook a detailed review of the on-ground implementation of Mission YUVA across the district and directed the officers to intensify their efforts to achieve the prescribed targets within the stipulated timeline. He emphasised effective coordination among departments, proactive field-level outreach and regular monitoring to ensure that maximum eligible youth benefit from the flagship entrepreneurship initiative.

Various strategies were discussed to streamline the implementation process and facilitate seamless access to the scheme for aspiring entrepreneurs.

Discussion was also held on facilitating around 21,000 Lakhpatri Didis of Jammu, through Udyam Jagriti, to avail Mission YUVA benefits to help them expand and scale their enterprises through the scheme's financial and institutional support. The meeting further deliberated on onboarding retail stores across Jammu on the Mission YUVA Seller App to enhance their market access and strengthen digital commerce opportunities.

The meeting was attended by Sub-Divisional Magistrates (SDMs), Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD) Danish Rasool, Block Development Officers (BDOs) and other concerned officers, who held threadbare discussions with the Chair on various aspects of the scheme and shared feedback on its implementation at the grassroots level.

Later, a meeting of the District Level Implementation Committee (DLIC) was also held under the chairmanship of the ADDC, during which 253 new cases under Mission YUVA were approved. The committee examined the proposals in detail before according approval.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Director Employment Sunaina Saini, ACD Danish Rasool Mir, ACP JAMMU, Assistant Director Employment Mukhlis Ali, Assistant Labour Commissioner (ALC) Roopal Jasrotia, Lead District Manager (LDM) Ajay Thappa, besides other members of the committee and concerned officers.

DC Poonch chairs NCORD Committee meeting to review anti-drug measures

HT NEWS NETWORK

POONCH, JULY 18: Deputy Commissioner Poonch Ashok Kumar Sharma today chaired a district-level meeting of the Narco-Coordination (NCORD) Committee to review action taken by various departments for prevention and control of drug abuse and narcotics-related activities.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed action taken by different departments regarding enforcement measures, awareness campaigns, rehabilitation initiatives and inter-departmental coordination to curb drug abuse.

A detailed discussion was held on the status of drug-related activities across all subdivisions. The Deputy Commissioner directed all departments concerned to strengthen monitoring and patrolling in identified hotspot areas and take strict action against those involved in drug-related activities.

The SDMs briefed the Chair on the status of anti-drug initiatives, vulnerable areas and the ongoing drive against cannabis cultivation in their respective jurisdictions.

The police officers and Drugs Inspector informed the meeting about action taken, including registration of cases, issuance of challans and suspension of licences.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the Forest, Police and Revenue Departments to launch a co-ordinated drive for destruction of cannabis cultivation and ensure strict enforcement against those involved in narcotics-related activities.

Speaking on the occasion, Senior Superintendent of Police Shafket Hussain Bhat stressed the need for sustained action against drug trafficking and illegal cultivation of cannabis and called for close coordination among departments to eliminate the drug menace and protect youth from substance abuse.

Among those present were Additional Deputy Commissioner Tahir Mustafa Malik, Chief Medical Officer, Deputy Chief Education Officer, Chief Agriculture Officer, District Social Welfare Officer, Medical Superintendent, Drugs Inspector, ARTO, Tehsildar Haveli, Tehsildar Headquarters, Forest Department officers, college professors and other officers concerned. SDMs Surankote and Mendhar, along with Tehsildars, SDPOs and DySPs, participated through virtual mode.

DLSA Budgam organizes Special Lok Adalat on cases under Negotiable Instruments Act 1881

HT NEWS NETWORK

BUDGAM, JULY 18: In accordance with the Calendar of Activities for the month of July 2026, the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Budgam today organized a Special Lok Adalat for cases arising under the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881.

The Special Lok Adalat was organized under the supervision of O.P. Bhagat, Chairman, District Legal Services Authority (Principal District & Sessions Judge), Budgam, and under the guidance of Tabassum Qadir Parry, Secretary, District Legal Services Authority, Budgam.

To facilitate the effective disposal of cases, five benches were constituted including a Special Bench, each comprising of a Presiding Officer and a Member.

Special Bench which was presided over by the Chairman, DLSA

Budgam and Chief LADC Budgam, Lateef Ahmad Khan, as a member.

Likewise, first bench was presided over by Abdul Bari, Chief Judicial Magistrate, Budgam, with Tasneem Kawoos, Munsiff/JMIC, Budgam, as a member. Second bench was presided over by Shafeeq Ahmad Malik, Sub-Judge, Chadoora, with Syed Raafiq Rashid, Panel Lawyer, TLSC Chadoora, as a member.

Similarly, third bench was presided over by Rabyia Snobar Gulzar, Munsiff/JMIC, Magam, with Hilal Ahmad Malla, Panel Lawyer, TLSC Magam, as a member. Fourth bench was presided over by Aiman Amin, Munsiff/JMIC, Charar-i-Sharief, with Reyaz Ahmad, Panel Lawyer, TLSC Charar-i-Sharief, as a member.

The Special Lok Adalat took up for settlement a wide range of matters relating to the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881, including cheque bounce cases, bank recovery mat-

ters and pre-litigation disputes as well. Through the process of amicable conciliation and settlement, the Lok Adalat provided litigants with an expeditious, cost-effective, and mutually acceptable mechanism for resolving their disputes.

A total of 235 cases were placed before the four benches, out of which 29 cases were amicably settled. An amount of 6839250 was awarded towards settlement, compensation, and recovery during the proceedings.

DLSA, Budgam, reiterated its commitment to promote alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and ensuring easy, affordable, and timely access to justice. The successful conduct of the Special Lok Adalat reflects the continued efforts of the District Legal Services Authority Budgam in reducing litigation, fostering amicable settlements, and strengthening public confidence in the justice delivery system.

JKEDI BARAMULLA HOLDS ORIENTATION PROGRAMME FOR SELECTION OF MDP CANDIDATES UNDER RAMP SCHEME

HT NEWS NETWORK

BARAMULLA, JULY 18: As part of its continued efforts to ensure the selection of suitable candidates for the Management Development Programme (MDP) under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) Scheme, the Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI), District Office Baramulla, today organized an orientation programme in collaboration with the Department of Industries & Commerce and the Labour Department.

The programme aimed to sensitize prospective participants

about the objectives of the MDP and highlight the importance of skill enhancement and capacity building in promoting sustainable growth of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

Speaking on the occasion, Labour Officer Baramulla, Javed Ahmad Shah, and President, Industrial Estate Baramulla, Haji Mohammad Ashraf Khan, underscored the significance of continuous skill development in improving the competitiveness, productivity, and long-term sustainability of the MSME sector. District President, Industrial Association Baramulla, Mohd Imran, along with Functional



Managers from the Department of Industries & Commerce and other officials, emphasized that

capacity-building initiatives under the RAMP Scheme are instrumental in empowering

entrepreneurs, fostering innovation, and creating a resilient MSME ecosystem.

The speakers encouraged aspiring entrepreneurs and MSME representatives to actively participate in such programmes to enhance their managerial and entrepreneurial capabilities.

All dignitaries present assured their full cooperation and support in ensuring that the benefits of the programme reach deserving entrepreneurs, enabling them to upgrade their skills, improve business performance, and contribute to the economic development of the district.

DIPR's Cultural Unit Kashmir organises Day-Long Cultural Show at Yusmarg

Spreads awareness against Drug Abuse

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BUDGAM, JULY 16: The Cultural Unit Kashmir of the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) today organised a day-long cultural programme at the scenic tourist destination of Yusmarg, captivating visitors with vibrant performances while spreading awareness about the growing menace of drug abuse.

The event showcased the rich cultural heritage of Jammu and Kashmir through a variety of traditional and contemporary performances. The major attractions included the traditional Bhaand Pather, Bacha Naghma, folk music presentations, and a thought-provoking skit based on the Nasha Mukht Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan (NMJKA), highlighting the adverse consequences of substance abuse and the importance of collective efforts in building a drug-free society.

A large number of visitors, including tourists from different parts of the country, gathered at the venue and thoroughly enjoyed the performances. The programme served as a unique blend of entertainment, cultural preservation and social awareness.

The event was also attended by officers and officials of the Joint



Directorate of Information Kashmir.

Speaking on the occasion, the officers highlighted the importance of organising cultural programmes at tourist destinations to promote tourism, preserve Kashmir's rich cultural heritage

and create awareness about important social issues, particularly drug abuse among youth.

Tourists and visitors appreciated the initiative of DIPR, stating that such programmes not only provide quality entertainment but also introduce audiences to



the rich folk theatre, music and cultural traditions of Kashmir. They noted that the performances effectively conveyed important social messages, encouraged civic responsibility and promoted awareness about contemporary challenges facing society.

The audience lauded the Department for organising cultural outreach programmes at tourist destinations, describing them as an effective medium for fostering cultural understanding, social awareness and meaningful public engagement.

Food Safety Department intensifies market surveillance in Shopian

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN, JULY 18: The Food Safety Department Shopian today conducted a comprehensive inspection drive in the main market, Shopian to ensure the availability of safe and quality food products for consumers.

During the inspection, the enforcement team lifted two food samples for detailed laboratory analysis to ascertain their quality and conformity with the prescribed standards under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

As part of the drive, the team also carried out an extensive awareness programme among Food Business Operators (FBOs), emphasizing the importance of maintaining high standards of hygiene and sanitation in food establishments. The operators were sensitized about safe food handling practices, cleanliness of food preparation and storage areas, use of wholesome raw materials and adherence to personal hygiene by food handlers.

The Food Safety Department advised all FBOs to strictly comply with the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and urged them to adopt best hygiene practices to safeguard public health and ensure the supply of safe and wholesome food to consumers.

The department reiterated that such inspection and awareness drives will continue across the district to strengthen food safety standards and promote responsible food business practices.

Illegal Mining Crackdown Intensifies in Kupwara; DMO Recovers Rs.64,977 During District-Wide Inspection Drive

■ DR. AB QAYOOM

KUPWARA, JULY 18: In a sustained effort to curb illegal mining and unauthorized transportation of minor minerals, the Geology and Mining Department, Kupwara, has intensified its enforcement drive across the district. As part of the campaign, the District Mineral Officer (DMO), accompanied by field officials, conducted an extensive inspection tour on July 16, covering Bohipora, Khumreyal (Lolab), Thayan, Kalarooch and Machil. During the inspection at Bohipora, officials intercepted two tippers transporting minor minerals without valid e-challans. The vehicles were penalized on the spot through the Point of Sale (POS) system, resulting in the recovery of Rs.39,078 as compounding charges, royalty and other applicable dues. At Izgund in Khumreyal, the inspection team seized a tractor allegedly involved in illegal mining activities. A formal seizure memo was issued, and further legal action has been initiated under the relevant provisions of the mining laws.

The enforcement drive continued at Sarkuli in Kalarooch, where another tipper carrying minor minerals without a valid e-challan was intercepted. The department imposed a penalty of Rs.19,539 along with



other applicable charges. Later in the evening, at around 8:30 PM, the Geology and Mining Department, in coordination with the Jammu and Kashmir Police, carried out a joint checking operation at Bridge Kawari in Handwara. During the operation, two sand-laden tippers were found transporting material using underweight e-challans. Officials recovered Rs.6,360 towards royalty and other applicable charges. In total, the department recovered Rs.64,977 during the day-long enforcement drive.

The recovered amount has been deposited into DMO Account No. 0141, officials confirmed. The District Mineral Officer reiterated the department's commitment to protecting natural resources and ensuring strict compliance with mining regulations.

Officials warned that illegal extraction and unauthorized transportation of minor minerals would not be tolerated and that surprise inspections and enforcement drives would continue across vulnerable areas of Kupwara district.

Bilal Ahmad Bhat Elected PSA President, Mohammad Syed Wani General Secretary Private Schools

■ FAROOQ RATHER

SRINAGAR, JULY 18: The Private Schools' Association (PSA), Jammu and Kashmir, on Saturday successfully concluded its Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2026 and State-level elections, recording an impressive 92 per cent voter turnout in what was described as one of the largest democratic exercises in the history of the Association.

Held under the theme "Democratic Leadership for Quality Education," the elections marked the culmination of a nearly two-month-long democratic process involving zonal, district and central-level polls. The event witnessed participation from school heads, educationists, administrators, civil society representatives and delegates from across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Election Commission declared Bilal Ahmad Bhat elected

as the new State President and Mohammad Syed Wani as the General Secretary of the Association. The newly elected office-bearers were administered the oath of office by the Chief Guest, Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shah, JKAS, Secretary to Government, Information Technology Department.

Congratulating the newly elected leadership, Dr. Shah said educational excellence requires visionary leadership, transparency, accountability and collective responsibility. He urged the new team to embrace innovation, digital transformation and ethical governance to strengthen educational institutions across Jammu and Kashmir.

The elections were conducted under the supervision of Chief Election Commissioner Advocate Ghulam Hassan Rather, who said the 92 per cent polling reflected the confidence of member schools

in the Association's transparent and constitutional electoral process. He appreciated the cooperation of voters, candidates, election officials and the media in ensuring peaceful and fair elections.

Addressing the gathering, PSA Chief Patron Dr. G.N. Var termed the successful completion of the elections a historic democratic milestone. He congratulated the newly elected leadership and expressed confidence that they would work for the welfare of private schools while promoting quality, child-centric education. He urged all stakeholders to respect the democratic mandate, remain united and resolve differences through dialogue.

Among the prominent speakers, Dr. Shafi Ayub, Editor of Tarjeehat and academician at Jawaharlal Nehru University, praised Dr. G.N. Var's lifelong contribution to education, describing him as a vision-

ary who has inspired thousands of students across Jammu and Kashmir to pursue quality education and national-level careers.

Renowned educationist and Chairman DPS Srinagar Vijay Dhar stressed the need to make teacher training the highest educational priority in Jammu and Kashmir. He called for greater emphasis on primary teacher training, B.Ed. programmes and inclusive education to improve learning outcomes.

Former Joint Director School Education Mehboob Hussain described the election as one of the most transparent democratic exercises he had witnessed and urged the new leadership to uphold integrity while ensuring that education empowers children with knowledge, confidence and life skills.

Showkat Chowdhary, Chairman of the Education Committee, CCIK, said the PSA has emerged as one of Jammu and Kashmir's largest

member-based school organisations and credited Dr. G.N. Var for building a strong and credible institution through years of dedicated service.

Khurshid Bismil, Chairman PSA Pir Panjal and Chenab Valley Division, described teaching as a mission to rebuild society and called upon private schools to focus on character-building alongside academic excellence.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Election Liaison Officer B.A. Shah, who appreciated the contributions of the Election Commission, district and zonal office-bearers, member schools, media fraternity and volunteers in making the Annual General Meeting and State-level elections a grand success. The event ended with a renewed commitment to strengthening the private education sector and promoting quality education across Jammu and Kashmir.

Padma Shri Balwant Thakur Felicitated by IIM Jammu for Pioneering Innovations in Arts Education

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JULY 18: Renowned theatre director and cultural visionary Padma Shri Balwant Thakur was felicitated by the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Jammu in recognition of his pioneering innovations in performing and visual arts education. The honour was conferred by Prof. B. S. Sahay, Director, IIM Jammu, during the valedictory ceremony of the institute's Mega Performing Arts Festival held at the packed Mandapam Auditorium.

Addressing the gathering, Prof. B. S. Sahay lauded Balwant Thakur's exceptional contribution over the past three years in conceptualising and implementing a unique, management-oriented arts curriculum for IIM students. He highlighted that Thakur has successfully redefined the role of arts in management education by introducing innovative pedagogical practices that seamlessly integrate performing and visual arts with leadership and personality development.

Prof. Sahay observed that the specially designed arts interventions have empowered students with enhanced self-confidence, effective communication skills, compelling storytelling abilities, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, emotional intelligence, and stage presence. The remarkable transformation



achieved through this initiative was evident in the students' performances during the festival, which displayed extraordinary confidence, originality, and expressive excellence.

Speaking on the occasion, Padma Shri Balwant Thakur shared his vision behind designing an entirely new framework for arts education tailored specifically for management students. He explained that instead of following conventional approaches centred on the history, evolution, and theoretical schools of performing and visual arts, he developed an application-oriented curriculum aligned with the aspirations and professional requirements of future managers and leaders.

"The objective was never to produce performers or artists," Thakur said. "The aim was to harness the transformative power of the arts to nurture confident, creative, emotionally intelligent, and socially aware individuals who can lead with empathy and communicate with conviction."

He further elaborated that every component of the programme was carefully designed to strengthen students' performance not only on stage but also in boardrooms, workplaces, public forums, and everyday life. Through theatre-based exercises, storytelling, voice and body language training, improvisation, collaborative creativity, and visual arts practices, students were encouraged to explore their hidden potential and develop essential life and leadership skills.

Highlighting the visual arts component, Thakur said students were introduced to the concept of Visual Thinking, an innovative approach aimed at sharpening observation, enhancing aesthetic sensitivity, encouraging creative problem-solving, and cultivating the ability to interpret and communicate complex ideas through visual expression. This unique intervention helped students develop a refined sense of aesthetics while strengthening their analytical and design-thinking capabilities.

The Mega Performing Arts Festival served as a vibrant showcase of the remarkable outcomes of this pioneering initiative, with students presenting a series of performances that reflected not only artistic excellence but also confidence, discipline, teamwork, innovation, and emotional depth.

Public Notice

This is for the information of the general public that my name and my father's name have been wrongly mentioned in my service records as Aarif Muzaffar S/o Syed Muzaffar.

I wish to correct the same to Aarif Muzaffar S/o Syed Muzaffar instead of Aarif Muzaffar S/o Syed Muzaffar.

If anybody has any objection regarding this correction, he/she may file the same within ten (10) days from the date of publication of this notice in the office of the Town Planning Organization, Kashmir, TPO Habitat Centre, National Highway, Bemina, Srinagar. Thereafter, no objection shall be entertained.

Aarif Muzaffar, S/o: Syed Muzaffar
R/o: Satboni, Lalbazar, Srinagar
P/A: Madda Bagh, Nowshera, Srinagar

Beyond Concrete and Steel: Building a Safer Lifeline for Kashmir

There are roads that connect places, and there are roads that sustain lives. National Highway-44 belongs to the latter. For Jammu and Kashmir, it is far more than a transport corridor. It is the Valley's lifeline—carrying food, fuel, medicines, agricultural produce, tourists, pilgrims and countless hopes every single day. When this highway remains open, life moves forward. When it closes, the entire region feels the impact.

The inauguration of the 810-metre Ramsoo viaduct and the 3.5-kilometre AT-03 tunnel is, therefore, much more than the completion of two engineering projects. It marks another decisive step towards making Jammu and Kashmir's most critical road safer, more reliable and better prepared to withstand the challenges of its rugged Himalayan terrain.

For decades, the Ramban-Banihal stretch has tested the patience of travellers and the resilience of the region. Landslides, shooting stones, flash floods and sinking road surfaces have repeatedly turned a routine journey into an uncertain one. Trucks carrying essential commodities have remained stranded for hours, sometimes even days, affecting supplies, businesses and livelihoods. Every road closure has come at a heavy economic and social cost.

The newly commissioned viaduct and tunnel aim to change that reality. By bypassing one of the most vulnerable sections of the highway, these projects significantly reduce the risk posed by unstable mountain slopes while improving travel time and road safety. More importantly, they strengthen the reliability of the only all-weather road link connecting the Kashmir Valley with the rest of the country.

Such projects are not merely feats of construction—they are triumphs of engineering. Building tunnels and elevated structures through the young and fragile Himalayan ranges is among the most complex infrastructure challenges anywhere in the world. Every stage of construction demands advanced technology, meticulous planning and unwavering commitment to safety. The successful completion of these structures reflects the growing capability to execute world-class infrastructure even in the most difficult geographical conditions.

It is true that the projects took longer than originally planned. Public infrastructure must always be delivered as efficiently as possible, and delays inevitably invite criticism. However, construction in the Himalayas rarely follows fixed timelines. Unpredictable geological conditions, extreme weather and the need to ensure structural safety often require careful adjustments. While timely execution should remain the goal, the long-term benefits of durable and resilient infrastructure far outweigh the cost of additional time.

The timing of the inauguration is particularly significant, coming just before the annual Shri Amarnath Yatra. Thousands of pilgrims travelling on this route will benefit from safer and smoother journeys. Yet the true value of these projects extends far beyond the pilgrimage season. They will serve farmers transporting fresh produce, traders moving goods, students travelling for education, patients seeking specialised healthcare and families making everyday journeys throughout the year.

Reliable connectivity is the foundation of economic progress. Better roads reduce transportation costs, improve supply chains, strengthen agriculture and horticulture, encourage tourism, attract investment and expand access to education and healthcare. In a region where geography has often limited opportunities, dependable infrastructure becomes a catalyst for growth and development.

Equally important is the larger message these projects convey. Infrastructure development today is no longer about simply laying roads; it is about building resilient networks that can withstand natural disasters and ensure uninterrupted connectivity. Every tunnel, bridge and viaduct completed on National Highway-44 brings Jammu and Kashmir closer to the long-awaited goal of safe, dependable, year-round road access.

While these achievements deserve appreciation, they should also reinforce the need to accelerate work on the remaining vulnerable stretches of the highway. Sustained investment, regular maintenance and modern engineering solutions will be essential to ensure that weather-related disruptions become increasingly rare. Ultimately, the success of infrastructure is measured not by the length of a tunnel or the height of a bridge, but by the confidence it inspires among the people who depend on it. A safer highway means fewer accidents, uninterrupted supplies, stronger economic activity and greater peace of mind for millions.

The Ramsoo viaduct and the AT-03 tunnel are more than engineering landmarks. They represent a promise—that geography need not dictate destiny. They remind us that with vision, perseverance and sustained investment, even the most formidable natural barriers can be overcome. Every kilometre made safer on National Highway-44 is an investment in the prosperity, security and future of Jammu and Kashmir.

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When Journalism Turns into Trolling: Reclaiming the Fourth Pillar of Democracy



■ AUBAID AHMAD AKHOON

"Freedom of the press is not merely the freedom to publish; it is the responsibility to inform, educate, question and inspire society with truth."

In any democratic setup, criticism is vital for governance, accountability as well as transparency. Recently, in the name of criticism, especially with the advent of digital media, rising TV ratings and social media's propagation of 'virals', a thin line between criticism is getting blurred and is becoming more of a tool to troll, outrage and polarize society.

Criticism is always healthy when it highlights the flaws, policies, mistakes and loopholes, while constructive criticism is when along with the flaws and mistakes, suggestions and remedies are also provided. Trolling is more of deriding, ridiculing, defaming and sensationalizing without any valid reasons. It is high time that we should stand up to this new form of censorship and save our democratic values, public discourse and sanity.

This trolling wave has engulfed our social media sites and some of our TV channels also, where instead of having informed and intelligent discussions on matters of fact which affect millions of people, we are witnessing the most sensationalized ad-hoc debates where even the basic decorum of discussion is lacking. The most ridiculous thing about this whole scenario is that people are associating this trolling with freedom of speech. It is not freedom of speech, which is being exercised here, but rather license. License to outrage, license to hate, license to abuse, license to deride, license to defame and license to mislead.

Freedom of Speech was never meant to be used as a tool for spreading poison, lies, hatred and malice. The credibility of our public discourse is at stake here when even the most basic facts are being questioned. Journalism's main motto should not be to become just another political weapon by sensationalizing the situations when the very basics of democracy require it to question the very system, institutions and machinery.

A great Nigerian Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka rightly said, "The greatest threat to freedom is the absence of criticism". However, absence of appropriate criticism, criticism without credibility is also dangerous, which actually is propaganda in disguise. Praise without credibility is public relations, while criticism without credibil-



ity is propaganda.

This difference between praise and criticism has been discussed in the realms of poetry and literature too. Tanqeed in the Urdu literature is not always censure. It actually means to criticize, discuss, appreciate, evaluate and review a subject matter with an unbiased and unprejudiced outlook. However, Tanqeed does not support suppression. It tries to uplift and improve things by providing a healthy constructive critique. This way Tanqeed is different from criticism or censure. A good Tanqeed evaluates both the positives and negatives so that the readers can also form an opinion about the subject matter themselves. The whole concept of Tanqeed is similar to the role of journalism today, where a journalist should not become a booster or a basher but an honest intermediary who deals in facts, opinions, thoughts, analysis and everything else that constitutes public discourse.

A great Urdu scholar Altaf Hussain Hali's Tanqeed on Urdu ghazal (a poetic genre) is an eye opener. At the time when almost everyone was criticizing Urdu ghazal and dismissing it as obsolete, Altaf Hussain Hali did not resort to outright dismissal. He appreciated the efforts of the ghazal writers while also discussing their weaknesses in his book 'Muqaddama-e-Sher-o-Shairi'. He actually laid down the foundation for reforming the Urdu ghazal which eventually bore fruits in later years. Today, Altaf Hussain Hali is respected by one and all for his honest and unbiased Tanqeed.

Another great Urdu critic Prof. Ale Ahmad Suroor also believed that criticism is among the most solemn duties of a writer. He further said that a

critic should aim at building standards, not lowering them when discussing any subject. Similarly, we believe that a critic (or a journalist) should aim at becoming a truth seeker and a democratizer of human thought, and not resort to sensationalism and mudslinging when discussing the very serious matters which require a level head to analyze and present facts in an honest manner.

Today in this competitive world of media, the biggest threat to healthy criticism is social media's promotion of outrageous content as it helps the channel or the page to go viral. Similarly, in order to get TRPs, TV channels air more of sensational debates where two sides of a single coin fight each other. In such scenarios, trolling has become more of a virtue and sensationalism has become the new facts.

Actually, the whole debate around the credibility of the facts is the most important aspect because when the public discourse starts becoming more of opinion-based, the facts themselves become questionable. In such a scenario, the democratic setup will only suffer because ultimately it is the common man who is the most affected by all this chaos, confusion, polarization and mistrust.

This is one of the biggest challenges journalism is facing today in the 21st century.

To be continued.....

The author is an educator, columnist, motivational speaker, and Associate Editor of Education Quill. He also offers modern home security solutions, including VDP and CCTV systems across Kashmir. Email: akhoun.aubaid@gmail.com

ONLINE SHOPPING TRENDS



■ SURINDERPAL SINGH

The way people shop nowadays has changed dramatically over the last two decades. Visiting markets, comparing products in different stores and interacting with shopkeepers are no longer the only ways to buy goods. Today, millions of people purchase everything from groceries and clothing to electronics and medicines with just a few taps on their smartphones. Online shopping has become one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy, transforming consumer behaviour and reshaping traditional retail.

The popularity of online shopping is driven by convenience. Consumers can browse thousands of products at any time of the day without leaving their homes. Home delivery, secure digital payments, easy returns, customer reviews and frequent discounts make online shopping highly attractive. Artificial intelligence and recommendation algorithms further personalize shopping experiences by suggesting products based on previous searches and purchases. During the COVID-19 pandemic, online shopping became an essential service rather than a luxury, accelerating its acceptance across all age groups.

However, an important question arises: Is online shopping the future of normal shopping? The answer is likely

yes—but not completely. Physical stores continue to offer experiences that online platforms cannot fully replace. Customers often want to touch fabrics, inspect product quality, try on clothes, test electronic devices, or seek personal advice before making expensive purchases. Markets also provide social interaction and immediate ownership of products without waiting for delivery. The future is therefore expected to be a hybrid model where online and offline shopping coexist, each serving different consumer needs.

Another significant concern is whether online shopping leads to extra or unnecessary shopping. Research in consumer psychology suggests that it often does. Digital platforms are carefully designed to encourage spending. Flash sales, limited-time offers, countdown timers, personalized recommendations, cashback rewards, free shipping thresholds and one-click purchasing reduce the time available for thoughtful decision-making. Consumers may buy products not because they need them but because they fear missing a bargain.

The psychology behind online shopping is powerful. Every successful purchase provides a small sense of excitement and satisfaction, driven partly by the brain's reward system. Over time, some individuals begin shopping to relieve stress, boredom, loneliness, or anxiety rather than to meet genuine needs. This emotional shopping can gradually become a habit, leading to overspending, financial strain and regret after the excitement fades.

Social media has further intensified this trend. Influencers, targeted advertisements and viral product promotions create a constant desire for the latest

fashion, gadgets, beauty products and lifestyle accessories. Young consumers are especially vulnerable because they spend considerable time on digital platforms where advertisements are blended with entertainment. As a result, distinguishing between genuine needs and manufactured desires becomes increasingly difficult.

Online shopping also affects the economy and society in different ways. It creates employment in technology, logistics, digital marketing and delivery services while providing small businesses with access to national and international customers. At the same time, traditional local shops may struggle to compete with large e-commerce companies that benefit from massive inventories and aggressive pricing. If small neighbourhood businesses decline, communities may lose important sources of employment and social interaction.

Environmental impacts deserve equal attention. Although online shopping can reduce individual travel to markets, it also increases packaging waste, cardboard consumption, plastic materials and transportation emissions from frequent deliveries. Fast fashion purchased online often encourages short-term consumption, resulting in greater textile waste and environmental pollution.

Consumers can enjoy the benefits of online shopping while avoiding its pitfalls by developing healthy purchasing habits. Preparing a shopping list, comparing prices, reading authentic reviews, waiting before making expensive purchases, setting monthly spending limits, and asking whether a product is truly necessary can prevent impulsive buying. Financial literacy and digital

awareness should become essential life skills, particularly for young people growing up in an increasingly digital marketplace.

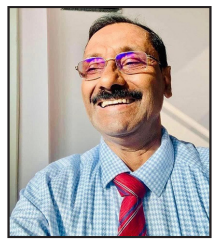
Governments and e-commerce companies also share responsibility. Strong consumer protection laws, transparent pricing, secure payment systems, protection of personal data, honest advertising and easy dispute resolution can build trust while reducing unethical marketing practices. Educational institutions should also teach responsible digital consumption as part of modern financial education.

Online shopping is undoubtedly shaping the future of retail. It offers unmatched convenience, wider choices and significant economic opportunities. Yet convenience should never replace thoughtful decision-making. The greatest challenge is not the technology itself but how consumers use it. When guided by genuine needs and informed choices, online shopping becomes a valuable tool. When driven by impulsive desires and persuasive marketing, it can easily become a source of unnecessary spending and financial stress.

The future of shopping will belong neither entirely to online platforms nor exclusively to traditional markets. Instead, it will belong to informed consumers who combine the convenience of technology with the wisdom of responsible purchasing. Ultimately, the smartest shopper is not the one who buys the most but the one who buys what truly adds value to life.

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An Ideal Teacher's Ideals: Indian and Western Educational Ideology



■ **DR. RATAN BHATTACHARJEE**

When I was delivering my lecture as an Indian teacher in Fairleigh Dickinson University on Tagore's ideal as a teacher, the question came to my mind that the idea of the ideal teacher has always been inseparable from the idea of civilization itself, for every society, whether ancient or modern, has entrusted its teachers with the responsibility of shaping the minds and morals of the next generation. A comparative study of Indian and Western educational philosophies reveal that although their emphases differ, their deeper aspirations converge on the holistic development of the learner, the cultivation of moral character, and the nurturing of intellectual curiosity, and this convergence becomes especially meaningful when we consider the evolving role of the teacher in a world that is increasingly interconnected yet culturally diverse, where the ideals of the teacher must be broad enough to embrace global perspectives while remaining rooted in the ethical foundations of their own tradition.

The Indian concept of the ideal teacher is deeply embedded in the ancient vision of the guru, a figure who embodies not only knowledge but also wisdom, compassion, and spiritual insight, and this vision is reflected in the Gurukula system where the relationship between guru and shishya was not transactional but transformative, based on trust, devotion, and the shared pursuit of truth, and the guru was expected to be a living example of the values they taught, a guide who illuminated the path of self-realization, and this emphasis on inner transformation remains central to Indian educational thought even today, as seen in the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, and Mahatma Gandhi, each of whom envisioned education as a means of awakening the latent divinity within the learner. Vivekananda insisted that education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man, a view that places the teacher in the role of a facilitator who helps the student discover their own

potential rather than imposing knowledge from outside, and Tagore, with his poetic humanism, believed that the teacher must nurture the child's sense of wonder, creativity, and harmony with nature, while Gandhi emphasized character formation, self-discipline, and the dignity of labor, arguing that the teacher must be a moral exemplar whose life itself becomes a lesson in truth and non-violence, and these ideals collectively shape the Indian vision of the teacher as a guide who integrates intellectual, ethical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of learning.

In contrast, Western educational philosophy, while equally committed to the development of the learner, places greater emphasis on rational inquiry, critical thinking, and civic participation, drawing from the intellectual traditions of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and later thinkers such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Dewey, and Paulo Freire, and the Western teacher is often envisioned as a facilitator of dialogue, a promoter of democratic values, and a cultivator of independent thought, and this emphasis on rationality and autonomy reflects the broader Western intellectual tradition that values empirical reasoning, scientific inquiry, and the questioning of established norms, and the Socratic method, for instance, positions the teacher not as an authority who dispenses knowledge but as a partner in dialogue who challenges the student to think critically, question assumptions, and arrive at their own conclusions.

Rousseau's vision of natural education, Locke's emphasis on experience, Dewey's advocacy of learning by doing, and Freire's insistence on education as a practice of freedom all contribute to a Western ideal of the teacher as someone who empowers learners to become active participants in society, capable of shaping democratic institutions and contributing to social progress, and this emphasis on civic responsibility and intellectual autonomy complements the Indian focus on moral and spiritual development, creating a rich field for comparative reflection. When we bring these two traditions into dialogue, we find that the ideal teacher in the modern world must embody a synthesis of these complementary ideals, integrating the Indian emphasis on inner growth with the Western emphasis on critical inquiry, and such a teacher must be both a moral guide and an intellectual catalyst, someone who nurtures the student's

character while also stimulating their curiosity, creativity, and capacity for independent thought, and this synthesis becomes especially important in an era marked by rapid technological change, cultural pluralism, and global interdependence, where the teacher must prepare students not only for professional success but also for responsible citizenship and ethical living.

The modern teacher, therefore, must cultivate a broad range of qualities, including empathy, patience, intellectual rigor, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to inspire, and they must be lifelong learners themselves, constantly updating their knowledge and adapting their methods to meet the evolving needs of students, and this adaptability is essential because education today is no longer confined to the classroom but extends into digital spaces, community interactions, and global networks, and the teacher must guide students in navigating these complex environments with discernment and integrity. The Indian tradition offers valuable insights into the ethical and spiritual dimensions of teaching, reminding us that education is not merely the transmission of information but the cultivation of wisdom, compassion, and self-knowledge, and the guru's role as a mentor who shapes the student's character remains relevant even in contemporary settings, where students often struggle with stress, identity crises, and moral dilemmas, and the teacher's ability to provide emotional support, ethical guidance, and a sense of purpose becomes crucial, and this aligns with the modern emphasis on social-emotional learning, which recognizes that students learn best when they feel safe, valued, and understood.

At the same time, Western educational thought contributes essential perspectives on critical thinking, scientific reasoning, and democratic engagement, and the teacher must encourage students to question, analyze, and evaluate information rather than accepting it passively, especially in an age of misinformation and digital overload, and this requires the teacher to cultivate intellectual independence, media literacy, and a spirit of inquiry, qualities that are central to the Western tradition of liberal education, and the teacher must also foster collaborative learning, open dialogue, and respect for diverse viewpoints, preparing students to participate constructively in pluralistic societies. The synthesis of Indian and Western

ideals thus enriches the teacher's role, enabling them to guide students toward both self-realization and social responsibility, and this dual focus is essential because education must address not only the individual's inner development but also their relationship with the world, and the ideal teacher must help students cultivate both personal integrity and a sense of global citizenship, and this requires a pedagogy that integrates ethical reflection, experiential learning, interdisciplinary exploration, and community engagement, and such a pedagogy draws from the strengths of both traditions, combining the Indian emphasis on values and self-discipline with the Western emphasis on inquiry and participation.

In this context, the teacher becomes not merely an instructor but a bridge between cultures, traditions, and ways of knowing, and their role extends beyond the classroom into the broader social and moral fabric of the community, and they must model the virtues they seek to instill, demonstrating humility, curiosity, resilience, and compassion in their interactions with students, colleagues, and society, and this modeling is crucial because students learn as much from the teacher's character as from their words, and the teacher's authenticity, integrity, and commitment to truth become powerful influences on the student's development. The ideal teacher must also recognize the uniqueness of each learner, honoring their individuality, strengths, challenges, and aspirations, and this recognition aligns with both the Indian belief in the divine potential within each person and the Western emphasis on learner-centered education, and the teacher must create an environment where students feel empowered to explore their interests, express their ideas, and pursue their goals, and this requires flexibility, creativity, and a deep understanding of human psychology, and the teacher must balance structure with freedom, guidance with autonomy, and discipline with empathy, creating a learning experience that is both rigorous and nurturing.

In the contemporary world, where education is increasingly shaped by technology, globalization, and shifting social values, the teacher's role becomes even more complex and demanding, and they must navigate the challenges of digital learning, multicultural classrooms, and rapidly changing knowledge systems, and they must help students develop not

only academic skills but also digital literacy, ethical judgment, emotional intelligence, and global awareness, and this multifaceted role requires a holistic approach that draws from the wisdom of both Indian and Western traditions, integrating spiritual insight with scientific reasoning, moral guidance with critical inquiry, and personal growth with social engagement.

Ultimately, the ideal teacher is one who inspires transformation, both within the individual and within society, and they must cultivate in their students a love of learning, a commitment to truth, a sense of compassion, and the courage to act with integrity, and these qualities are essential for building a just, peaceful, and enlightened world, and the teacher's influence extends far beyond the classroom, shaping the values, aspirations, and actions of future generations, and this profound responsibility underscores the need for teachers to embody the highest ideals of their profession, drawing from the rich heritage of Indian and Western educational philosophies to create a vision of teaching that is both timeless and relevant.

In this sense, the ideal teacher becomes a living synthesis of traditions, a guide who helps students navigate the complexities of modern life while remaining anchored in universal values, and their work becomes a form of service, a contribution to the collective well-being of humanity, and the ideals they embody—wisdom, compassion, integrity, curiosity, and courage—become the foundation upon which the future is built, and as we reflect on the evolving role of the teacher, we recognize that their greatest power lies not in the information they impart but in the inspiration they ignite, the character they shape, and the vision they awaken in the hearts of their students, and this vision, rooted in the shared aspirations of Indian and Western educational thought, affirms the teacher's enduring role as a beacon of light in the journey of human development.

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Tobacco Products never a good option



■ **SAHIL MANZOOR**

Every year on 31st May, World No Tobacco Day is observed with awareness programmes and seminars. Today, it is very unfortunate that our blooming and tender-age youth are engaging in the smoking curse, and most adult people in Kashmir are smoking for no reason. This should be eradicated and their extravagant expenditure should be saved. Recently, cigarettes and other related products are skyrocketing, and it is dreadful and not a good option to get involved in cigarette consumption habits.

Smoking causes lethal health issues in society. Tobacco belongs to the nightshade family and is cultivated for its dried leaves. Tobacco plants grow 1 to 3 metres tall and produce more than 10 broad leaves. The leaves of the tobacco plant are dried, processed, and used to manufacture cigars, cigarettes, etc., which are lethal to human health and have immense hazards.

Cigarettes contain about 4,000 chemicals, of which 43 are carcinogenic (cancer-causing). These include polycyclic hydrocarbons, ammonia, formaldehyde, and oxides of nitrogen. Carbon monoxide is one of the most dangerous and poisonous



gases, which reduces the oxygen-carrying capacity of the blood and affects smokers worldwide.

It is believed that in 1492, Christopher Columbus landed on Tobago Island and found that the natives were using dried tobacco leaves for pleasure. Since then, tobacco has spread throughout the world in different forms, such as chewing tobacco and cigars.

Nicotine is present in tobacco leaves and is the major addictive component. It has harmful effects on human health, as it causes heart attacks and affects the nervous system. Nicotine is also used in agriculture as an insecticide and in some gastrointestinal treatments. It makes people depen-

dent, sick, unhygienic, and short-tempered.

Tobacco contains tar, which causes lung cancer and many other diseases among smokers. Active smokers are ten times more likely to die from lung cancer than passive smokers. The mixture of carbon monoxide and nicotine increases heart rate and blood pressure and is responsible for strokes as well.

Carbon monoxide reduces the oxygen-carrying capacity of muscles and the brain, causing stress to these organs. Consuming tobacco products in different forms can trigger irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Smoking can harm the stomach and cause intestinal irritation.

Smoking is not only harmful to active

smokers but also affects passive smokers. It causes irritation, coughing, sneezing, and greatly pollutes the environment. Every year on 31st May, Anti-Smoking Day is celebrated worldwide through seminars and anti-tobacco campaigns in schools, colleges, and public places.

Being responsible citizens, we must take steps to understand the factors that lead youth into tobacco and drug use. Our youth are losing their health and wealth in a very harmful way.

Major Health Hazards of Smoking Heart Disease:

Smoking damages the heart, blood vessels, and blood cells. The chemicals in cigarettes increase the risk of atheroscle-

rosis (plaque buildup in arteries), which limits blood flow and causes dangerous blockages. Smoking also increases the risk of peripheral artery disease (PAD).

Damaged Lungs:

Smoking increases the risk of lung cancer. About 9 out of 10 lung cancer deaths are linked to smoking. It also increases the risk of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema, chronic bronchitis, and asthma attacks.

Fertility Problems:

Smoking can damage a woman's reproductive system and make pregnancy difficult. In men, it increases the risk of erectile dysfunction and reduces sperm quality.

Weakened Immune System:

Smoking weakens the immune system, making people more prone to illness.

Vision Problems:

Smoking increases the risk of cataracts, macular degeneration, dry eyes, glaucoma, and diabetic retinopathy.

Poor Oral Hygiene:

Smokers have double the risk of gum disease. Smoking stains teeth, affects taste and smell, and causes swollen gums, bleeding, loose teeth, and sensitivity.

Unhealthy Skin and Hair:

Smoking causes premature ageing, wrinkles, hair loss, and increases the risk of skin cancer, especially on the lips.

Risk of Other Cancers:

Smoking contributes to cancers of the pancreas, bladder, stomach, mouth, throat, larynx, oesophagus, kidney, cervix, liver, colon, and acute myeloid leukemia.

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Feeling the heat?

It might be ageing you faster than you think



■ SHAHNAZ HUSAIN

If you've ever felt like the summer heat is draining your energy, you're not alone. Feeling tired during hot weather is common, especially in peak summer. Many people experience low energy, feel tired, and struggle to stay focused throughout the day, even without doing heavy work during the hot summer season.

People often dismiss 'afternoon lethargy' as a normal part of life. But summer fatigue isn't just about being exhausted; it's a physical reaction to heat.

When temperatures rise, your body spends more energy cooling itself through sweating and increased blood circulation.

When we sweat, we also lose water and electrolytes (i.e., "salts" such as sodium, chloride, potassium).

Sweating removes not only water but also electrolytes (i.e., "salts" such as sodium, chloride, potassium), that help maintain normal body function.

This process uses extra energy, which can leave you feeling drained even without much physical activity.

Summer fatigue differs from typical tiredness. Environmental factors create specific energy drains unique to warm seasons.

We lose fluids and electrolytes. Loss of electrolytes can affect muscle and nerve function. Electrolytes affect the amount of water in your body, the acidity of your blood (pH), your muscle function, and other important processes.

Mild dehydration underlies most summer fatigue, and it doesn't always feel like 'dehydration'. It feels like laziness, low mood, or lack of focus, leading to a drop in energy level.

Prolonged exposure to severe, scorching temperatures triggers stress and damage in the body that goes far beyond a simple sunburn. Consistent exposure to high temperatures might also be making you age more quickly at a molecular level.

Repeated exposure to extreme heat waves can do more than make you sweat. It can quietly accelerate the ageing process in people and increase vulnerability to health issues. The more extreme heat events an individual is exposed to, the more quickly they age.

Exposure to outdoor heat accelerates ageing among the physically weak adults living in poorly ventilated spaces or working in outdoor settings because they remain exposed to heat for longer periods.

Prolonged exposure to high temperatures may increase oxidative stress, inflammation, and strain on vital organs.

■ Pre-hydration

When the temperature climbs, you might only be "feeling the heat", but your body is actively fighting to protect your vital organs.

Prevention does not come about by just drinking water when you're thirsty; it works when you understand the biological mechanics of heat and stay one step ahead of it.

From a clinical perspective, thirst is a late signal of dehydration. The body begins to lose fluids much earlier, especially in high heat

The pre-hydration rule during summer means hydrating in advance by drinking adequate fluids and electrolytes 2 to 3 hours before stepping into the heat or engaging in physical activity to set up a hydration reserve in the body.

Pre-hydration is simply staying hydrated before you hit a deficit.

This is where you give your body a hydration head start, ensuring it's well-prepped for the challenges ahead.

The body benefits more when fluid intake begins early in the morning and continues steadily before stepping out.

This approach helps maintain your body's fluid balance, enhancing your endurance, focus, and overall performance.

Everyone's hydration needs are different. Pay attention to how your body feels and adjust your fluid intake accordingly. Don't consume all your fluids at once. Sip consistently throughout the morning.

Infuse the water with vetiver (khus), fennel seeds (saunf), or a slice of cucumber. These are naturally "cooling" and make plain water less boring to drink.

On the flip side, becoming over-hydrated can be serious as well. This condition, known as hyponatremia, occurs when someone drinks too much water, thereby diluting electrolytes. This is also a serious and potentially deadly condition that needs immediate medical attention.



If you drink a lot of water in a short period, you may move from mild over-hydration to what's known as water toxicity, intoxication, or water poisoning.

■ Local dish to stay naturally cool

Beat the blistering heat with a bowl of Curd Rice or a chilled glass of Sattu Sharbat.

A glass of kokum sherbet will keep you cool in this heat, reduce the acidity and get rid of bloating

These traditional Indian cooling foods drop your internal body temperature naturally, rehydrate lost electrolytes, and are incredibly light on your digestion

Kokum sherbet is a refreshing, tangy, and naturally cooling Indian summer drink.

Made from dried kokum fruit, the drink has a deep pink colour and a pleasantly tangy taste. To prepare it, kokum is soaked in hot water to cover until soft, and mixed with sugar or jaggery, along with roasted cumin powder and a pinch of salt.

Add a large glass of ice-cold water and mix well. Serve chilled with ice.

Kokum sherbet is often consumed in

the afternoon or after meals during summer. Many families store kokum concentrate so they can quickly prepare the drink whenever the heat becomes overwhelming.

Low in fat and high in probiotics, buttermilk soothes the stomach and boosts hydration. It's perfect after a heavy meal or during midday when the heat peaks.

You can make a quick sattu drink by taking 2 tablespoons of Sattu powder, 1 glass of cold water, 1/2 teaspoon roasted cumin powder, a pinch of black salt, and a squeeze of fresh lemon. Mix all the ingredients in a glass until completely smooth. Garnish with a few fresh mint leaves and enjoy immediately.

Bajre ki Rabi/ Raab: A centuries-old summer superfood made of fermented pearl millet (bajra) flour or sorghum mixed with buttermilk is a highly nutritious, traditional Rajasthani porridge.

It provides hydration, electrolytes, and acts as a natural body coolant.

In rural areas, it has long been considered one of the best natural ways to survive the harsh desert heat.

Many locals see it as a natural cooling remedy that helps the body stay hydrated and energised during peak summer

months.

In the summer, it is consumed cold, and keeps the body cool and protects from heat stroke.

■ Seasonal Fruits

Water-rich fruits are rich in natural sugars, fibre, and antioxidants. They are not only an excellent source of hydration but also protect the body against damage caused by heat and sun exposure. Many fruits naturally contain high amounts of water along with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Including hydrating summer fruits such as watermelon (92%), strawberries (91%), cantaloupe (90%), and peaches (89%) not only provides essential nutrients like vitamin C, vitamin A, potassium, and antioxidants, helping with hydration, immunity, and overall energy.

■ Watch your medicines during the summer

Medicine may raise the risk during the summer season

Certain medications significantly raise your risk of heat exhaustion, dehydration, and sunburn during the summer.

Certain medications, such as those for high blood pressure or heart disease, may raise your risk for fainting in high heat. Know if any drugs or supplements you take could make you less tolerant to the heat.

Never leave medications in hot cars, direct sunlight, or humid areas like the beach. Heat breaks down active ingredients.

Some medicines, like diuretics, lower your fluid levels. They're often part of treatment for high blood pressure.

If you're taking certain medicines, you'll want to be extra careful. They can make your skin extra sensitive to sunburns, which can lead to heat exhaustion.

Heat can also degrade drugs like inhalers or EpiPens. Always store medicines in cool, dry places, stay hydrated, and consult your doctor before altering any prescriptions.

Summer heat and humidity can quickly degrade the chemical structure of prescription and over-the-counter medications, rendering them ineffective or even dangerous. Proper storage and awareness are essential for your medications during peak seasonal temperatures

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

The Growing Threat of Carcinogenic Substances to Human Health



■ SURINDERPAL SINGH

The growing presence of carcinogenic substances in our environment has emerged as a significant public health concern in the modern world. Carcinogens are substances or agents capable of causing cancer by damaging cells and altering normal biological processes. With rapid industrialization, urbanization, and changing lifestyles, human exposure to these harmful substances has increased considerably, making cancer prevention and environmental safety more important than ever before.

Carcinogenic substances are found in many aspects of daily life. They exist in tobacco smoke, industrial emissions, vehicle exhaust, pesticides, processed foods, and certain household products. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has identified numerous substances with cancer-causing potential, including benzene, formaldehyde, asbestos, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). These chemicals can enter the human body through inhalation, ingestion, or skin contact and may cause serious health complications over time.

Scientific research conducted across the world has established a strong connection between exposure to carcinogens and the increasing incidence of cancer. Studies have shown that workers employed in



industries such as mining, construction, manufacturing, and chemical processing face a higher risk of developing lung cancer, leukemia, skin cancer, and various digestive system cancers. Continuous exposure to hazardous substances in occupational settings underscores the need for stronger workplace safety standards and effective protective measures.

The impact of carcinogenic substances extends far beyond industrial environments. Environmental pollution caused by factories, traffic emissions, waste burning, and improper disposal of hazardous materials exposes millions of people to

harmful toxins every day. Air pollution, in particular, has become a major health challenge. According to global health reports, polluted air contributes significantly to premature deaths and increases the risk of respiratory illnesses and cancer. Children, senior citizens, and individuals with weakened immune systems are among the most vulnerable groups affected by environmental carcinogens.

Modern dietary habits and lifestyle choices have further intensified the problem. Excessive consumption of processed foods, smoked and preserved meat products, alcohol, and tobacco can increase

exposure to cancer-causing agents. Combined with environmental pollution and sedentary lifestyles, these habits create conditions that elevate long-term health risks. As a result, exposure to carcinogenic substances has become an increasingly common reality for many people.

Addressing this challenge requires greater public awareness and preventive action. Health experts emphasize the importance of educating communities about the sources of carcinogenic substances and ways to minimize exposure. Avoiding tobacco use, choosing fresh and nutritious foods, limiting the use of harm-

ful chemicals, ensuring proper indoor ventilation, and supporting environmental conservation efforts can significantly reduce health risks and improve overall well-being.

Governments and industries also have a crucial role to play in safeguarding public health. Industries that rely on hazardous chemicals should adopt cleaner technologies, safer alternatives, and environmentally responsible production methods. Strong environmental regulations, strict emission controls, and continuous monitoring of industrial waste are essential for protecting communities and preserving natural ecosystems. At the same time, global cooperation is necessary to develop policies that promote sustainable development while reducing exposure to dangerous substances.

As scientific evidence continues to reveal the long-term consequences of carcinogenic exposure, collective action becomes increasingly important. Public awareness, responsible industrial practices, scientific innovation, and effective government policies must work together to combat this growing health threat. By taking proactive measures today, societies can reduce the burden of cancer and create a safer environment for future generations.

The rising threat of carcinogenic substances represents one of the most pressing health challenges of our time. Reducing exposure, strengthening environmental protections, and promoting healthier lifestyles are essential steps toward protecting human life and ensuring a healthier future for all.

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

Justice Sanjeev Kumar chairs awareness programme on NALSA DAWN scheme, drug abuse and Its Illicit Trafficking

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

PULWAMA JULY 18: Acting Chief Justice, High Court of J&K and Ladakh & Executive Chairman, J&K Legal Services Authority, Sanjeev Kumar, in presence of Justice, Sanjay Dhar, Administrative Judge, District Pulwama today presided over an awareness programme on NALSA DAWN (Drug Awareness and Wellness Navigation) Scheme, 2025 and Drug Abuse and Its Illicit Trafficking at Government Degree College (Boys), Pulwama.

The programme was organized by the District Legal Services Authority, Pulwama under the aegis of J&K Legal Services Authority.

On arrival, the Acting Chief Justice along with the Administrative Judge was accorded a ceremonial Guard of Honour by the police contingent of District Pulwama at Government Degree College (Boys), Pulwama. The programme formally commenced with the inauguration of the Legal Literacy Club at the college.

In his presidential address, the Acting Chief Justice lauded the efforts of DLSA Pulwama and J&K LSA for organizing such programmes which are the need of the hour. He impressed upon the audience, especially the youth, to follow the golden principle of "Prevention is Better than Cure". He stated that drug abuse has become a grave threat to the society and collective efforts are required to save the younger generation.

Delivering the welcome address, Malik Shabir Ahmad, Principal District & Sessions Judge & Chairman DLSA Pulwama,

highlighted the importance of spreading legal awareness and community outreach to effectively combat the drug abuse.

The Secretary, District Legal Services Authority, elaborated on the theme of the programme and the objectives of the NALSA DAWN Scheme, 2025. He emphasized the role of Legal Services Institutions in creating a drug-free society through awareness, counseling and rehabilitation.

Deputy Commissioner, Pulwama, Dr. Basharat Qayoom assured full administrative support for awareness, prevention and rehabilitation campaigns in the district.

An address by the Psychiatrist, Dr. Umer was held, wherein the psychological, social and health consequences of substance abuse were discussed. The expert highlighted the initiatives of the government, including dedicated de-addiction centres in all hospitals of J&K and notified helpline numbers for easy access by the affected persons and their families.

This was followed by a special address by the Administrative Judge, District Pulwama, who underlined the need for coordinated efforts by the judiciary, administration, educational institutions and civil society to eradicate the menace of drugs. Thereafter, the dignitaries released the publication "Rabita", prepared by District Legal Services Authority, Pulwama.

Later, the Acting Chief Justice and the Administrative Judge visited the District Court Complex, Pulwama and laid the foundation stone for the Lawyers' Chambers besides inaugurating

the e-Sewa Kendra for providing accessible and citizen-friendly legal services.

Subsequently, the Acting Chief Justice had an exclusive meeting with the district administration followed by an interaction with the Judicial Officers of Pulwama.

Later, an interaction with the members of the Bar Association, Pulwama was also held where the issues related to legal aid and access to justice were discussed.

Meanwhile, a special Lok Adalat for Negotiable Instruments (NI) Act, 1881 was also conducted in which Single Bench was constituted for amicable settlement of the cases which was presided over by Muzamil Ahmad Wani, Chief Judicial Magistrate, Pulwama with Danishta Shafi, Munsiff/JMIC, Pulwama as Bench Member.

A total of 16 (sixteen) cases were taken up, of which, 12 were disposed off settling 4 lakhs (Four lakhs) worth cheque bounce cases.

During the programme, M.K Sharma, Registrar General, Rajiv Gupta, Registrar Vigilance from the High Court of J&K and Ladakh, Shazia Tabassum, Member Secretary, J&K Legal Services Authority, Registrar Rules, Registrar Judicial, Joint Registrar Protocol from the High Court of J&K and Ladkakh and other officers of Pulwama district were also present.

Earlier, the Acting Chief Justice and Administrative Judge visited the Court Complex, Pampore, where they laid the foundation stone for construction of Lawyers' Chambers. The dignitaries also interacted with the members of the Bar Association there.

Shopian Administration Gives Warm Farewell to Outgoing DIO Showkat Hussain Ganie, Assumes New Role in Kulgam



■ FAROOQ RATHER

SHOPIAN, JULY 18: The District Administration Shopian on Saturday accorded a warm farewell to District Information Officer (DIO) Showkat Hussain Ganie on his transfer to Kulgam, with senior officers praising his dedicated service and contribution to strengthening public communication in the district.

The farewell function was attended by Deputy Commissioner Shishir Gupta, Additional District Development Commissioner Dr. Nasir Ahmad Lone, Additional Deputy Commissioner Dr. Zakir Hussain Faaz, and officers and officials of the District Information Centre (DIC), who gathered to honour

Ganie's services and wish him success in his new assignment.

Addressing the gathering, Deputy Commissioner Shishir Gupta commended Ganie for his professionalism, commitment and significant contribution to the effective dissemination of government policies, welfare schemes and developmental initiatives. He appreciated the outgoing officer's efforts in enhancing public outreach and ensuring timely dissemination of information, describing his tenure as marked by dedication and efficiency.

Other officers present at the event fondly recalled their association with Ganie and appreciated his teamwork, cordial working style and unwavering

commitment to duty. They extended their best wishes for his future responsibilities as District Information Officer, Kulgam.

In his remarks, Showkat Hussain Ganie expressed gratitude to the District Administration and his colleagues for their support and cooperation throughout his tenure in Shopian. He said serving in the district had been a rewarding experience and added that the memories and professional relationships he had built would always remain close to his heart.

The programme concluded with the presentation of mementoes to the outgoing officer as a token of appreciation for his dedicated services and valuable contribution to the district.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

Office of the Executive Engineer Mechanical & Hospitals Division Baramulla

e-mail, id, xenmhd.bla@jk.gov.in

CORRIGENDUM-I

Subject: Re-Tendering of e-NIT No. 24 of 2026-27 Dated: - 07-07-2026.

Reference: Tender IDs: 2026_PWDJK_314894_1

Due to no response from bidders, the e-NIT for the work titled "Comprehensive Maintenance of PSA Technology based Oxygen Generation Plant (300 LPM Oxywise make) including all the Electrical Equipment and Operation of PSA Technology based Oxygen Generation Plant by way of engagement of 03 (three) semi-skilled Operators (01 in each shift) for round the clock operation of the OGP at Sub-District Hospital Uri for a period of One year, stands retendered as under:

S. No	Description	Re- Scheduled date
1	Date of Downloading	07-07-2025 (06:15 PM) to 29-07-2025 (06:00 PM)
2	Date of uploading	07-07-2025 (06:30 PM) to 29-07-2025 (06:55 PM)
3	Due date of opening of tender	30-07-2025 (01:00 PM)

All other terms and conditions shall remain unchanged.

No: M&HDB/TS/1083-88 | Dated: 18-07-2025

Sd/- Executive Engineer
Mechanical & Hospitals Division Baramulla

DIPK: 3442/26 | Dated: 18-07-2026

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (R&B) DIVISION PULWAMA

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

NIT No: Fresh 71/EEP/RNB of 2026-2027/3760-70 | Dated: 18/07/2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor Union Territory of J&K,, e-tenders are being invited on an item rate basis/percentage age basis (as applicable) from approved and eligible Contractors registered with the J&K Government, CPWD, Railways, and other State/ Central Governments for the following works:

S. No	Name of Work	Major Head of Account	Est. Cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Class	Time	T.D Cost	AAA No / Dt
01	Macadamisation of Interior roads at Bellow Dargund including IR channpora.	MH: C&T 2026-27	39.00	BEE/AAY	10 days	1100/	79/SE/PS of 2026-27 Dated: 03 .06.2026
02	Macadamisation of Interior roads of village Akhal.	MH: C&T 2026-27	19.42	CEE/BEE	10 days	800/	83/SE/PS of 2026-27 Dated: 03 .06.2026

EMD in shape of CDR/ FDR/BG: 2% of Adv Cost

Position of funds: Committed

Project Authority= PW(R&B) Department Kashmir

The bidding documents, which would include qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications/drawings, a bill of quantities (B.O.Q), a set of contract terms and conditions, and other details, can be viewed/downloaded from the departmental website www. jktenders.gov.in on the dates listed below: -

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	18 /07/2026
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	18/07/2026 from 04.00 PM.
3	Bid submission Start Date	18 /07/2026 from 04.00 PM.
4	Bid Submission End Date	23 /07/2026 upto 4.00 PM.
5	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	24/07/2026 at 11:00 AM in the office of Executive Engineer R&B Division Pulwama

In light of Circular issued by Finance department Vide No:FD-code/290/2026 Dated 22.05.2026 and circular issued by worthy Chief Engineer PW(R&B)Department South Kashmir Vide order No:CE/R&B/SK/WS/2095-2111 Dated: 05.06.2026 ,the following conditions are mentioned below:-

1. Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document/Tender Fee to be deposited in Cash in Centralized Designated Pooling JK Bank Account Bearing No: 0470010200000099, IFSC: JAKA0LALANG) .

2. All the bidders must deposit Earnest money /Bid security equal to 2% of advertised cost in Cash in Centralized Designated Pooling JK Bank Account Bearing No: 0470010200000099, IFSC: JAKA0LALANG)

3. The Successful bidder will have to provide performance security @ 5% of contract value to be deposited in Cash in Pulwama MC Holding Account Executive Engineer R&B Pulwama Bearing Account no. 0054010200003470 ,IFSC: JAKA0GOLDEN), which shall be released after successful completion of DLP /maintenance period..

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

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

All other terms and conditions shall be available in website www.jktenders.gov.in

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
R&B Division Pulwama

DIPK: 3433/26 | Dated: 18-07-2026

JAMMU & KASHMIR STATE HAJ COMMITTEE

Government of India
Ministry of Minority Affairs
Haj Committee of India

HAJ 2027 (1448 H)

IMPORTANT GUIDELINES

1 PASSPORT VALIDITY

- Passport must be valid till **31 December 2027**.
- Passport must be valid on the date of application.

2 COVER / GROUP

- A group can have maximum **5 members**.
- Minimum age – **18 years** on the date of application.

3 COVER HEAD

- Cover Head must be a **male member**.
- Minimum age – **18 years** on the date of application.

4 MOBILE NUMBER & WHATSAPP

- Cover Head must use his own mobile number.
- WhatsApp must be active on the same number.

5 FORM SUBMISSION

- Fill the form yourself.
- Do not let anyone else fill the form using your mobile number.
- Do not share your OTP with anyone.

6 NOMINEE

- Nominee: Son / Daughter / Parents / Spouse (Legal heir preferred)
- Add only one nominee who will perform Hajj in your place.

7 BANK DETAILS (ACCOUNT HOLDER MUST BE COVER HEAD)

- Account must be in the name of the Cover Head.
- Provide correct & active bank account details.
- Account must be active.

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR HAJ – 2027 (1448 H)

- The Haj Committee of India invites applications from eligible intending pilgrims for Haj – 2027 through the online Haj Application Form available at <https://www.hajcommittee.gov.in> or HAJ SUVIDHA mobile app.
- The application window shall remain open from **22.06.2026 to 20.07.2026** (up to 11:59 PM). After Qurbah (Digital Random Selection) process to be conducted in the last week of July, each provisionally selected pilgrim shall be required to deposit an advance amount of **₹1,52,300/-** on or before **10.08.2026**. No relaxation or extension in these timelines shall be feasible.
- Applicants must carefully read the Guidelines and Undertakings to ensure their eligibility and upload scanned copies (not photographs) of the following:
 - Front and back pages of machine-readable Indian Passport (1200 × 800 px, JPG/JPEG, 100–500 KB), issued on or before the application closing date and valid up to at least 31.12.2027;
 - Passport-size photo with white background (480 × 640 px, JPG/JPEG, 5–20 KB);
 - Bank passbook or cancelled cheque (590 × 750 px, JPG/JPEG, 80–250 KB); and
 - Address proof (590 × 750 px, JPG/JPEG, 80–250 KB).
- Cancellation of a Haj seat is strongly discouraged, as it causes operational difficulties. Accordingly, cancellation shall attract substantial penalties in accordance with the Guidelines for Haj 2027. Intending pilgrims are advised to apply only after careful consideration of their preparedness and firm commitment to undertake the pilgrimage.

JOIN OUR OFFICIAL WHATSAPP GROUP
For Haj 2027 Updates

Bait-ul-Hujaj (Haj House), Bemina, Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, India - 190017

+91 194 249 5365
<https://www.jkshc.org/>

Aapki Tayyari – Aapka Aaram – Hamari Zimmedari

Space Devoted by Headlines Today, Purely in Public Interest

J&K Judicial Academy holds Day-33 Training for Civil Judges, Judicial Officers in Srinagar

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 18: Under the patronage of Acting Chief Justice of High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh and Patron-in-Chief, Governing Committee, J&K Judicial Academy, Sanjeev Kumar and guidance of Justice Rajnesh Oswal, Judge, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh and Chairman, Governing Committee, J&K Judicial Academy, the Jammu & Kashmir Judicial Academy today conducted Day-33 of academic sessions of the Pre-Appointment Induction Training Programme for Trainee Civil Judges (Junior Division), Batch-2026, along with a Continuing Judicial Education Programme for the Judicial Officers of Batch-2020 at the J&K Judicial Academy, Mominabad, Srinagar.

The morning sessions were conducted by Justice Rajesh Bindal, Former Judge, Supreme Court of India, on "Technology in the Administration of Justice" and "Artificial Intelligence for Judges."

Addressing the participants, Justice Rajesh Bindal highlighted the indispensable role of technology in strengthening an efficient, transparent and accessible justice delivery system. He underscored the judiciary's progressive transi-



tion towards digital and paperless courts through practical demonstrations of technological platforms such as the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG), Electronic Supreme Court Reports (eSCR) and the Bhashini application.

Justice Rajesh Bindal familiarized the participants with their utility in judicial functioning, legal research and access to justice.

During the session on Artificial Intelligence, he explained the concept of Artificial Intelligence and demonstrated its applications in legal research, judgment support, drafting, summarization and transcription. He emphasised that AI is only an enabling tool and can never substitute the independent application of judicial mind.

Justice Rajesh Bindal urged

the judicial officers to embrace technology responsibly and ethically while ensuring that the ultimate responsibility for judicial decision-making always rests with the Judge.

The afternoon sessions were conducted by Justice Rahul Bharti, Judge, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh and Member, Governing Committee, J&K Judicial Academy.

Addressing both the Judicial Officers of Batch-2020 and the Trainee Civil Judges (Junior Division), Batch-2026, Justice Rahul Bharti emphasized that the essence of the judicial profession lies in continuous learning, intellectual discipline and unwavering seriousness towards one's judicial responsibilities.

Drawing from his own journey at the Bar and the invaluable lessons learnt under his senior, Justice Rahul Bharti observed that every judicial officer must cultivate the habit of constant study of law, legal history, jurisprudence and evolving judicial precedents.

He stressed that every matter brought before a court deserves careful and conscious application of mind, observing that no judicial proceeding is truly "uncontested" if examined with the vigilance, sensitivity and responsibility expected of a Judge.

Referring to judgment writing as one of the most significant responsibilities of a Judge, Justice Rahul Bharti encouraged the participants to develop clarity of thought, analytical reasoning and precision in judicial writing. He urged the participants to uphold the highest standards of professionalism, diligence, humility and accountability throughout their judicial careers.

Earlier, Director, J&K Judicial Academy, Naseer Ahmad Dar briefly highlighted the significance of the day's academic programme in strengthening the judicial competence through deliberations on technology, artificial intelligence, judgment writing besides decrees and orders.

The programme remained highly interactive throughout the day, during which the participants actively engaged with the Resource Persons, seeking guidance on various practical and contemporary issues relating to judicial administration, technological advancements and judicial decision-making.

The deliberations provided valuable insights and further enriched the learning experience of both the serving Judicial Officers and the newly inducted Civil Judges (Junior Division).

District-Level Workshop-cum-Exhibition under MIDH organized at Sumbal

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, JULY 18: The Department of Agriculture Kashmir today organized a District-Level Workshop-cum-Exhibition under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) at Sumbal, Bandipora, with the objective of creating awareness among farmers about the various schemes and interventions being implemented under the mission to promote sustainable horticulture and agricultural development.

The workshop-cum-exhibition was inaugurated by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM), Sumbal, who appreciated the Department of Agriculture for organizing the programme and providing farmers with a platform to learn about modern agricultural and horticultural practices, advanced technologies, and government support available under MIDH. He emphasized the importance of adopting scientific farming methods and making optimum use of government initiatives to enhance productivity and improve farmers' incomes.

Speaking on the occasion, the Joint Director Agriculture (Extension), Kashmir, highlighted the significance of MIDH in strengthening the horticulture sector through quality planting material, protected cultivation, mechanization, post-harvest management, and capacity-building initiatives.

He urged farmers to actively avail themselves of the benefits offered under the mission and adopt innovative technologies to achieve sustainable agricultural growth.

The Chief Agriculture Officer, Bandipora, welcomed the participants and reiterated the department's commitment to extending technical guidance and institutional support to farmers for improving productivity and ensuring the successful implementation of various developmental programmes.

The programme was attended by the Joint Director Agriculture (Extension), Kashmir, Chief Agriculture Officer, Bandipora, along with officers of the Agriculture Department, field functionaries, progressive farmers, and other stakeholders.

DDC Bandipora reviews progress of District Capex, Revenue Capex and DAJGUA Works

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, JULY 18: District Development Commissioner (DDC) Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, today chaired a review meeting at the Mini Secretariat Bandipora to assess the progress of works under District Capex, Revenue Capex, SASCI and Dharti Aaba Janatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJGUA).

The meeting reviewed the status of ongoing and new works, besides taking stock of administrative approvals accorded, pending estimates, tendering, allotment of works, approved outlay, funds released and expenditure incurred across various sectors.

At the outset, Chief Planning Officer Bandipora, Mohammad Maqbool Lone, presented a detailed overview of the ongoing works and projects and briefed the chair on the expenditure performance of the executing agencies.

The meeting reviewed the progress of works in sectors including Minor Irrigation, Roads & Buildings (R&B), Elementary Education, Secondary Education, Youth Services & Sports, Health, Urban Development, Public Health Engineering (PHE), NFB, Untied Grants, DDC Grants, BDC Grants, PRI Grants, Aspirational Block Development Scheme (ABDS), Aspirational Panchayat Development Scheme (APDS) and Samridh Seema Yojana (SSY). The status of works under Revenue Capex, SASCI and DAJGUA was also reviewed.

During the meeting, the DDC directed all concerned officers to closely monitor and follow up the works being executed by agencies including R&B, Housing Board and the Rural Development Department (RDD) to ensure timely execution and optimum utilization of funds.

Emphasising accountability, the DDC directed that the intending departments shall be held responsible for any lapse leading to surrender of earmarked funds or low expenditure, and such responsibility should not be shifted solely to the executing agencies.

The DDC appreciated the efforts of the technical team of the Rural Development Department for expediting the preparation of estimates under PRI Grants and BDC Grants, and urged them to maintain the same pace to facilitate timely execution of works. She further directed all departments to ensure timely submission of bills after completion of the prescribed works so that payments are processed without delay.

The DDC also directed the District Treasury Officer, to furnish department-wise details of bills submitted to the Treasury for payment to facilitate close monitoring of expenditure under various schemes.

Among others, the meeting was attended by Programme Officer ICDS, Superintending Engineer PHE Hydraulic Circle, Assistant Commissioner Development, Assistant Commissioner Panchayat, Chief Education Officer, Chief Medical Officer, District Sheep Husbandry Officer, Block Development Officers, Executive Engineers, District Treasury Officer, District Youth Services & Sports Officer, besides other concerned officers.

District Admin, Police intensify crackdown on drug peddlers in Budgam

Demolish multiple illegal properties in Beerwah, Khansahib Sub-Divisions

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BUDGAM, JULY 18: District Administration Budgam, in co-ordination with District Police Budgam, has intensified its crackdown against drug peddlers across the district, continuing its sustained campaign to dismantle illegal assets linked to narcotics trafficking.

As part of the ongoing anti-drug drive, the District Administration and District Police on Saturday demolished three illegally constructed properties belonging to alleged drug peddlers in the Magam Sub-Division.

The demolition was carried

out in the Chairu and Mazhama areas in the presence of the concerned revenue and police officials. During the operation, three illegal shops, unauthorized fencing, and encroachment over five marlas of land were removed.

The action forms part of the administration's continued efforts to dismantle illegally acquired assets of individuals involved in drug peddling and to curb the menace of narcotics in the district.

Earlier, the District Administration, along with District Police, had demolished four illegally constructed properties belonging to alleged drug ped-



dlers in the Khansahib Sub-Division.

The demolition drive was conducted in the Parnewa and Arigam areas in the presence of revenue and police officials. During the operation, four shops, a cowshed, and a tile factory constructed illegally were demolished.

The District Administration reiterated its firm commitment to continue stringent action against drug peddlers and to identify and demolish all illegally acquired properties linked to drug trafficking. It also appealed to the public to support the administration and police by sharing information to help eradicate the drug menace from society.

DC Anantnag reviews disaster preparedness, directs high state of operational readiness

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

ANANTNAG, JULY 18: In view of the adverse weather forecast issued by the Meteorological Department for next few days, Deputy Commissioner (Chairman District Disaster Management Authority) Anantnag, Dr. Bilal Mohiuddin Bhat today chaired a high-level emergency review meeting at Dak Bangalow, Khanabal.

The meeting was convened to assess departmental readiness, finalize precautionary measures, and establish a robust multi-sectoral response plan to mitigate risks arising from erratic weather patterns that may affect the district during the coming days.

CEO PDA, SDMs, SP, SEs of Jal Shakti, PDD and PWD; CPO, CMO, CEO, Tehsildar Anantnag, Exens of PWD, Flood Control and PHE; DD F&ES, DySP SDRF, ARTO, DYSSO, CEO MCA, EOs of MCs, Representatives of BSNL, Jio and Airtel and other concerned officials attended the meeting.

At the outset, a detailed presentation of the District Disaster Management Plan was run to apprise the participants about historical occurrences of floods, cloud-bursts, flash floods and other disaster like incidents. A thorough discussion on the vulnerable areas and critical locations was held on the occasion.

With the Met Department warning of potential flash floods, landslides, and rise in river water levels which may lead to inundation and water logging in vulnerable areas, the Deputy Commissioner directed all line departments to transition into a state of high alert and operational readiness to ensure public safety and minimal disruption to essential services.

The extensive review focused on deploying immediate preventive strategies, mapping and activation of resources like boats, ropes, evacuation centres, dewatering pumps and special vehicles, mobilisation of adequate manpower including volunteers and machinery, securing critical infrastructure, and ensuring minimal communication lag during the upcoming inclement weather cycle.

The Police and SDRF were directed to pre-position rescue teams and quick-response forces near historically vulnerable zones and low-lying areas prone to sudden water logging.

Sub-Divisional Magistrates (SDMs) were instructed to immediately activate the field teams and establish robust contact networks with field level functionaries especially Patwaris, Police Officials, Numberdars and Chowkidars.

Special emphasis was laid on keeping back up plans ready to cater to any extraordinary situation like internet and telecom breakdowns. SDMs were further asked to continuously monitor the developments in their jurisdictions and manage local evacuations, wherever necessary.

Hydraulic/Jal Shakti and Flood Control Departments were asked to clear drainage choke points, arrange adequate number of sand bags and station heavy machinery including dewatering pumps, in consultation with F&ES Department, at critical locations especially in main town and high risk areas. Directives were passed to the R&B Department to provide sand bags and other necessary material for preventing breaches at vulnerable points.

DC Ganderbal reviews implementation of HADP, JKICP

Also chairs DLC meeting, approves 162 cases

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

GANDERBAL, JULY 18: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore today chaired a meeting of the District Level Committee (DLC) to review the implementation and progress of the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) and the Jammu & Kashmir Competitiveness Improvement of Agriculture & Allied Sectors Project (JKICP) in the district.

During the meeting, the DC conducted a comprehensive department-wise review of progress under HADP and JKICP schemes. He reviewed the performance of all Agriculture and Allied Departments and directed the concerned departments to expedite the establishment of units against the allotted targets for the year 2026-27.

He further instructed the departments to ensure that all completed units are promptly updated and marked as established on the JKICP Portal.

The meeting also reviewed the department-wise progress of Output Tracking of established units under JKICP. Stressing the importance of timely monitoring and evaluation, the DC directed the Departments of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Horticulture Planning & Marketing (HP&M) to complete the tracking of all remaining units on priority. Reviewing the progress under the Daksh Kisan Portal, the DC directed all departments to intensify farmer registration, ensure timely enrolment of eligible beneficiaries and facilitate the completion of online training courses by registered farmers to strengthen capacity building and improve outreach under the programme.

The DC further took stock of the progress achieved under Kisan Khidmat Ghar (KKG) registrations, including L2 and L3 targets, and instructed all departments to accelerate registrations and improve overall performance to achieve the assigned targets within the stipulated timeframe.

He also reviewed the status of credit application cases under HADP and JKICP and directed all concerned banks to expedite the disposal of pending cases on priority so that the benefits reach eligible applicants without delay. Similarly, the progress under the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme was reviewed, and banks were instructed to clear all pending KCC applications at the earliest.

During the meeting, the District Level Committee (DLC) approved 162 cases under HADP and JKICP.

The DC emphasized close coordination among all stakeholder departments and financial institutions for effective implementation of HADP and JKICP. He stressed the need for continuous monitoring, timely execution of targets and prompt disposal of pending cases to ensure that the benefits of these flagship programmes reach eligible farmers and allied sector beneficiaries in a transparent and time-bound manner.

The meeting was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Chief Agriculture Officer, Chief Animal Husbandry Officer, Chief Horticulture Officer, Assistant Director Fisheries, Cluster Head J&K Bank, Lead District Manager, Nodal Officer HADP/JKICP, representatives of the concerned banks and officers of various Agriculture and Allied Departments.

Consumer Online Foundation urges PMO to constitute Task Force against illicit tobacco trade

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JUL 18: Consumer Online Foundation (COF) has urged the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to constitute a National Task Force to tackle illicit tobacco trade, citing growing concerns over smuggled cigarettes, counterfeit tobacco products and illegal nicotine products that, it said, threaten consumer safety, public health and government revenues.

In a representation addressed to the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, the Foundation said that while India has made significant progress in tobacco control through legislative and fiscal measures, these efforts are increasingly being undermined by the proliferation of illicit tobacco products that evade taxes, regulatory oversight and statutory health safeguards.

The representation comes at a time when governments across the world are increasingly examining the impact of illicit tobacco trade on public health, tax collections and organised crime.

Citing a recent case in Australia, Consumer Online Foundation said India, too, needs a coordi-



nated strategy that combines robust tobacco control with intelligence-led action against illicit trade.

According to the Foundation, illicit tobacco trade not only deprives the Government of significant GST, Customs Duty and other tax revenues but also exposes consumers to products that bypass mandatory health warnings, quality standards, age restrictions and regulatory scrutiny.

Bejon Kumar Misra, internationally recognised consumer policy expert and Founder of Consumer Online Foundation, said,

"India has taken significant strides in tobacco control, but taxation alone cannot achieve the intended public health objectives if illicit trade continues to flourish. International experience also shows that when illegal tobacco products become cheaper and more accessible, consumers shift towards unregulated markets rather than reducing consumption."

Consumer Online Foundation has proposed the establishment of a high-level National Task Force on Illicit Tobacco Trade, comprising representatives from the Ministries of Health & Family Welfare,

Finance, Home Affairs, Consumer Affairs, Commerce & Industry, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs, State Enforcement Agencies and other relevant institutions.

The proposed Task Force would be responsible for preparing a National Anti-Illicit Tobacco Strategy with measurable outcomes on preventing cross-border smuggling, curbing counterfeit manufacturing, strengthening intelligence-led enforcement, protecting consumers from illegal tobacco and nicotine products, improving tax compliance and supporting India's long-term public health objectives.

The Foundation has also recommended a comprehensive 100-Day Action Agenda, including stronger border surveillance, coordinated enforcement against counterfeit manufacturing, enhanced market inspections, creation of a national consumer reporting mechanism, evidence-based policymaking through a national data repository, nationwide public awareness campaigns and annual performance reviews to measure progress in reducing illicit trade. UNI

Delhi's Rs 400 crore start-up push to back young entrepreneurs and innovation

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JUL 18: The Delhi government has cleared a new Start-up and Incubation Policy aimed at strengthening the capital's innovation ecosystem, with an outlay of more than Rs 400 crore over the next five years.

The initiative focuses on expanding incubation infrastructure across government-run educational institutions while extending financial and institutional support to early-stage ventures.

The policy will be implemented in a phased manner, covering 11 state universities, 13 government-aided colleges, polytechnic institutes, Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), and government schools in the initial phase. Eligible institutions will receive a one-time grant to establish or upgrade incubation facilities, along with recurring annual funding to support operations such as mentoring programmes, networking initiatives, innovation activities, and ecosystem development.

As part of the programme, incubation centres will provide entrepreneurs with access to office infrastructure, expert guidance, business advisory services, intellectual property assistance, laboratories, testing facilities, and connections with industry leaders and investors.

Start-ups selected under the scheme will also be eligible for milestone-linked financial assistance to support prototype



creation, proof-of-concept development, product refinement, market validation, and commercialisation.

To ensure effective execution of the policy, the government will constitute a State Incubation Policy Monitoring Committee comprising representatives from government departments, educational institutions, industry, and the start-up ecosystem. The committee will oversee implementation and monitor the policy's progress.

The Cabinet has also approved the launch of an annual Delhi Start-up Youth Festival, which will serve as a platform for students, entrepreneurs, investors, policymakers, and industry stakeholders to interact, showcase innovations, and explore collaboration opportunities.

According to the Delhi government, the policy is designed to promote research-led innovation, deepen collaboration between academia and industry, create employment opportunities, and accelerate the growth of a knowledge-driven economy in the national capital. UNI

STRENGTHENING TRANSPARENCY, GOVERNANCE, INVESTOR PROTECTION KEY FOR PMS INDUSTRY GROWTH: SEBI ED

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

CHENNAI, JULY 18: Securities Exchange Board of Executive Director (SEBI) Executive Director Manoj Kumar on Friday said strengthening transparency, governance, investor protection and responsible distribution practices will be the critical factors as India's Portfolio Management Services (PMS) Industry enters the next phase.

Addressing the PMS Leadership Conclave 2026 organised by the Association of Portfolio Managers in India (APMI), which is also the representative body of SEBI registered portfolio managers, here, he said the Indian PMS industry stands at a defining inflection point, driven by evolving investor aspirations and the growing demand for personalised wealth management solutions.

As the sector enters its next phase of growth, strengthening transparency, governance, investor protection and responsible distribution practices will be

critical, he said, adding, platforms such as the PMS Leadership Conclave provide an opportunity for industry stakeholders to exchange perspectives and collectively contribute towards building a resilient and trusted PMS ecosystem that supports long-term wealth creation.

The new regulations which are under way will take the above in account and we collectively look forward to the growth of the Industry, Manoj Kumar said.

The India's PMS industry continues to witness steady growth, with assets under management (AUM) reaching Rs 42.5 lakh crore, spanning 520 registered portfolio managers and serving over 2.1 lakh investor accounts and in this back the Leadership conclave was organised by the APMI with SEBI and industry leaders, that brought together regulators, portfolio managers, distributors, family offices and wealth management professionals to discuss the sector's evolving priorities and growth opportunities.



The conclave served as a platform for meaningful discussions on the opportunities and challenges shaping the PMS industry, while strengthening engagement between market participants and regulators.

The key highlight of the event was 'Chennai Speaks', a special session moderated by Mr. Biharilal

Deora, Chairman, APMI where members from the region discussed on the local business environment, industry challenges, expectations from APMI, and perspectives on regulatory developments.

Biharilal Deora said as the PMS sector continues to evolve, driven by growing investor par-

ticipation and demand for customised investment solutions, it is essential for portfolio managers, distributors, family offices and regulators to work together to enhance transparency, strengthen governance standards and build investor confidence. Through initiatives such as the PMS Leadership Conclave, APMI remains committed to promoting dialogue and contributing to the long-term growth of India's portfolio management ecosystem.

The Chennai conclave follows the successful edition held in Kolkata last month, which brought together key stakeholders from the PMS ecosystem. Building on the insights from regional forums such as 'Kolkata Speaks' and 'Chennai Speaks', APMI aims to continue organising similar engagements across other parts of the country to incorporate diverse market perspectives, strengthen industry-regulator dialogue and support the sustainable growth of India's portfolio management industry.

India's banking sector set to stay resilient in FY27 despite margin pressure, deposit challenges: Report

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JUL 18: India's banking sector is expected to remain resilient in FY27, supported by healthy capital buffers, improving asset quality and sustained credit demand, although lenders are likely to face pressure from narrowing margins and intense competition for deposits, according to a report by CareEdge Ratings.

The ratings agency expects bank credit growth to moderate to 14.5-15.5pc in FY27 after a strong expansion in FY26, as large corporates and NBFCs increasingly shift towards bond markets and external commercial borrowings (ECBs) amid improving financing conditions.

Nevertheless, credit demand is expected to remain healthy, backed by robust domestic economic activity, improving liquidity and continued government capital expenditure.

The report noted that India's banking system entered FY27 from a position of strength, with robust capitalisation, adequate liquidity and significantly improved asset quality.

While retail loans, MSMEs, infrastructure financing and lending to NBFCs are expected to remain the key growth drivers, some of the recent surge in credit demand was also due to borrowers substituting market borrowings with bank loans amid elevated bond yields.

During FY26, scheduled commercial banks recorded credit growth of around 14.5pc, outpacing deposit growth of 11.5pc, resulting in the loan-to-deposit ratio rising to 81.4 from 78.4pc a year earlier.

The widening gap has forced banks to increasingly depend on market-based funding, including certificates of deposit, while competition for retail deposits has intensified as household savings continue to diversify into mutual funds and alternative investment products.

CareEdge said banks are likely to continue facing funding pressures despite lower deposit rates, as deposit mobilisation remains a key challenge. UNI

Stock markets end on strong note, Sensex up 900 points

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JUL 18: The Indian stock markets on Friday ended on a strong note. Indices were supported by robust buying in auto, information technology and banking stocks.

At close, the Sensex was up 964.58 points or 1.25 percent at 78,151.45, and the Nifty was up 261.55 points or 1.09 percent at 24,334.30. For the week, BSE Sensex added 0.5pc and

Nifty rose 0.7pc.

Among the sectors, Nifty Private Bank emerging as the top gainer rising 2 percent. It was followed by Nifty Bank, which advanced 1.6 percent, Nifty IT by 1.7 percent. Nifty Auto and Nifty Realty also rose 1.3 percent each, Nifty Oil & Gas gained 1 percent and Nifty FMCG added 0.7 percent.

On the other hand, Nifty Pharma lost 1.4 percent and Metal down 0.4

percent.

Nearly 100 stocks touched their 52-week high on the BSE. These included Federal Bank, Sona BLW, Exide Industries, Himadri Speciality, Adani Energy, Ipca Labs, Oracle Fin Services, Gujarat Fluorochemicals, Piramal Finance, BHEL, among others. Indian rupee snapped four-day losing streak and ended higher by 7 paise at 96.28 against the US dollar. UNI

INDIA TO GET FIRST ADVANCED BATTERY RECYCLING PLANT BY 2027 AS N.A.N. GREENMET, BELGIUM'S SILOX PARTNER

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JULY 18: India is set to establish its first advanced hydrometallurgical battery recycling facility under a Rs 1,400-crore joint venture between N.A.N. GreenMet Pvt. Ltd. and Belgium's Silox Group, having four decades of experience, as the country seeks to secure supplies of battery-grade critical minerals domestically amid rapid growth in electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing.

The project, which will deploy Silox's proprietary hydrometallurgical technology, is expected to begin commercial operations by December 2027, marking a significant step in India's efforts to build a circular battery econ-

omy and reduce dependence on imported raw materials.

Silox Group Chairman Jean-Christophe (J.C.) Bogaert said the company is introducing a technology that has already been validated in India, reducing execution risks for the commercial-scale project.

"This is not a first-generation technology being introduced into a new market. It is a proven industrial process that has already been validated in the Indian context through pilot-scale work undertaken by Silox Specialties India," Bogaert said in an exclusive interview.

The technology has been designed with the flexibility to process different lithium-ion battery chemistries and evolving

feedstock streams, which is particularly important as India's EV and battery ecosystem continues to mature. The phased development approach also allows us to scale operations in line with the availability of end-of-life batteries and manufacturing scrap, ensuring that capacity grows alongside the market.

Unlike conventional recycling methods, the hydrometallurgical process enables recovery of battery-grade lithium, cobalt, nickel and manganese from spent lithium-ion batteries and manufacturing scrap with high purity, allowing these materials to be reintroduced into battery manufacturing.

In terms of technology performance, Silox brings over 40

years of industrial-scale hydrometallurgical expertise and the objective of the company is to "consistently produce high-purity battery-grade materials that meet global quality standards while enabling a commercially sustainable and circular value chain. The technology has also been designed to process multiple lithium-ion battery chemistries."

The facility will be developed in phases with an eventual capacity to process 40,000 metric tonnes per annum (MTPA) of spent battery shredding and 20,000 tonnes per annum (TPA) of hydrometallurgical processing, and an overall Capex of around INR 1400 Cr, with first phase Capex of INR 600 Cr. The

land has been secured in Andhra Pradesh, and the financial incentives are in place.

"Commercial operations are targeted to commence by December 2027. The land has been secured in Andhra Pradesh, and the financial incentives are in place," he said.

India's battery recycling industry remains at an early stage despite the country's ambitious electric mobility plans.

It is worth mentioning that the absence of large-scale domestic refining capacity has resulted in significant volumes of battery scrap either being exported or remaining under-utilised, while manufacturers continue to rely heavily on imported battery materials. UNI

