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You Are the Makers of India's Future: LG Sinha Tells Youth at Mega Job Fair

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 28: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday urged the youth of Jammu and Kashmir to dream big, acquire new skills and lead the country's development journey, asserting that young people are not just job seekers but the makers of India's future.

Addressing the 77th State-Level Mega Job Fair at Amar Singh College, Srinagar, the Lieutenant Governor said such platforms provide a crucial link between the aspirations of young people and employment opportunities while strengthening the foundation for a skilled and self-reliant workforce.

The job fair, organised by Desh Bhagat University, Punjab and Cluster University Srinagar in collaboration with NIELIT, Nations Development Association and MY Bharat, witnessed participation from more than 50 companies representing sectors including information technology, healthcare, banking, finance, manufacturing, retail, hospitality, education, logistics and engineering.

"This is a platform where dreams meet



direction, where education meets industry, and where the foundation of a new Jammu and Kashmir is being strengthened," Sinha said.

Addressing thousands of aspiring can-

didates, the Lieutenant Governor said the future of the nation depends on the ability of youth to innovate, learn continuously and adapt to changing requirements.

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Having Funds But Not Spending Them Is Incompetence: Omar Abdullah Tells Departments



■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 28: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday directed government departments to accelerate Capital Expenditure (CAPEX) and ensure timely utilization of available funds, stating that failure to spend sanctioned money hampers development and cannot be justified.

Chairing a high-level review meeting at the Civil Secretariat, the Chief Minister stressed

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CM Omar calls for expanding employment opportunities for youth

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 28: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today reaffirmed his government's commitment to expanding employment opportunities for the youth, saying that while government jobs alone are not the solution to unemployment, it is the government's responsibility to create more avenues for youth through private sector recruitment, entrepreneurship and industry partnerships.

The Chief Minister made these remarks while addressing the valedictory session of the 77th State-Level Mega Job Fair at Amar Singh College, Srinagar. The event was organised by Desh Bhagat University, Punjab, and Cluster University of Srinagar in collaboration with NIELIT, Nations Development Association (NDA) and MY Bharat.

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Amarnath Yatra Surpasses Last Year's Pilgrim Count as 4.35 Lakh Visit Holy Cave Shrine

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, JULY 28: The annual Amarnath Yatra has surpassed last year's total pilgrim footfall, with 4,35,412 devotees offering prayers at the holy cave shrine since the pilgrimage commenced on July 3, officials said on Tuesday.

According to officials, 9,073 pilgrims visited the shrine on Tuesday alone, pushing the cumulative figure beyond the over 4.14 lakh pilgrims who completed the pilgrimage during the previous year's Yatra. The milestone reflects the sustained flow of devotees despite challenging terrain and weather conditions.

Among those who offered prayers on Tuesday were 5,526 men, 3,090 women, 162 children, 41 saints, 12 women ascetics, three transgender devotees and 239 security personnel.

A fresh batch of 3,029 pilgrims, including 30 foreign male devotees, also reached the Baltal base camp after departing from Bhagwati Nagar Yatri Niwas in Jammu under

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39 Injured As Bus Carrying Amarnath Yatra Pilgrims Skids Off Road In J&K

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JUL 28: At least 39 Amarnath Yatra pilgrims were injured when their speeding bus skidded off the road in the Kangan area of Jammu and Kashmir's Ganderbal district on Tuesday, officials said.

The bus fell on a house at Hariganwan after the driver lost control of the vehicle while navigating a curve. The house was badly damaged, but it prevented the

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Ensure Best Possible Medical Care For Injured Pilgrims: LG Sinha

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 28: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday directed health authorities to ensure the best possible medical care for 39 Amarnath Yatra pilgrims injured in a road accident in

● Turn on Page 2

CM Omar Orders Best Care for Injured Pilgrims

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 28: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today expressed deep concern over the road accident at Gund, Kangan in Ganderbal district, in

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Sakeena Itoo visits SKIMS Soura

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 28: On the directions of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Minister for Health and Medical

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Widespread To Moderate Rain Likely Across Kashmir Over Next 4 Days

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JUL 28: The Meteorological Centre on Tuesday predicted fairly widespread light to moderate rain and thunderstorms across Jammu and Kashmir over the next 24 hours, with wet weather expected to persist during the following two days.

According to the forecast, many places across the union Territory are likely to witness

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J&K explores global best practices to modernise horticulture sector, enhance farmer income

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 28: A high-level delegation from Jammu and Kashmir, led by Minister for Agriculture Production Department, Javid Ahmad Dar, has recently concluded an official visit to Europe aimed at strengthening the Union Territory's horticulture sector through adoption of advanced technologies, modern production systems and strategic inter-

national collaborations.

The delegation was comprised of Vikas Anand, Director Horticulture, Kashmir; Nodal Officer, JKIP/HADP; Professor Haroon Rashid Naik, former Director Research, SKUAST-Kashmir and Dr. A. Raouf Malik, Principal Investigator, HADP and Expert Member.

During the visit, the delegation toured internationally reputed commercial nurseries producing premium-quality plant-

ing material and designer plants. Detailed interactions were held with the leading experts on nursery management, modern propagation techniques, certification systems, phytosanitary protocols, quality assurance and integrated management of nursery pests and diseases.

The visit provided valuable insights into the production of disease-free, true-to-type planting material, which forms

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J&K's 570 MVAR Capacitor Banks Have Become Technologically Obsolete: NRPC

■ HT NEWS DESK / KNO / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, JUL 28: The Northern Regional Power Committee (NRPC) has raised serious concerns over the condition of Jammu and Kashmir's reactive power infrastructure, stating that the Union Territory's 570 MVAR shunt capacitor banks have become technologically obsolete and require urgent refurbishment, re-

placement and modernisation to meet the demands of an evolving electricity transmission network.

According to official documents, the Jammu and Kashmir Power Transmission Corporation Limited (JKPTCL) informed the committee that its intra-state transmission system currently operates approximately 570 MVAR of shunt capacitor banks installed at various 33 kV grid

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Promotion Process to Begin Immediately, As MHA Clears Ad-Hoc Promotions in Ladakh: LG Ladakh, VK Saxena

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

LEH, JULY 28: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has approved the filling of vacant Group 'B' Gazetted Administrative Service posts in the Union Territory of Ladakh through ad-hoc promotions, paving the way for immediate appointments to address the long-standing shortage of Gazetted officers.

The approval, conveyed through an official communication dated July

27, permits the Ladakh Administration to fill vacancies under the promotion quota as an interim measure until a regular promotion mechanism is established.

The decision follows the intervention of Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, who had urged the MHA to resolve the issue, pointing out that the absence of notified Recruitment Rules had stalled regular promotions and adversely affected

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CS reviews implementation of JKCIP across J&K

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 28: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today chaired a comprehensive review meeting to assess the implementation of the Jammu & Kashmir Competitiveness Improvement of Agriculture and Allied Sectors Project (JKCIP) being implemented by the Agriculture Production Department across the districts of the Union Territory.

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Agriculture Production Department; VC, SKUAST-Kashmir/SKUAST-Jammu; Secretary (Technical), APD; Mission Director, JKCIP; MD, Horticulture Planning & Marketing; Directors of



Agriculture, Horticulture, Sheep Husbandry, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry; Convenor, UTLCB besides senior officers of the Agriculture Production Department.

Emphasising that agriculture continues to be one of the most

critical sectors of Jammu & Kashmir's economy, the Chief Secretary said that JKCIP has been conceived as a transformational initiative aimed at enhancing farmers' incomes through climate-smart agriculture, promotion of niche crops, value addition, entre-

preneurship development, market integration and sustainable livelihood generation.

He observed that the project has created a strong institutional framework for modernising the agriculture and allied sectors and stressed that every implementing agency must now shift its focus from approvals to tangible outcomes on the ground by ensuring timely establishment of beneficiary units and measurable improvement in rural livelihoods.

Regarding enhancing the participation of women and youth as envisaged under the programme, the Chief Secretary directed the Agriculture Production Department

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CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....

You Are....

"You are not merely job-seekers. You are the makers of India's future. In your hands rests your career as well as the direction of the nation's development," he said.

Sinha emphasised that education must go beyond classrooms and examinations, stating that colleges and universities should prepare students with practical knowledge, confidence and workplace skills.

"Education should not be confined to classrooms. It must prepare every student to begin life's journey with confidence, skills and practical understanding," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor called for greater co-operation between educational institutions and industries, saying that a strong partnership would help bridge the gap between academic learning and professional requirements.

"If industry and education work together, we can create an environment where knowledge and experience strengthen each other, and innovation and employment advance together," he said.

Highlighting the objectives of the mega job fair, Sinha said the initiative would promote employment opportunities, encourage entrepreneurship, simplify recruitment processes and align skill development programmes with modern industry needs.

He said unemployment cannot be addressed through government jobs alone as available positions in the public sector are limited. Instead, he stressed the need to promote private sector growth, strengthen small businesses, improve technical skills and provide better career guidance to students.

Urging youth to follow the principles of ambition, continuous learning and innovation, the Lieutenant Governor said success carries greater value when achieved with honesty, responsibility and ethical conduct.

He also highlighted the growing entrepreneurial spirit among young people in Jammu and Kashmir and said the Union Territory has the potential to emerge as a centre for startups, innovation and modern industries.

"Let us resolve that this 77th Mega Job Fair will mark the beginning of a new chapter in the employment history of Jammu and Kashmir," Sinha said.

Senior government officials, heads of educational institutions, industry representatives and a large number of students attended the event.

Having Funds....

that effective use of resources is crucial for infrastructure growth, better public services and economic progress in Jammu and Kashmir.

"To have money and not spend it is incompetence. This is very difficult to justify. Not having money is easier to explain, but it is impossible to explain when funds are available and remain unutilized," Omar Abdullah said.

The Chief Minister expressed concern over delays in expenditure by some departments and directed them to focus on improving spending performance instead of waiting until the final months of the financial year.

He said the review was conducted at the beginning of the financial cycle to provide departments sufficient time to take corrective measures and complete pending works during the available working season.

"There is still ample working season available in both Kashmir and Jammu. There should be no reason why funds already released are not spent appropriately. Every department must give this focused attention," he said.

During the meeting, Omar Abdullah reviewed progress under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) scheme and directed departments to ensure complete utilization of allocated funds, warning that unspent amounts could affect future allocations.

He instructed ministers to personally monitor reform-related targets under SASCI on a fortnightly basis to help Jammu and Kashmir qualify for additional financial assistance.

"The earlier we implement the specified reforms, the sooner we receive additional funds and the more time we will have to utilize them productively," he said.

The Chief Minister directed departments to immediately begin work on projects where administrative approvals and tendering processes have already been completed. He said such projects could initially be supported through CAPEX funding and later shifted to the reform-linked component of SASCI after additional funds become available.

Emphasising the need for better planning, Omar Abdullah asked departments to prepare a strong project pipeline for the next financial year instead of waiting for funds before identifying development works. He also advised departments to examine development priorities submitted by Members of the Legislative Assembly during Budget consultations and consider suitable projects, particularly those above 2 crore, for future funding support.

The Chief Minister further instructed departments to complete approvals and other formalities well in advance to ensure that projects for the 2027-28 financial year are ready for implementation once funds are sanctioned.

He directed officials to improve expenditure under Centrally Sponsored Schemes and ensure that released funds are utilized efficiently within prescribed timelines.

Taking note of concerns regarding the tendering process, the Chief Minister asked departments to develop measures for simplifying procurement procedures while maintaining transparency and accountability.

The meeting was attended by ministers Sakina Itoo, Javed Ahmed Rana, Javid Ahmed Dar and Satish Sharma, along with Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, senior administrative officers and heads of departments.

Earlier, Additional Chief Secretary Finance Shailen-

dra Kumar gave a detailed presentation on the Capital Expenditure position for the financial year 2026-27, highlighting sector-wise expenditure trends and departments facing delays in fund utilization.

CM Omar....

Minister for Education Sakina Itoo, Commissioner Secretary School Education Ram Niwas Sharma, Vice Chancellor Cluster University of Srinagar, Vice Chancellors of several universities from Jammu and Kashmir, President Desh Bhagat University Punjab Dr. Sandeep Singh, Principal Amar Singh College, principals and deans of various colleges, members of the teaching fraternity and students were present on the occasion.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said that institutions of higher learning have a responsibility that extends beyond awarding degrees. He observed that universities and colleges must actively support students in transitioning from education to employment through continuous engagement and career facilitation.

He noted that for decades, educational institutions in Jammu and Kashmir had largely considered their responsibility fulfilled once students graduated. Appreciating the initiative taken by Cluster University Srinagar and Desh Bhagat University in organising the mega job fair, he described it as a significant step towards bridging the gap between education and employment.

The Chief Minister highlighted the encouraging outcome of the job fair, stating that of the nearly 5,300 registered candidates, around 470 youths secured job offers, while another 430 candidates reached the final stages of recruitment, requiring only the completion of interview formalities. He said that nearly 900 young men and women had either secured employment or were on the verge of being employed, describing it as an impressive success rate for an initiative that is still in its early stages.

He expressed confidence that with more such employment drives, the number of placements would continue to rise. Calling the event a landmark initiative for Cluster University Srinagar, he said it demonstrated the immense potential of structured campus recruitment in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Chief Minister stressed the need to institutionalise campus recruitment across all universities and colleges in Jammu and Kashmir. He said that universities, including the University of Kashmir, Islamic University of Science and Technology, University of Jammu, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology and other higher educational institutions, should organise recruitment drives regularly so that students get employment opportunities before completing their studies.

Stating that merely asserting government jobs are not the solution to unemployment is not enough, Omar Abdullah said the government cannot abdicate its responsibility after making such a statement. "If we cannot provide government employment to every young person, then it becomes our duty to open more doors of opportunity. We cannot simply tell our youth to look elsewhere; we must create opportunities for them through private sector engagement, skill development and industry partnerships," he said.

Emphasising the immense talent among the youth of Jammu and Kashmir, the Chief Minister said that what they require is greater exposure and wider opportunities. The Chief Minister also underscored the importance of promoting entrepreneurship alongside employment. Referring to the government's recent initiatives to strengthen the startup ecosystem, he said efforts were underway to connect young entrepreneurs with venture capital fund and hand-holding of startups so that those wishing to establish their own enterprises receive the necessary institutional support.

He reiterated that the government would continue making every possible effort to ensure that the youth of Jammu and Kashmir receive opportunities comparable to those available elsewhere in the country and abroad. Congratulating the candidates who secured placements during the recruitment drive, the Chief Minister wished them success in their professional careers. He also extended his best wishes to those who had reached the final stage of the recruitment process, expressing hope that they too would soon secure employment.

Earlier, the Chief Minister handed over offer letters to students who were selected during the campus recruitment process. Congratulating the newly recruited candidates, he expressed confidence that they would excel in their respective careers and serve as an inspiration for other aspiring youth.

On the occasion, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was also signed between Cluster University of Srinagar and Desh Bhagat University, Punjab in presence of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, aimed at strengthening academic collaboration, skill development initiatives and enhancing employment opportunities for students. The mega job fair brought together more than 50 reputed employers from various parts of the country, including companies with operations in the Gulf and Middle East.

The event offered direct employment opportunities to graduates, postgraduates, diploma holders and skilled youth through on-the-spot interviews, screening and recruitment, while also providing career guidance and valuable industry exposure.

Amarnath Yatra....

stringent security arrangements.

Officials said the 21st convoy left Jammu at 2:45 a.m. and consisted of 151 vehicles, including 57 buses, 30 medium motor vehicles, 58 light motor vehicles and six two-wheelers. No convoy was dispatched through the Pahalgam route on Tuesday.

The latest batch comprised 2,310 men, 590 women, 14 children, 45 saints, 40 women ascetics and 30 foreign male pilgrims.

Officials further stated that the total number of

pilgrims who have departed from Bhagwati Nagar Yatri Niwas in Jammu for this year's pilgrimage has reached 1,30,355.

The Amarnath Yatra, one of India's largest annual religious pilgrimages, is conducted through the twin routes of Baltal in Central Kashmir and Nunwan in Pahalgam, leading to the cave shrine located at an altitude of 3,880 metres in the Himalayas.

With the pilgrim count already exceeding last year's total, the Yatra is moving towards another high turnout. In 2024, around 5.12 lakh devotees visited the shrine, while the highest-ever attendance was recorded in 2011 with 6.35 lakh pilgrims, followed by 6.22 lakh in 2012.

39 Injured....

bus from rolling into the Sindh river. No one was in the house at the time of the accident, the officials said.

They said the 39 pilgrims, who were returning after paying obeisance at the holy cave shrine of Amarnath, suffered injuries. They were evacuated by locals and security personnel to the hospital for treatment.

Lieutenant Governor (LG) Manoj Sinha enquired about the condition of the injured.

"Spoke with Deputy Commissioner, Ganderbal, and health officials and inquired about the health condition of Shri Amarnathji Yatra pilgrims injured in the unfortunate road accident earlier this morning at Ganiwan, Ganderbal. 39 pilgrims returning after Darshan of Baba Barfani sustained injuries and are currently undergoing treatment at SKIMS," Sinha posted on his X handle.

He said he has directed the health officials to ensure all necessary assistance and the best possible medical care for the injured.

"I pray to Lord Shiva for the speedy recovery of the injured devotees," Sinha said.

Ensure Best....

Ganderbal district, as officials rushed emergency assistance to the victims.

The pilgrims were injured after the bus carrying them skidded off the road near Ganiwan in Kangan area while returning from the Amarnath Cave Shrine. The vehicle lost control while negotiating a curve and crashed into a residential house at Hariganwan.

Officials said the impact caused significant damage to the house, but the structure prevented the bus from falling into the Sindh River, averting a major tragedy. The house was vacant at the time of the accident.

Local residents, security personnel and emergency teams immediately launched rescue operations and shifted all injured pilgrims to hospital. The injured devotees are undergoing treatment at the Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS).

The Lieutenant Governor spoke with the Deputy Commissioner, Ganderbal, and senior health officials to take stock of the situation and enquire about the condition of the injured pilgrims.

Sinha directed authorities to provide every possible assistance and ensure timely and effective treatment for all those injured in the accident.

The accident has raised fresh concerns over road safety measures on hilly routes during the ongoing pilgrimage season, with authorities expected to review precautionary arrangements to prevent such incidents.

CM Omar....

which several Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra pilgrims returning to Srinagar after paying obeisance at the holy cave shrine sustained injuries. The Chief Minister directed the Health & Medical Education Department to ensure the best possible medical care for all the injured pilgrims and deputed Minister for Health & Medical Education, Sakina Itoo, to Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), Soura to personally oversee their treatment.

Acting on the directions of the Chief Minister, the Health Minister visited SKIMS, where she met the injured pilgrims and enquired about their well-being. She also interacted with the attending doctors and hospital authorities to assess the nature of injuries and the treatment being provided.

The Minister directed the hospital administration to ensure the best possible medical care for all the injured pilgrims and instructed that no effort be spared in their treatment and recovery.

The Chief Minister wished the injured pilgrims a speedy recovery and reaffirmed the Government's commitment to extending every possible assistance to them and their families during this difficult time.

Earlier this morning, a bus carrying Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra pilgrims returning from the holy cave shrine skidded off the road near the Ganiwan/Hariganwan stretch in the Gund area of Kangan, Ganderbal district, after the driver reportedly lost control while negotiating a curve. Thirty-nine pilgrims sustained injuries in the accident. A swift rescue operation was soon launched, shifting the injured initially to Sub-District Hospital, Kangan, before they were referred to SKIMS, Soura for specialised treatment.

Sakeena....

Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, today visited the Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), Soura, to enquire about the health condition of the Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra pilgrims who sustained injuries in a road accident in Ganiwan, Ganderbal.

During the visit, the Minister met the injured pilgrims undergoing treatment and interacted with them individually to enquire about their well-being and recovery. She also spoke to their attendants and assured them of the Government's full support.

The Minister reviewed the treatment being provided to the injured pilgrims and held a detailed interaction with the doctors and senior officers of the hospital regarding their medical condition and progress.

Emphasising that the health and well-being of

the pilgrims is the Government's foremost priority, Sakeena Itoo directed the hospital administration to ensure that all the injured receive the best possible medical care, specialised treatment and every required facility for their speedy recovery.

"The Government is committed to providing the highest standard of healthcare to every injured pilgrim. There should be no compromise in treatment, and all necessary medical assistance and support must be extended to them," the Minister said.

She also instructed the hospital authorities to closely monitor the condition of each patient and ensure round-the-clock availability of specialist doctors, medicines and other essential healthcare services.

Director SKIMS, Dr. Ashraf Ganie informed the Minister that all injured pilgrims are under constant medical supervision and are being provided comprehensive treatment by teams of specialists.

Widespread....

one or two spells of light to moderate rain or thundershowers on July 28 and 29, particularly during the early morning and late afternoon to evening hours.

The weather office has also warned of heavy rainfall and brief intense showers at a few districts of the Jammu division during this period.

For July 30 and 31, the Meteorological Centre has predicted one or two spells of light to moderate rain and thundershowers at most places across the Kashmir division. Brief intense heavy showers are also possible at isolated places, mainly during the early morning and late afternoon to evening hours.

Meanwhile, night temperatures across the Valley remained above normal. The minimum temperature was 1-2 degrees Celsius above normal at many places in the Kashmir division and 0-2 degrees Celsius above normal in the Jammu division.

Gulmarg recorded the lowest minimum temperature in the Kashmir division at 11.4 deg C.

The Meteorological Centre has advised residents to follow administration advisory.

J&K explores....

the foundation of a productive and globally competitive horticulture sector.

The visit assumes particular significance for Jammu and Kashmir as a substantial proportion of the high-density apple planting material presently introduced in the Union Territory originates from European nurseries. A first-hand understanding of the nursery production system, quality control mechanisms, certification standards and traceability practices adopted in Europe will help the government strengthen the domestic nursery infrastructure, improve the quality of locally produced planting material and progressively reduce dependence on external sources while ensuring the availability of superior planting stock for growers.

The delegation also visited Koppert Biological Systems, where discussions focused on biological crop protection, integrated pest management (IPM), bio-inputs and other sustainable horticultural practices.

The exposure is expected to accelerate the adoption of environmentally sustainable technologies, reduce dependence on chemical pesticides and promote climate-smart horticulture across Jammu and Kashmir.

As part of the technical programme, the delegation also examined the state-of-the-art horticultural machinery designed for nursery operations, precision orchard management, planting, pruning, spraying, harvesting and post-harvest handling. The technologies evaluated have considerable potential to improve productivity, reduce production costs, enhance labour efficiency and promote greater mechanisation of the horticulture sector.

J&K's 570....

substations across the Union Territory.

The utility told the committee that most of these installations were commissioned several years ago and continue to function with conventional control and protection systems, limiting their ability to respond efficiently to changing grid conditions.

Reviewing reactive power compensation and voltage profile improvement in the Jammu and Kashmir grid, the NRPC observed that the ageing capacitor banks, along with associated switchgear, protection systems and control equipment, now require comprehensive modernisation to ensure reliable and efficient grid operations.

The committee further noted that although reactive power support is available through Inter-State Transmission System substations connected to the Northern Grid, no comprehensive assessment has been conducted in recent years to determine whether the existing reactive power compensation remains adequate under present network conditions.

According to the NRPC, JKPTCL has stressed the need for a detailed technical study to evaluate the existing voltage profile across the transmission network and examine reactive power flow under different operating scenarios. The proposed study would also assess current and future requirements for reactive power compensation, including the installation of additional capacitor banks, reactors, dynamic reactive compensation systems and other voltage control measures required to strengthen the transmission network.

To address the identified shortcomings, JKPTCL informed the committee that it has prepared a programme for the refurbishment, replacement and augmentation of reactive power compensation facilities across its transmission system.

The proposed upgrades are expected to improve voltage regulation, enhance grid stability and strengthen the reliability of electricity transmission across Jammu and Kashmir as demand on the power network continues to grow.

Promotion....

administrative functioning across government departments.

Officials said the move would provide immediate relief to eligible employees awaiting promotion while ensuring that key administrative posts do not remain vacant. The shortage of Gazetted officers has impacted governance and decision-making in several departments across the Union Territory.

Welcoming the approval, Lt Governor Saxena said the decision would significantly improve administrative efficiency and strengthen governance in Ladakh.

"It will help overcome the shortage of Gazetted officers, improve administrative efficiency and ensure uninterrupted delivery of public services. I have directed the Chief Secretary to start the promotion process immediately," he said.

The MHA has directed that all ad-hoc promotions be made strictly in accordance with the Department of Personnel and Training's Office Memorandum dated April 3, 2013, along with subsequent amendments and other applicable guidelines, subject to fulfilment of all prescribed conditions.

The decision is expected to ensure continuity in governance, speed up administrative processes and improve the delivery of public services while the Centre finalises a permanent promotion framework for the Union Territory.

CS reviews....

to reach out to the women registered under the Self-Help Groups (SHGs) of the Rural Development Department (RDD) and utilise the database of Mission YUVA to effectively engage the aspiring young entrepreneurs across Jammu & Kashmir. He emphasised that convergence with these flagship initiatives would significantly broaden the programme's outreach and ensure greater inclusion of eligible beneficiaries.

The Chief Secretary further directed the Deputy Commissioners to institute a roster-based mechanism for regular field inspections by designated officers to assess the quality of implementation, verify the functionality of beneficiary units established under JKICP, and obtain first-hand feedback from applicants. He instructed that the field visits should also focus on identifying implementation bottlenecks and addressing the challenges faced by beneficiaries in a timely manner to ensure effective execution of the programme.

The Chief Secretary further observed that the implementation of the programme must concentrate on improving the pace of establishment of sanctioned units, strengthening field-level supervision and ensuring that approved beneficiaries are provided all necessary support for timely completion of their enterprises.

Speaking on the occasion, Additional Chief Secretary, Agriculture Production Department, Dr. Ashish Chandra Verma, observed that farmer participation under JKICP has witnessed remarkable growth since the last review, reflecting the increasing confidence of the farming community in the programme.

While expressing satisfaction over this incremental progress, he maintained that considerable scope still exists for further improvement. He called upon all implementing agencies to intensify awareness campaigns, strengthen grassroots outreach, and ensure that every eligible farmer, youth and aspiring agri-entrepreneur is able to avail the benefits of the project through proactive facilitation and effective last-mile delivery.

While providing the details the MD, JKICP, Dr. Sagar Doifode Dattatray stated that the number of registered farmers has increased to 60,283, reflecting an increase of nearly 189 per cent over the past. Similarly, he gave out that the number of applications received under various project interventions has risen to 67,579, while 43,168 applications have been approved with 7,501 beneficiary units already been established across Jammu & Kashmir.

A detailed department-wise review revealed substantial progress under Agriculture, Horticulture, Fisheries, Sheep Husbandry, Animal Husbandry, Horticulture Planning & Marketing and SKUASTs. The Agriculture Department as the principal implementing agency has made large-scale interventions in vegetable cultivation, aromatic rice, saffron, protected cultivation, water management systems, medicinal and aromatic plants, honey production, mushroom cultivation and other niche agricultural enterprises.

Similarly, the Horticulture Department has expanded interventions relating to orchard rejuvenation, apple, walnut, kiwi, citrus, mango, guava, litchi, nursery development and water management. Significant progress has also been registered under Fisheries, Sheep Husbandry and other allied sectors through livelihood-oriented interventions aimed at strengthening income generation among rural households.



DC Srinagar reviews progress in implementation of flagship welfare & pension schemes

Calls for enhanced outreach through special awareness-cum-registration camps

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 28: To assess the progress achieved under various flagship welfare and pension schemes, including the Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana (PM-SYM), JK Samadhan, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PM-KMY), and the National Pension Scheme for Traders and Self-Employed Persons, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, on Tuesday chaired a comprehensive review meeting at the Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex.

The meeting was attended by

Additional Deputy Commissioner, Joint Commissioner SMC, District Programme Officer, ICDS, Chief Planning Officer, General Manager DIC, Assistant Commissioner Development, Deputy Director Employment, Chief Education Officer, Chief Agriculture Officer, Chief Horticulture Officer, Assistant Labour Commissioner, AD Handicraft/Handloom, ARTO, District Health Officer, District Officer, KVIB/KVIC, DPM NRLM, District Manager CSC and other concerned.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner was given a department-wise presentation on the progress achieved under the Pradhan



Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana (PM-SYM), JK Samadhan, Pradhan

Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PM-KMY) and the National Pension Scheme for Traders and Self-Employed

Persons in the District. The presentation highlighted the status of enrolment, beneficiary coverage and implementation of these flagship welfare and pension schemes.

The DC reviewed the status of beneficiary registration, enrolment progress, awareness campaigns and the overall implementation of the schemes by the concerned Departments and implementing agencies. He stressed the need to intensify outreach and awareness efforts to ensure that every eligible beneficiary is enrolled under the schemes within the stipulated timelines.

The DC also underscored the im-

portance of close coordination among all stakeholders for the effective implementation of the welfare programmes and timely delivery of benefits to the intended beneficiaries.

The DC further directed the concerned Departments to organise special awareness-cum-registration camps under the National Pension Scheme for Traders and Self-Employed Persons to accelerate awareness generation and voluntary registrations. He emphasized the need to maximise outreach and ensure wider coverage of eligible beneficiaries under all the welfare and pension schemes.

SKUAST-K, ICAR-ATARI Team Visits Zero Line in Keran, Empowers Border Farming Community

Pays Tribute to Kargil Martyrs, Promotes Sustainable Agriculture in Keran Border Area

DR.AB QAYOOM

KUPWARA, JULY 26: In a significant outreach programme aimed at strengthening the farming community in the border areas, the top leadership of Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-K), led by Vice-Chancellor Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai, along with Dr. Parvender Sheoran, Director, ICAR-ATARI, Ludhiana, and Director Extension Prof. Raihana Habib Kanth visited the Zero Line in Keran sector of Kupwara district on the occasion of Kargil Vijay Diwas.

The programme was organised under the supervision and guidance of Vice-Chancellor Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai and Director Extension, Prof. Raihana Habib Kanth, with the efforts of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Kupwara. The delegation included scientists and non-scientific staff of KVK Kupwara, who travelled to one of the country's last border villages to interact directly with the farming community.

During the visit, the SKUAST-K and ICAR team inspected agricultural fields, interacted with local farmers, and discussed various modern farming practices to improve agricultural productivity and strengthen the rural economy. The experts encouraged farmers to adopt



scientific and sustainable agricultural techniques for enhancing their income and ensuring long-term agricultural development.

As part of the outreach programme, the team distributed essential agricultural tools and equipment among farmers to support their farming activities and improve productivity in the remote border region.

Addressing the gathering, the visiting dignitaries stressed the importance of empowering border farmers and strengthening the country's internal economy through sustainable agriculture, tech-

nological interventions, and continuous scientific support. They reaffirmed SKUAST-K's commitment to ensuring that farmers living in remote and border areas receive equal access to agricultural innovations and extension services.

On the occasion of Kargil Vijay Diwas, the SKUAST-K delegation also participated in a commemorative programme organised by the Indian Army in Keran. The Vice-Chancellor, Director ICAR-ATARI, Director Extension, scientists, and other officials paid rich tributes to the brave soldiers who laid down their lives in the service of the nation during

the Kargil War. Floral tributes were offered to honour the supreme sacrifice of the martyrs, while the gathering remembered their courage, patriotism, and dedication.

The delegation appreciated the invaluable role played by the Indian Army in safeguarding the nation's borders and acknowledged its continuous support towards the welfare and socio-economic development of border communities, particularly in facilitating agricultural and developmental initiatives.

Local residents expressed gratitude to SKUAST-K for reaching the remote border village with scientific knowledge and practical support. They particularly appreciated the sustained efforts of KVK Kupwara, which, according to the locals, has been consistently working in the Keran region for nearly a decade by organising awareness programmes, training sessions, demonstrations, and farmer outreach activities for the overall development of the farming community.

The programme concluded with a renewed commitment from SKUAST-K and its extension wing to continue strengthening farmer-scientist linkages in border areas and to promote inclusive agricultural growth while honouring the spirit of national service and sacrifice symbolised by Kargil Vijay Diwas.

MCS Baramulla Stages Thought-Provoking Kashmiri Play "Aalav" at Skicc in Chinara Book Festival

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 28: As part of the 3rd edition of the Chinara Book Festival organised by the National Book Trust, India (NBT) at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC) Srinagar, Mehboob Cultural Society "MCS" Baramulla presented its thought-provoking Kashmiri stage play "Aalav" captivating the audience with its powerful message and artistic excellence. The play was written and directed by noted theatre practitioner Ashraf Nagoo who also appeared in a lead role alongside Hilal Khan and Shabeer Hakak. Their compelling performance marked by emotional depth and natural expression received warm appreciation from the audience. "Aalav" explored contemporary social issues and highlighted the importance of human values through an engaging narrative and effective stagecraft. The meaningful dialogues, strong direction and impressive acting combined to make the production one of the memorable cultural presentations of the festival. Prominent literary figures, theatre enthusiasts and members of the cultural fraternity present on the occasion lauded the efforts of MCS Baramulla describing the production as a significant contribution to the promotion and preservation of Kashmiri theatre. They congratulated the director, cast and the entire production team for delivering a meaningful and impactful performance. The performance received widespread appreciation for its artistic excellence and meaningful message, reaffirming the vital role of theatre in preserving Kashmir's rich cultural heritage and encouraging dialogue on contemporary social issues.

Jawa Yezdi Motorcycles and Indian Army come together for Shaurya Vijay Yatra, Culminating at Dras on Kargil Vijay Diwas

HT NEWS NETWORK

DRAS, 26 JULY 2026: Jawa Yezdi Motorcycles' Shaurya Vijay Yatra, organised in partnership with the Indian Army, culminated at the Kargil War Memorial in Dras on Kargil Vijay Diwas, completing a 1,900-km journey that began at the National War Memorial in New Delhi. Bringing together serving and retired defence personnel, Veer Naris, families of martyrs and civilian riders, the expedition paid homage to the valour, dedication and supreme sacrifice of the heroes of the 1999 Kargil War.

A defining moment of the expedition was the ceremonial carriage of sacred soil from the National War Memorial to the Kargil War Memorial, symbolically connecting generations of Indian soldiers whose unwavering commitment continues to safeguard the nation's freedom.

Travelling through the rugged terrains of Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh, participants paid respects at key military landmarks including Chandimandir, Rezang La and the Leh War Memorial before arriving in Dras. The journey served not only as a memorial ride but also as a reminder of the enduring legacy of India's armed forces and the values they embody.

Since its inception in 2021,



the ride conceptualised by Jawa Yezdi motorcycles has sought to carry the stories of India's soldiers beyond military circles and into public consciousness. By bringing together members of the riding community, serving personnel, veterans, Veer Naris and families of martyrs, the initiative has evolved into a unique civil-military movement dedicated to preserving the spirit of courage, duty and selfless service for

future generations.

This year's expedition was flagged off by Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh and attended by senior military officials, veterans and invited guests, underscoring the significance of the initiative and its growing role in fostering public remembrance.

The expedition was completed aboard a fleet of Jawa and Yezdi motorcycles, including the Jawa 350, Jawa 42, Jawa 42 FJ,

Yezdi Adventure and Yezdi Scrambler. Traversing high-altitude passes, challenging mountain routes and some of India's most significant military landmarks, the motorcycles enabled riders to undertake a demanding journey befitting the spirit of the occasion.

Anupam Thareja, Co-founder, Classic Legends, said:

"The Shaurya Vijay Yatra is our way of ensuring that the stories of India's bravehearts continue to inspire future generations. From the National War Memorial to Dras, every kilometre of this journey was dedicated to honouring those who gave everything for the nation. We are proud to undertake this tribute alongside the Indian Army and the wider riding community. By bringing together serving and retired defence personnel, Veer Naris and civilian riders, we hope to ensure that the values of courage, service and national pride continue to resonate across generations."

As riders gathered at the Kargil War Memorial on Kargil Vijay Diwas, the Shaurya Vijay Yatra reaffirmed its enduring purpose—to ensure that the legacy of India's fallen heroes continues to inspire citizens across generations and that the spirit of Kargil remains etched in the nation's collective memory.

District Hospital Bandipora celebrates World Hepatitis Day-2026

HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, JULY 28: District Hospital Bandipora on Tuesday organised a comprehensive awareness programme to commemorate World Hepatitis Day-2026, reaffirming its commitment to raising public awareness about hepatitis prevention, early diagnosis, and treatment.

The programme was presided over by Additional District Development Commissioner Bandipora, Nazir Ahmad Mir. Among the distinguished dignitaries present were Chief Medical Officer Bandipora, Dr. Bhajan Kour, and Medical Superintendent, District Hospital Bandipora, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad Malla, besides doctors, healthcare professionals, paramedical staff, and other officials.

On the occasion, Dr. Imtiaz Ahmad Dar, Nodal Officer, delivered a detailed presentation highlighting the global and national burden of hepatitis, its modes of transmission, preventive strategies, vaccination, and the importance of timely screening and treatment. The presentation was followed by an informative session by Dr. Nabeel Ishtiyak, who elaborated on the latest clinical approaches to the diagnosis and management of viral hepatitis while stressing the significance of community awareness and preventive healthcare.

Addressing the gathering, the ADDC appreciated the Health Department for

organising the awareness programme and underscored the need for collective efforts to eliminate hepatitis as a public health threat.

"World Hepatitis Day serves as an important reminder that awareness, early detection, and timely treatment are the strongest tools in combating hepatitis. Every stakeholder must work together to ensure that people are informed and have access to quality healthcare services," he said.

Chief Medical Officer Bandipora, emphasised the importance of preventive healthcare and community participation in the fight against hepatitis. She said that regular screening, vaccination where applicable, safe medical practices and sustained public awareness can significantly reduce the prevalence of hepatitis.

Speaking on the occasion, Medical Superintendent District Hospital Bandipora, reaffirmed the hospital's commitment to strengthening hepatitis screening and treatment services.

"District Hospital Bandipora remains committed to providing quality healthcare services. We encourage people to undergo timely screening and seek medical advice without delay, as early diagnosis greatly improves treatment outcomes," he said.

The programme concluded with an interactive session, where participants discussed preventive measures, the importance of healthy lifestyles, and the collective responsibility of healthcare institutions and the community in achieving the goal of hepatitis.

Javed Rana assures swift action on issues raised by MLA's, contractors

Stresses legislators involvement to enable people centric, inclusive development

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 28: Multiple deputations, including Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) from different constituencies today called on Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, at the Civil Secretariat here and discussed a wide range of public welfare issues.

The legislators who met the Minister included Hilal Akbar Lone, Sajjad Shaheen, Irshad Rasool Kar, Pyare Lal Sharma, Saifuddin Bhat, Randhir Singh and Zafar Ali Khatana.

During the interaction, the MLAs apprised the Minister of the developmental needs and public concerns of their respective constituencies.

They highlighted issues related to drinking water supply, irrigation infrastructure, flood protection measures, road connectivity, healthcare, education and other sectoral requirements, while also seeking timely execution of ongoing development works.

The legislators urged the Minister to ensure early completion of projects of public impor-



tance and called for effective coordination among the departments to address the aspirations of the people.

Giving a patient hearing to each of the legislators, Javed Rana assured them that all their genuine issues projected during the

meetings would receive due attention.

He directed the concerned officers to examine the matters on priority and take appropriate action wherever required.

The Minister reiterated that the Omar Abdullah-led gov-

ernment is committed to strengthen the public service delivery, ensuring that developmental benefits reach every region in a fair and transparent manner.

He said the government remains focused on responsive

governance, prompt resolution of public grievances and accelerated implementation of infrastructure projects aimed at improving the quality of life of the people.

Emphasising close coordination between the public representatives and the administration, the Minister said that the elected legislators play a vital role in identifying the developmental priorities of their constituencies and ensuring that governance remains people-centric.

He said the government values their feedback and will continue to work in close consultation with them to achieve balanced and inclusive development across Jammu and Kashmir.

Later, a delegation of contractors associated with the Jal Shakti Department also called on the Minister and projected issues related to pending payments and execution of departmental works.

The Minister gave a patient hearing to the delegation and assured them that all their genuine concerns would be examined and addressed in accordance with the rules.

One-day awareness programme on Branding & Marketing for PM Vishwakarma beneficiaries held in Udhampur

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

UDHAMPUR, JULY 28: The Ministry of MSME, Government of India, through the MSME-Development & Facilitation Office Jammu, in collaboration with the district administration Udhampur today organised a one-day awareness programme on branding and marketing for beneficiaries of the PM Vishwakarma Scheme.

Additional District Development Commissioner Udhampur Jugal Kishore was the chief guest



on the occasion.

While addressing the participants, the ADDC said that the PM Vishwakarma Scheme is aimed at promoting self-employment, entrepreneurship development and skill enhancement among traditional artisans and young aspirants. He stated that the scheme enables beneficiaries to avail themselves of government support in the form of skill upgradation, toolkit incentives, credit assistance and other benefits, thereby creating sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Emphasising the importance of branding and market outreach, the ADDC highlighted that effective branding and marketing play a vital role in enhancing the visibility, competitiveness and income of traditional artisans. He urged the beneficiaries to adopt innovative marketing practices and build strong brand identities to expand their customer base and improve the market value of their products.

During the programme, experts sensitised the artisans on the importance of product branding, packaging, digital marketing and customer engagement.

My Youth My Pride Wushu & Kabaddi Championship Kicks Off at Indoor Stadium Handwara

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KUPWARA, JULY 28: My Youth My Pride Wushu and Kabaddi Championship began today at the Indoor Stadium Handwara, Kupwara.



A total of 120 boys and girls from different areas are participating in the championship, which is organised under the guidance of the Jammu & Kashmir Sports Council. The event was inaugurated in the presence of Showket, Incharge Baramulla, as Chief Guest, and Ajaz Hassan, Incharge Indoor Stadium Handwara, as Guest of Honour. Farooq Ahmed, Incharge Kulangam, Kupwara, and Nahida Nabi, Khelo India Kabaddi Coach, were also present and interacted with the participating athletes.

The championship aims to promote sports culture, discipline, teamwork, and a healthy lifestyle among the youth of the region. The participation of 120 players from Wushu and Kabaddi disciplines reflects the growing interest in these sports across the area. The event continues to provide young athletes, particularly those from remote and border areas, with opportunities and a platform to showcase their talent at various levels.

The championship will conclude on 29 July 2026 with Wushu and Kabaddi competitions on both days.

ADC Bhaderwah reviews functioning of Municipal Committee

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BHADERWAH, JULY 28: Additional Deputy Commissioner Bhaderwah Sunil Kumar Bhutyal today chaired a review meeting at his office chamber to assess the functioning of the Municipal Committee (MC), Bhaderwah.

The meeting was attended by

the Executive Engineer, PWD (R&B), Bhaderwah, Executive Officer, Municipal Committee, Bhaderwah and others. During the meeting, the ADC reviewed the progress of developmental works being executed by the Municipal Committee and discussed the delivery of civic services in the town. The ADC directed the concerned officers to furnish a comprehensive

report detailing all developmental works undertaken by the Municipal Committee, along with information on the various civic functions and services being provided to the public. Emphasising transparency, accountability and efficient public service delivery, the ADC asked the officers to ensure timely submission of accurate.

DC Rajouri orders Structural Safety Assessment of DC Office Building; Staff of few clerical sections shifted as precaution

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

RAJOURI, JULY 28: Deputy Commissioner Rajouri Abhishek Sharma ordered a comprehensive structural safety assessment of the Deputy Commissioner's Office building following additional damage caused by the recent heavy rains to the already vulnerable structure.

To assess the structural stability and identify any potential hazards, the Deputy Commissioner deputed teams of engineers along with personnel from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) to conduct a detailed inspection of the building.

As a precautionary measure and in the interest of the safety of employees and visitors, staff of few clerical sections have been



temporarily shifted to an alternate location until the building is declared structurally safe by

the NDRF and the engineering experts.

The district administration clarified that the offices of the Deputy Commissioner, Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC), Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC), Assistant Commissioner Revenue (ACR), Assistant Commissioner Defence (AC Defence), Chief Planning Officer (CPO) and other key offices continue to function from the existing DC Office building without any disruption.

Further, keeping in view the safety of visitors, the Deputy Commissioner shall hold all public interactions in the lawn of the DC Office from 12:30 pm to 2 pm. However, the schedule may be revised depending on official meetings and other administrative exigencies.

ADC Bhaderwah inspects SDH Bhaderwah, Reviews healthcare services, JK Sehat App implementation

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BHADERWAH, JULY 28: Additional Deputy Commissioner Bhaderwah Sunil Kumar Bhutyal today conducted a detailed visit to Sub-District Hospital Bhaderwah and inspected various sections of the hospital to assess the functioning of healthcare services and the facilities being provided to the general public.

During the visit, the ADC also chaired a Jan Bhagidari meeting in the presence of Block Medical Officer Bhaderwah Dr. Versha Sharma. Discussions focused on enhancing public participation, improving the quality and accessibility of healthcare services and reviewing the implementation of various health schemes and initiatives.

The ADC further presided over a training and sensitization session



on the JK Sehat App, wherein representatives from different departments, including ASHA workers, Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) and other field-level functionaries participated.

The participants were sensitized about the key features and benefits of the application, and the app was installed on their mobile devices. Practical guidance was also provided on its effective utilization to ensure its successful implementation at the grassroots level.

The ADC appreciated the efforts of the Health Department and stressed the need for greater inter-departmental coordination, effective use of digital health initiatives and active community participation to further strengthen healthcare delivery and ensure that government health services reach the people effectively.

DC Kathua reviews implementation of Biometric Attendance System

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KATHUA, JULY 28: Deputy Commissioner Kathua Rajesh Sharma, today chaired a meeting of District Officers and Sub-Divisional Heads to review the implementation of the Aadhaar-enabled Biometric Attendance System (BAS) in government offices across the district.

The Deputy Commissioner reviewed the department-wise status of biometric attendance and directed all District Officers and Sub-Divisional Heads to strictly implement the Biometric Attendance System (BAS) and ensure that all employees adhere to the government instructions and the circular issued in this regard.

He informed that detailed instructions have already been issued



through a circular, mandating all departments to furnish a monthly certificate of compliance regarding biometric attendance. He said that the drawal of salary shall be allowed only after the concerned Drawing and Disbursing Officer (DDO) furnishes the prescribed monthly certificate of compliance. He stressed that strict compliance

with the instructions is essential to promote punctuality, transparency and accountability in government offices.

DC State Taxes Joginder Singh Jasrotia, ADC Mahima Madan, GM DIC Mushtaq Chaudhary, CPO Ranjeet Thakur and other District and Sectoral officers attended the meeting.

DG Rural Sanitation calls for Mission-Mode execution of SBM (G) initiatives across J&K

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 28: Director General, Rural Sanitation, J&K, Anoo Malhotra today chaired a comprehensive review meeting to assess the implementation and progress of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) across all districts of Jammu & Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Director Rural Sanitation, Jammu / Kashmir, Shabir Ahmad Hakak, Accounts Officer of the Directorate Ajay Singh, Assistant Commissioners Panchayat (ACPs) of all the districts, other officers and consultants of the Directorate.

During the meeting, the Director General conducted a detailed review of the expenditure status under SBM(G), emphasizing the need for timely and effective utilization of available funds to achieve intended outcomes. Districts were directed to closely monitor financial progress and ensure that resources are utilized efficiently for priority interventions.



The progress of spillover works was also reviewed, with instructions to expedite the completion of all pending projects within the prescribed timelines. The Director General stressed that delayed works should be closely monitored to ensure early completion without compromising quality.

A detailed assessment of the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) was undertaken, focusing

on the status of tendering and implementation of approved works. Districts were instructed to fast-track pending tendering processes and ensure timely execution of infrastructure and sanitation projects to strengthen rural sanitation systems.

The meeting also reviewed the District Sanitation Plans, highlighting district-specific interventions aimed at improving solid and liquid waste man-

agement, strengthening community participation, and enhancing Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities.

The Director General directed the districts to intensify field-level monitoring, strengthen documentation, improve service delivery, and ensure greater community participation to enhance overall performance in the national survey.

The Model Verification Status of villages and the functionality status of sanitation assets, including Solid and Liquid Waste Management infrastructure and Community Sanitary Complexes, were also reviewed.

The Director General directed district officials to undertake regular inspections and ensure that all sanitation assets remain fully functional, properly maintained, and effectively utilized by rural communities.

The meeting further reviewed the progress made in the iden-

tification and verification of Bulk Waste Generators (BWGs) across rural areas as per the Solid Waste Management Rules 2026. Districts were instructed to complete the identification process at the earliest and ensure compliance with the provisions of the Solid Waste Management Rules through appropriate monitoring and institutional engagement.

The Director General further underscored the importance of convergence among stakeholders, effective utilization of available resources, and continuous public engagement to sustain the gains achieved under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) and further improve the quality of life in rural Jammu & Kashmir.

The meeting concluded with district-wise action points and timelines for compliance, reaffirming the Directorate's commitment to strengthening rural sanitation systems and achieving the objectives of Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) through coordinated and result-oriented implementation.

LCG Enthrals Audience with Traditional Rouf Dance at SKICC in Chinara Book Festival

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR JULY28: The artists of Lotus Cultural Group "LCG" Srinagar captivated the audience with a graceful presentation of the traditional Kashmiri Rouf Dance during the 3rd edition of Chinara Book Festival at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC) Srinagar. The vibrant cultural performance showcased the rich artistic heritage of Kashmir through synchronized movements, colourful traditional attire and melodious folk rhythms.

The presentation drew warm appreciation from the audience who applauded the performers for their dedication and artistic excellence. The performance formed an important part of the cultural segment of the Chinara Book Festival, highlighting the significance of preserving and promoting Kashmir's rich folk traditions alongside literature and the arts. The artists of LCG expressed their commitment to preserving the region's cultural legacy and thanked the organisers for providing a prestigious platform to showcase Kashmir's traditional performing arts before a diverse audience.

The performance reflected the richness of Kashmir's cultural heritage and underscored the importance of preserving traditional folk art. The audience praised the artists for their vibrant presentation and dedication to keeping the Rouf tradition alive.

SKUAST-K Scientist Mudasir Andrabi bags JC Bose Fellowship

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 27: Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-K) has earned national recognition after its senior scientist, Prof Syed Mudasir Andrabi, was awarded the prestigious JC Bose Fellowship, one of India's highest scientific honours, for his pioneering contributions to biotechnology, innovation and translational research.

Prof Andrabi, Professor and Head of the Division of Animal Biotechnology, Faculty of Veterinary Sciences and Animal Husbandry, has been selected for the fellowship in recognition of his sustained excellence in research, technological innovation and scientific leadership. The fellowship is awarded to outstanding scientists whose work has made significant contributions to advancing science and technology in the country.

An internationally acclaimed researcher, Prof Andrabi has built an extensive body of work spanning animal biotechnology, molecular diagnostics, vaccine development, regenerative medicine, bioengineering and translational biomedical research. His research has focused on developing technologies that address critical challenges in human and animal health while supporting agricultural development and public welfare.

Currently, he leads several major research projects funded by premier national agencies, including the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Department of Science and Technology (DST), Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). His ongoing work



covers antimicrobial resistance, gene editing, regenerative medicine, vaccine development and the One Health approach.

Prof Andrabi's research has resulted in several notable innovations, including SalOvac™, a recombinant Lactobacillus-based vaccine against poultry salmonellosis, the RealTick Multiplex Real-Time PCR Diagnostic Kit for human rickettsial infections, LungHealth-MDx, a digital PCR-based epigenetic diagnostic platform, advanced burn recovery bandages and regenerative biomaterials. He holds 13 grant patents, including two U.S. patents, besides several international patent applications and licensed technologies with commercial potential.

Congratulating Prof. Andrabi, Vice-Chancellor Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai said the honour reflects the growing stature of SKUAST-

K in frontier scientific research and innovation. He said the recognition would further inspire the university's research community to pursue high-impact science and accelerate the development of technologies that benefit agriculture, livestock and society.

The university described the fellowship as a landmark achievement for both SKUAST-K and Jammu & Kashmir, noting that it reinforces the institution's emergence as a national hub for translational research, innovation and technology development. Prof Andrabi has authored more than 250 research papers in reputed national and international journals and has mentored numerous postgraduate and doctoral scholars, many of whom have gone on to make significant contributions in academia and scientific research.

His work has earned widespread recognition for combining scientific excellence with practical applications that address real-world challenges.

The scientist has also represented India at several international conferences and collaborative research programmes, contributing to global efforts in biotechnology and veterinary sciences. His collaborations with leading research institutions have strengthened knowledge exchange and enhanced the international visibility of Indian scientific research.

Over the years, Prof Andrabi has received several prestigious awards and honours for his outstanding contributions to science, innovation and technology. His achievements have played a vital role in promoting cutting-edge research at SKUAST-K while encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration across scientific domains.

The JC Bose Fellowship will provide additional support for advanced research, enabling Prof Andrabi to further strengthen ongoing projects and explore emerging areas of biotechnology with potential applications in healthcare, livestock development and sustainable agriculture. The fellowship also recognises scientists who continue to make impactful contributions throughout their careers.

The recognition is being viewed as a proud milestone for Jammu and Kashmir's scientific community, reflecting the region's growing contribution to national research and innovation. Academicians and researchers have hailed the honour as an inspiration for young scientists, encouraging them to pursue excellence in research that addresses societal and developmental needs.

DC Kulgam reviews PMAY-G 2.0

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM, JULY 28: A review meeting regarding the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) 2.0 was held today under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC), Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, in his office chambers.



ber.

During the meeting, a detailed review was conducted of the applications received under PMAY-G 2.0. It was informed that a total of 21,533 applications had been received across the district, of which 17,701 applicants were found eligible.

The Deputy Commissioner directed all concerned officers to publish the gradation list of eligible applicants for wide publicity to ensure transparency. He stated that public disclosure of the priority list would enable applicants to verify their status and facilitate timely correction of any discrepancies.

The DC further directed all BDOs to conduct Gram Sabhas from August 9 to August 12, 2026, for public verification of the gradation lists. The schedule of Gram Sabhas, along with the Panchayat-wise dates and gradation lists, shall be widely publicized through media and displayed at other prominent public loca-

tions to ensure maximum public participation.

It was also decided that each Block shall separately publish Panchayat-wise Gram Sabha schedules along with the respective gradation lists. All Gram Sabha proceedings must be videographed, with the recordings to be properly pre-

served for future reference and for addressing any grievances, if required, said the DC.

All Block Development Officers were directed to ensure that all grievances are addressed by or before August 03, 2026, with proper documentation and evidence of the proceedings.

Emphasizing transparency, accountability, and timely implementation, the Deputy Commissioner instructed all officers to strictly adhere to the prescribed timelines and ensure that the PMAY-G 2.0 beneficiary selection process remains fair and transparent.

The meeting was attended by Altaf Ahmad Khan, Additional District Development Commissioner, Kulgam; Bilal Ahmad, Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD); Malik Suheel, Chief Planning Officer (CPO), Kulgam; and all Block Development Officers (BDOs) of the district.

Kashmir's Fruit Industry, Backbone of Economy, Neglected; Government Must Intervene Immediately: Bashir Ahmad Basheer, Ghulam Ahmad Bandy.

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

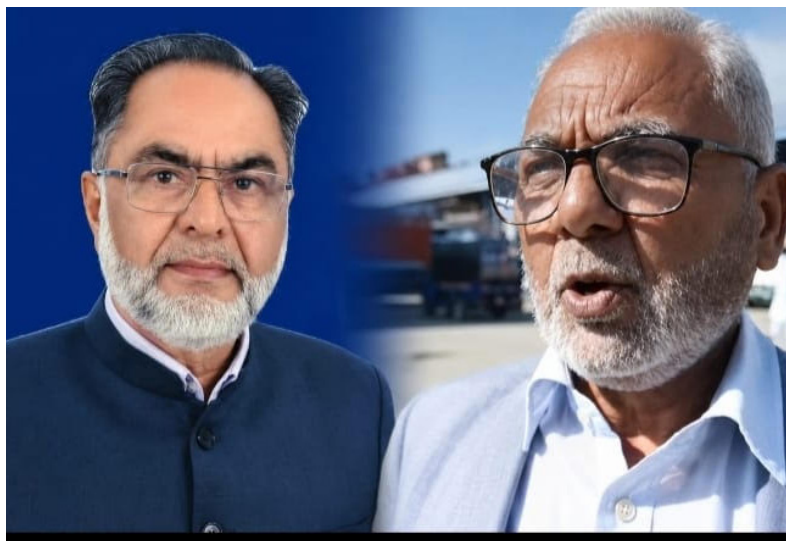
SRINAGAR, JULY 28: President of the Kashmir Valley Fruit Growers-cum-Dealers Union, Bashir Ahmad Basheer, and President of the Fruit Growers-cum-Dealers Association of South Kashmir, Ghulam Ahmad Bandy, urged the Jammu and Kashmir Government to take immediate and concrete measures to rescue the horticulture sector, describing it as the backbone of Kashmir's economy and the primary source of livelihood for lakhs of families.

In a joint statement issued to the media, the two leaders said the horticulture sector has been facing an unprecedented crisis over the past several years due to recurring natural calamities, climate change, the sale of substandard agricultural inputs, and a sharp rise in production costs. They said these challenges

have pushed orchardists into severe financial distress.

They noted that untimely hailstorms, prolonged rainfall, strong winds, erratic weather conditions, and other natural disasters have caused extensive damage to orchards across the Valley. The widespread availability of counterfeit and low-quality fertilizers, pesticides, and fungicides has further reduced both the quality and quantity of fruit production, depriving growers of fair returns on their investments.

The leaders said a majority of orchard owners are burdened with heavy debts owed to banks and private lenders, forcing many to sell their agricultural land at throwaway prices. At the same time, the costs of fertilizers, pesticides, labour, packaging, and transportation have increased significantly, while growers' incomes have continued to decline.



They added that many families associated with the fruit industry are struggling to meet even their basic needs. Bashir Ahmed

Basheer and Ghulam Ahmad Bandy demanded the waiver of loans availed under the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme, supply of quality fer-

tilizers and pesticides at affordable prices, enhanced subsidies on anti-hail nets, revival of the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS), and the introduction of a comprehensive crop insurance scheme to compensate growers for losses caused by hailstorms, heavy rainfall, snowfall, diseases, and other natural disasters.

They also called upon the government to announce a special financial relief package for the horticulture sector, strengthen cold storage infrastructure, improve marketing and export facilities, and develop modern infrastructure. They stressed the need for greater emphasis on grading, scientific packaging, branding, and quality marketing to enable Kashmiri apples and other fruits to secure better prices in domestic and international markets.

The two leaders said they have

repeatedly raised these issues with both the Central and Jammu and Kashmir Governments through written representations and personal meetings, but no effective or long-term action has been taken. As a result, they said, orchardists are increasingly frustrated and disillusioned.

Warning that continued neglect could further weaken the horticulture sector and worsen the economic condition of lakhs of families dependent on it, Bashir Ahmed Basheer and Ghulam Ahmad Bandy urged the government to formulate a comprehensive policy for the revival of horticulture. They also called for meaningful consultation with orchardists, fruit traders, and other stakeholders to ensure practical and lasting solutions to the challenges confronting Kashmir's vital fruit industry.

HT EDITORIAL

When the Mountains Roar, We Must Listen

Recurring floods and cloudbursts across J&K are no longer isolated disasters—they are urgent warnings that demand action before the next tragedy strikes

The fury of recent floods and repeated cloudbursts across Jammu and Kashmir should dispel any illusion that extreme weather is an occasional misfortune. Year after year, roads are washed away, homes are inundated, bridges collapse, crops are destroyed, and lives are disrupted. What was once considered a rare event is fast becoming a disturbing pattern.

Nature is speaking in a language that can no longer be ignored.

From the Chenab Valley to the Pir Panjal, from the Kashmir Valley to the plains of Jammu, extreme rainfall has become increasingly frequent and unpredictable. Rivers swell within hours, mountain slopes give way without warning, and flash floods strike with devastating speed. The fragile Himalayan ecosystem is proving ever more vulnerable to the combined impact of climate change, unchecked urbanisation, reckless construction and environmental degradation.

The recent weather events are not merely natural disasters; they are a test of our preparedness. Every cloudburst exposes the shortcomings in drainage systems, disaster response, land-use planning and infrastructure resilience. Encroachments on flood channels, shrinking wetlands, indiscriminate hill cutting and deforestation have reduced nature's own ability to absorb the excesses of rainfall.

Climate scientists have repeatedly warned that a warming atmosphere holds more moisture, increasing the likelihood of intense rainfall over shorter periods. Jammu and Kashmir is now witnessing precisely this phenomenon. While no single flood can be blamed solely on climate change, the growing frequency and intensity of such events leave little room for complacency.

The answer cannot simply be emergency relief after every disaster. A long-term strategy is urgently needed. Authorities must strengthen early warning systems, identify vulnerable zones, enforce scientific building regulations, restore wetlands, protect forests and improve drainage infrastructure in both urban and rural areas. Development projects in ecologically sensitive regions must undergo rigorous environmental scrutiny rather than becoming victims of short-term expediency.

Equally important is public participation. Communities must become partners in disaster preparedness. Illegal dumping into streams and drains, construction along riverbanks, destruction of natural water channels and indiscriminate felling of trees only magnify the consequences of heavy rainfall. Environmental responsibility begins with everyday choices made by every citizen.

Educational institutions, civil society organisations and the media also have a responsibility to build awareness about disaster preparedness and environmental conservation. Climate resilience is not merely the government's responsibility; it is a collective obligation that requires informed and sustained public engagement.

Jammu and Kashmir has always lived in harmony with its mountains, rivers and forests. That delicate balance is now under unprecedented strain. Every flood, every landslide and every cloudburst reminds us that nature cannot be taken for granted. We cannot prevent every natural hazard, but we can certainly reduce its impact through better planning, greater environmental stewardship and timely preparedness.

The next storm is not a question of if but when. Whether it becomes another tragedy or a story of resilience depends on the decisions we make today.

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When Journalism Becomes Trolling: Fourth Pillar of Democracy Essay

Restoring the Credibility of Journalism



■ AUBAID AHMAD AKHOON

In a changing world, journalism cannot fail to change with it, but there are some constants. Technology, digitization, and other factors have led to the democratization of information and made it available at an unprecedented rate. Yet, as society grows in complexity, one rule remains the same- the truth will always outweigh popularity, no matter how high it may be. Thus, it is essential that the credibility of journalism remains intact.

This credibility is based on a simple principle- truth without fear or favor. A journalist cannot become the spokesperson for the powerful or the apologist for the opposition. This basic tenet requires that, in the democratic framework, the journalist's loyalty be to the people and not to any particular entity. Therefore, it is the journalist's responsibility to praise good governance, censure bad governance, report matters of public interest with a commitment to the public good, and not be unduly influenced by political or other ideological considerations.

Constructive criticism, therefore, constitutes the cornerstone of journalism, and it is on this bedrock that credibility rests. Constructive criticism is not trolling; it is about exposing corruption, maladministration, and matters of public interest. Constructive criticism requires digging deep to unearth not only the malaise but also the elixir and informing the people of both. A responsible journalist recognizes that he/she is a conduit for information and not a cheerleader for any particular cause. It is not the role of the journalist to inflame opinion but to invite debate and encourage discussion of matters of public interest. Journalism must be a bridge and not a barrier.

However, in recent times, credibility has been dented by the perception that some sections of the media do not subscribe to the values of responsible reporting. The quest for traffic and popularity has led to the promotion of sensationalism over substance. Therefore, some editors and publishers have been willing to sacrifice professionalism, ethics, and credibility for the short-term gains of Higher TRP (television rating points). In an increasingly digital world, this approach may yield dividends in the short term. Yet, in the long run, popularity without credibility is a hollow achievement.

The restoration of credibility requires a concerted effort on the part of the media houses to reinforce professional ethics. This could involve continuous education and inculcation of a sense of professional responsibility among journalists. Moreover, professional gatekeeping mechanisms such as fact checking, editing, and correction policies when violated must be strongly countered. Similarly, the onus is on the journalists to recognize that mistakes are inevitable, but it is a journalist's responsibility to acknowledge and correct them.

In addition, there is a need to distinguish between professional criticism and wilful dissemination of falsehoods. Freedom of the press is a fundamental facet of democracy, and it must be defended at all costs. At the same time, however, it is also a journalist's responsibility not to misuse this freedom to propagate demonstrably false information, fuel hate speech, or damage the reputation of individuals or institutions in bad faith.

Strong ethical guidelines and robust legal frameworks must be implemented to deter, punish, and discourage such activities while at the same time protecting legitimate journalistic freedom. Finally, it is



the professional responsibility of the journalist to report not just the news but also interpret it for the betterment of society. This process requires that criticism must be tempered with caution so that democratic institutions – media, government, judiciary – are fortified and not decimated by irresponsible reporting.

Beyond the Headlines

The recent announcement of the NEET results offers some important lessons in responsible reporting. The event generates widespread interest in print, electronic, and social media. There is a frenzy to report the number one rank holder, the success stories of those who have made it, and the congratulations due to the coaching centres that contribute to their success. Coaching centres also go all out to announce their results and glorify their achievements by featuring these bright students in full-page advertisements in newspapers and on other media.

There is nothing wrong with celebrating achievement. In fact, all students who have worked hard to get a good result must be commended for their efforts. Similarly, coaching centres have every right to rejoice their role in the success of these selected students. However, what is lacking in this wholehearted celebration is a single voice for those who have not achieved their desired results.

Beyond every success story, there are hundreds of students who may have put in equal effort but failed to meet their goals. There are so many students who prepare relentlessly for this examination, who come from financially disadvantaged backgrounds, and who sacrifice their personal lives for months and sometimes years for this one opportunity. When their efforts do not bear fruit, many may be devastated and suffer emotionally and sometimes even contemplate suicide.

This is a scenario crying out for responsible reporting. It is vital that, alongside success stories, those who have failed also deserve an equal share of sympathy and support from society. There is an old saying that success has many fathers while failure is an orphan. This observation resonates powerfully in this context, for all the coaching centres are quick to trumpet their role in the success of the selected few while remaining silent about the majority who have failed. In fact, most of the NEET advertising does not reveal the overall pass percentage or number of students who have cleared the examination and those who have not.

The responsible journalist, therefore, has to go beyond the blatant publicity and bring to light hard facts that can help guide future NEET takers and parents. Questions such as what percentage of students qualify or what options are open to those who have not passed should be of utmost importance to the responsible journalist.

It is also essential for the mental well-being of the failed students to recognize that an exam does not define their life and that there are still many options open to them. Responsible reporting should, therefore, feature mental health professionals who can offer advice to the parents and students on how best to deal with the situation.

Moreover, the journalist should be able to highlight other avenues open to these students and encourage them not to give up in their quest for knowledge and a better life. There has been too much focus on the examination and the success stories, and perhaps it is time the resilience of the failed students took centre stage. It would save many lives to recognize that these examination results are meaningless if a student takes his/her life in despair.

It is impossible to overestimate the role of the journalist in disseminating crucial information that can help in such situations. The journalist has the ability to change attitudes and encourage a more realistic appraisal of the examination. This is especially so when parents are advised to be supportive and avoid being judgmental. Thus, every young person needs to understand that failure in one examination does not mean the end of their life. After all, we live in a world where many great men and women have failed on their way to greatness, and it is this resilience that defines their legacy. This lesson must be driven home loudly to these young students by all responsible members of society.

Other Issues in Addition to NEET

The same principles that apply to NEET also apply to other areas of reporting, including election reporting, reports on policy issues, and general news reporting. Thus, when it comes to reporting on politics, economic policy, health, and various social issues, the journalist should always seek to report the news and interpret it in a way that informs the citizen and promotes healthy debate that, ultimately, leads to positive change. In other words, the journalist should not be a propaganda machine for either of the

contending parties but should strive to promote healthy debate that strengthens democracy. The journalist, therefore, has the responsibility to report not only the positions of the contending parties but also to analyze the issues in depth to help voters make more informed choices.

Criticism, therefore, must be the cornerstone of news reporting, but it must be tempered with caution, for criticism in bad faith can cause as much damage as it aims to cure. This brings us to the importance of constructive criticism as opposed to destructive criticism. At the heart of democratic governance is the right of citizens to criticize government policies and institutions without fear of censure or retribution. However, such criticism needs to be rooted in ethical and professional grounds. It must be based on verifiable facts and avoid subjective opinions that could do more harm than good. Similarly, criticism should not be used as a weapon to destroy individuals or institutions, for the end result of such criticism is not the reform of institutions but the destruction of credibility.

Therefore, it is essential that criticism be used as a tool to reform and not vengeance. It is only in this way that democratic institutions, systems, and processes can benefit from criticism, for the ultimate aim of criticism should be to strengthen institutions and fortify democracy, not weaken it.

Bottomline

It must be stated that today's society needs good, independent journalism more than ever before. The Fourth Pillar of Democracy, as it is sometimes called, enjoys constitutional protection as a fundamental pillar of democracy. However, its credibility and, by extension, its constitutional mandate will only be reinforced by ethical journalism that informs citizens, strengthens democratic institutions, and promotes sustainable development. In this age of digital media, the journalist must rise to the occasion and promote democratic values and institutions. At no time has society needed principled journalism more than it does now.

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Resh Vaer: The Hidden Map of Faith, Memory, and Sacred Geometry in Kashmir

A Comprehensive Journey Through the Ancient Academies, Forgotten Shrines, and Syncretic Pilgrimage Circuits of the Kashmir Valley



DR. RIZWAN RUMI

1. Introduction: The Land Built on Sacred Waters and Saints

Long before tourists arrived seeking alpine landscapes, wildflower meadows, and serene houseboat stays, Kashmir was known throughout the Asian continent as Resh Vaer—the Valley of Saints. According to ancient geographical treatises like the Nilamata Purana, the entire Valley of Kashmir was once an enormous high-altitude inland lake called Satisar (the lake of Sati). Ancient tradition recounts that the legendary sage Kashyapa drained this primordial sea by breaching the mountains at Baramulla (Varahamula), laying bare a fertile basin that was immediately treated as a living sanctuary.

In the traditional Kashmiri worldview, geography and divinity are fundamentally intertwined. Every mountain peak is understood to be the seat of a meditating deity or guardian spirit; every natural artesian spring (Nag) is revered as a sacred portal to the subterranean realm; and every pine-scented forest serves as an ancient retreat for ascetics. Over centuries, this unique physical landscape fostered an extraordinary spiritual culture. Kashmir became the birthplace of Kashmiri Shaivism—a high philosophy of monistic idealism—as well as a vibrant center of Mahayana Buddhism, Sikhism, and an indigenous form of Sufism known as the Rishi order.

The defining feature of pilgrimage in Kashmir is not merely the individual grandeur of its temples, shrines, or monasteries, but its deep ethos of syncretism. This shared spiritual fabric, often described as Kashmiriyat, reflects a historical reality where different faiths did not merely exist side by side in cold tolerance, but actively enriched, protected, and integrated one another's sacred spaces.

"In Kashmir, the sacred is not trapped within stone walls or isolated doctrines. It flows through the mountain streams, speaks through the centuries-old Chinars, and resides in the quiet convergence of the azan, the temple bell, and the gurbani across the valley."

2. The Seat of Forgotten Wisdom: Ancient Academies & Monolithic Temples

To fully understand the spiritual heritage of Kashmir, one must examine its legacy as one of the world's premier seats of learning and monumental architecture. During the first millennium CE, the valley functioned as an intellectual lighthouse for South and Central Asia, drawing philosophers, translators, and royal pilgrims across thousands of miles.

Sharda Peeth (Neelam Valley): The Cradle of Learning

Situated along the Kishenganga (Neelam) River, Sharda Peeth was far more than an isolated temple; it was a legendary temple-university and one of the supreme seats of scholarship in ancient India. Dedicated to Sharada, the goddess of knowledge and speech, it was the focal point of the native Sharada script and possessed a legendary library of rare Sanskrit manuscripts. It was at Sharda Peeth that the 11th-century Vaishnava philosopher Ramanuja studied to compose his masterwork, the Sri Bhasya. Scholars from across Tibet, China, and the Indian plains made arduous journeys here to earn academic validation. Though the physical complex now lies in quiet stone ruins across the Line of Control, Sharda Peeth remains an enduring emotional polaris and a symbol of Kashmir's academic golden age.

Martand Sun Temple (Anantnag): The Solar Masterpiece

Perched atop a high, wind-swept plateau overlooking the entire Kashmir Valley, the Martand Sun Temple was constructed in the 8th century CE by King Lalitaditya Muktapada of the Karkota Dynasty. Dedicated to Surya, the Sun God, Martand represents the pinnacle of ancient Kashmiri temple architecture. The complex features a central sanctuary surrounded by an expansive courtyard lined with 84 carved colonnaded vaulted cham-

bers. Its stone masonry seamlessly combines indigenous Kashmiri architecture with Hellenistic (Gandharan) trefoil arches and Roman-style fluted columns, reflecting an era when Kashmir was a central node of international exchange and imperial power.

Naranag Temple Complex (Ganderbal): The Alpine Sanctuary

Nestled in a dense pine forest at the foot of the sacred Mount Haramukh in Ganderbal, Naranag (ancient Wangnath) consists of two distinct clusters of 8th-century stone temples dedicated to Lord Shiva as Bhuteshwara. Built using massive local granite blocks without mortar, these temples served as the primary base camp and ritual preparation center for pilgrims undertaking the strenuous high-altitude pilgrimage to Gangabal Lake, located at 11,800 feet directly beneath the glacier of Mount Haramukh.

Awantiswami and Avantisvara Temples (Awantipora)

Located 28 kilometers south of Srinagar along the banks of the Jhelum River, Awantipora houses two monumental temple complexes built in the 9th century CE by King Avantivarman. The Awantiswami temple, dedicated to Lord Vishnu, and the nearby Avantisvara temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, showcase magnificent bas-relief stone carvings depicting Hindu deities, floral garlands, and intricate geometric patterns. Though buried under silt for centuries until 19th-century excavations, their surviving colonnades demonstrate the extraordinary artistic refinement of 9th-century Kashmiri artisans.

Parihaspore (Baramulla): The Lost Imperial Capital

Built by King Lalitaditya in the 8th century as his grand capital, Parihaspore (the City of Laughter) was designed as a massive religious and political hub. The site once featured vast Buddhist stupas, monasteries, and grand Hindu temples. Today, massive carved stone blocks—some weighing several tons—lie scattered across the plateau, giving visitors a tangible sense of the scale and ambition of Kashmir's medieval architecture.

3. Whispers in the Mountains: Hidden, Rare, and Offbeat Shrines

While major pilgrimage sites receive nationwide attention, the true heart of Kashmir's sacred geography resides in its quiet villages, alpine forests, and ancient spring sanctuaries that remain largely unvisited by modern tourists.

Payar Monolithic Temple (Pulwama)

Tucked away in a quiet village roughly 45 kilometers south of Srinagar, the 11th-century Payar Temple is an architectural marvel built entirely from just ten colossal carved stone monoliths fitted together with absolute precision. Despite its compact size, the shrine features elegant trefoil arches, a pyramidal roof, and exquisite relief carvings of Shiva as Lakulisa surrounded by celestial attendants. It stands as one of the best-preserved intact ancient stone structures in northern India.

Shrine of Baba Payamuddin Reshi (Baba Reshi, Baramulla)

Located at an elevation of 7,000 feet in a dense forest near Gulmarg, this 15th-century Sufi sanctuary honors Baba Payamuddin Reshi. A former court noble to the King of Kashmir, he gave up his worldly wealth and high political title after witnessing the selfless devotion of Baba Zain-ud-Din Rishi, becoming a hermit dedicated to public service. The shrine is famous for its breathtaking timber construction, featuring intricate Pinjra-kari (geometric wooden lattice windows) and vibrant papier-mâché ceilings. Devotees of all religious backgrounds visit this tranquil forest shrine to seek blessings.

Kagzag Monastery & Ancient Rock Inscriptions (Gilgit-Baltistan Transit Route)

Along the old mountain transit corridors connecting Kashmir to Central Asia lie ancient rock carvings, Petroglyphs, and monastic ruins dating back to the Kushan era. Sites such as Hunza and Chilas feature thousands of Buddhist rock carvings depicting stupas, Bodhisattvas, and ancient Kharosthi and Brahmi inscriptions, recording the journeys of Buddhist pilgrims and monks traveling between Kashmir and China.

Devibal & Nagbal Springs (Anantnag Old City)

The city of Anantnag takes its name

4. The Syncretic Core: Where Faiths Intersect

In Kashmir, sacred spaces have rarely existed in religious isolation. Instead, the history of the valley is defined by cross-faith guardianship, shared spiritual practices, and profound mutual respect.

Sacred Site / Circuit	Primary Tradition	The Syncretic Reality & Shared Heritage
Amarnath Cave Shrine	Hinduism (Shaivism)	Located at 3,888 meters, the annual pilgrimage to the ice Shivalinga was historically discovered and supported for centuries by local Muslim shepherds (the Malik family of Batakote).
Charar-e-Sharif	Islam (Sufi Rishi Order)	Built in honor of Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Wali (Nund Rishi), founder of the Kashmir Rishi movement, who was deeply influenced by the 14th-century Hindu mystic poetess Lalleshwari (Lalla Ded).
Mela Kheer Bhawani (Tulmulla)	Hinduism (Shaktism)	Centered on Goddess Ragnya Devi's sacred spring, the annual festival sees local Kashmiri Muslim villagers preparing, selling, and offering flowers, milk, and earthen lamps to Hindu devotees.
Hari Parbat Sacred Triangle	Multi-Faith Heritage	Within a single neighborhood on the slopes of Hari Parbat in Srinagar stand the Sufi shrine of Makhdoom Sahib, the ancient temple of Sharika Devi, and Gurdwara Chatti Padshahi.
Hazratbal & Khanqah-e-Moula	Islamic Sacred Architecture	Houses the sacred relic (Moi-e-Muqqadas). Both shrines feature distinct pagoda-style wooden spires crafted by native artisans who adapted traditional temple carpentry techniques.

The Wooden Pagodas: Architectural Synthesis

A striking visual expression of Kashmir's syncretic spirit is seen in its Islamic architecture. Unlike the bulbous domes and tall stone minarets characteristic of Middle Eastern or Mughal architecture, Kashmir's historic mosques and Khanqahs—such as Khanqah-e-Moula, Jamia Masjid Srinagar, and Charar-e-Sharif—feature tiered, square-plan wooden structures topped with tall, sloping pagoda-style spires (Gajur). Constructed out of Deodar cedar timber, these buildings were crafted by local master artisans who adapted ancient wooden temple craftsmanship to fulfill Islamic spiritual requirements.



from the infinite cosmic serpent Ananta, and is built over a vast network of subterranean natural artesian springs. In the heart of the old town lies Devibal, a tiny, ancient stone temple sitting directly atop a crystal-clear spring under the shade of centuries-old Chinar trees. The spring water flows endlessly into stone channels where locals and devotees gather for daily morning prayers.

Bumzuva Cave Temples (Mattan)

Located just a few kilometers from Mattan, the Bumzuva caves represent a rare example of rock-cut temple architecture in Kashmir. Carved into a limestone cliff, the main cave houses an ancient stone Shiva temple within a neatly sculpted trefoil doorway. Nearby caves have historically served as hermitages for meditating monks and Sufi recluses over the centuries.

Mamleshwar Temple (Pahalgam)

Situated across the Lidder River in Pahalgam, Mamleshwar is a small stone Shiva temple dating back to the 12th century, mentioned in Kalhana's Rajatarangini. According to local folklore, this is the sacred spot where Lord Ganesha was tasked with guarding the doorway for Goddess Parvati. Surrounded by snow-capped peaks, the temple features a small natural water pool fed directly from mountain springs.

5. High-Altitude Sacred Circuits & Trekking Routes

Pilgrimage in Kashmir has always required physical endurance, linking spiritual devotion with the challenging mountain geography of the Himalayas.

The Great Gangabal Yatra (Haramukh)

For thousands of years, Kashmiri Pan-

dits undertook the rigorous trek from Naranag up to Gangabal Lake (11,800 feet), nestled directly at the foot of the 16,870-foot Mount Haramukh. Considered the 'Kailash of Kashmir', Gangabal is revered as the abode of Lord Shiva. Devotees performed immersion rituals for the ashes of departed ancestors in its turquoise glacial waters, completing a sacred circuit that bridged the valley floor with the high alpine wilderness.

The Amarnath Yatra via Pahalgam & Baital

Traversing through dramatic alpine passes, glacier crossings, and high-altitude lakes like Sheshnag and Panjtarni, the journey to the natural ice cave at Amarnath (12,756 feet) remains one of the most famous pilgrimages in the world. The trek combines profound religious faith with awe-inspiring Himalayan landscapes.

Consolidated Spiritual Sites Overview

To appreciate the sheer density of spiritual sites across Kashmir, consider the following key pilgrimage hubs spread across its districts:

- Srinagar District: Hazratbal Shrine, Shankaracharya Temple (Gopadri Hill), Hari Parbat (Sharika Devi Temple & Makhdoom Sahib), Khanqah-e-Moula, Jamia Masjid, Gurdwara Chatti Padshahi.
- Ganderbal District: Kheer Bhawani Spring Shrine (Tulmulla), Naranag Temple Complex, Gangabal Lake.
- Anantnag & Kulgam Districts: Martand Sun Temple, Devibal Spring, Bumzuva Caves, Aishmuqam Shrine (associated with Baba Zain-ud-Din Rishi),

In the traditional Kashmiri worldview, geography and divinity are fundamentally intertwined. Every mountain peak is understood to be the seat of a meditating deity or guardian spirit; every natural

artesian spring (Nag) is revered as a sacred portal to the subterranean realm; and every pine-scented forest serves as an ancient retreat for ascetics. Over centuries, this unique physical landscape fostered an extraordinary spiritual culture. Kashmir became the birthplace of Kashmiri Shaivism—a high philosophy of monistic idealism—as well as a vibrant center of Mahayana Buddhism, Sikhism, and an indigenous form of Sufism known as the Rishi order.

Reshi Shrines of Kulgam.

- Baramulla & Budgam Districts: Baba Reshi Shrine (Gulmarg), Charar-e-Sharif (Budgam), Ancient Stupa of Ushkur (Baramulla).
- Pulwama District: Payar Monolithic Temple, Awantiswami & Avantisvara Temples.

6. Looking Forward: The Future of Heritage & Pilgrimage Tourism

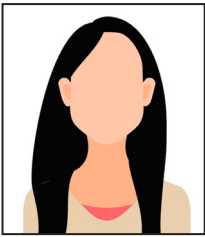
As Kashmir looks toward the future, pilgrimage tourism offers a sustainable blueprint for economic growth, cultural preservation, and peace-building. Expanding the tourism narrative beyond seasonal resort trips to include historic pilgrimage circuits creates immense opportunities:

1. Sustainable Eco-Tourism & Traffic Distribution: By promoting lesser-known heritage destinations like Payar, Naranag, Awantipora, and Parihaspore, tourism pressure can be diverted away from overburdened spots like Gulmarg and Pahalgam, spreading economic benefits directly to rural communities.
2. Architectural Conservation & Restoration: Many ancient stone structures and wooden Khanqahs require meticulous scientific restoration and preservation. Developing heritage corridors and local museum circuits ensures these physical monuments survive for future generations.
3. Cultural Reconciliation & Diaspora Reconnection: Supporting pilgrimage festivals like Mela Kheer Bhawani and restoring access to ancient heritage routes like Sharda Peeth serves as a vital bridge for the Kashmiri Pandit diaspora, fostering cultural continuity and mutual healing.

Ultimately, Kashmir's pilgrimage landscape stands as a testament to human resilience, artistic brilliance, and interfaith harmony. By honoring both its famed sanctuaries and its forgotten ruins, we preserve the true spirit of Resh Vaer—a land where faith flows as freely as its alpine waters.

Silent Cries, Urgent Action: Kashmir's Mental Health Crisis Demands a Collective Response

As emotional distress among young people grows, strengthening mental healthcare and breaking stigma, are essential to preventing further loss of life



■ **BISMA ASHRAF LONE**

The growing concern over suicide and self-harm in the Kashmir Valley has become one of the most pressing public health challenges in recent years. Every life lost leaves behind grieving families, shattered communities, and difficult questions about whether timely intervention could have changed the outcome. Rather than viewing these tragedies in isolation, society must recognise them as a call for urgent, coordinated action.

Mental health experts emphasise that suicide is rarely caused by a single event. It often results from a combination of untreated depression or anxiety, prolonged stress, family conflict, financial hardship, academic pressure, social isolation, and unresolved trauma. The COVID-19 pandemic further aggravated these chal-

lenges by disrupting education, livelihoods, and access to emotional support.

Young people remain particularly vulnerable. Students and young adults frequently face intense expectations regarding education, employment, and family responsibilities. When these pressures are coupled with limited mental health services and the persistent stigma surrounding psychological illness, many suffer in silence rather than seeking help.

Changing public attitudes is therefore crucial. Mental illness should never be regarded as a sign of weakness or failure. Like any other health condition, it deserves timely diagnosis, professional treatment, and the compassion of family and society. Encouraging open conversations about emotional wellbeing can help people seek assistance before a crisis develops.

Strengthening mental healthcare must become a priority. Accessible counselling services, trained psychologists, and crisis intervention facilities should be available across every district. Schools, colleges, and universities should introduce life-skills education, emotional wellbeing programmes, and confidential counselling centres capable of identifying and

Strengthening mental healthcare must become a priority. Accessible counselling services, trained psychologists, and crisis intervention facilities should be available across every district. Schools, colleges, and universities should introduce life-skills education, emotional wellbeing programmes, and confidential counselling centres capable of identifying and supporting students in distress at an early stage. Communities also have a vital role to play. Parents, teachers, neighbours, religious leaders, and employers are often the first to notice behavioural changes.

supporting students in distress at an early stage.

Communities also have a vital role to play. Parents, teachers, neighbours, religious leaders, and employers are

often the first to notice behavioural changes. A caring conversation, patient listening, and timely referral to professional help can save lives. Equally important is responsible media reporting

that avoids sensationalism and instead promotes awareness, hope, recovery, and information on where people can seek help.

The government, healthcare institutions, educational establishments, civil society organisations, and community leaders must work together to develop a comprehensive suicide prevention strategy. Greater investment in mental health infrastructure, awareness campaigns, youth employment initiatives, school-based interventions, and improved research and data collection will strengthen long-term prevention efforts.

Every suicide is a profound human tragedy, but it is also a reminder that prevention is possible. By replacing stigma with understanding, isolation with support, and silence with open dialogue, Kashmir can build a society where those facing emotional distress find hope, timely care, and the reassurance that they are never alone.

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THE LIFE SAVING HYDRATION



■ **SURINDERPAL SINGH**

As summer temperatures are continuously rising across many parts of the world, especially in tropical and subtropical regions, heat and humidity have become serious health concerns. Every year, thousands insidekashmirpress@gmail.com of people suffer from dehydration, heat exhaustion and heat stroke because they often underestimate the importance of drinking enough water. Hydration is not merely a matter of quenching thirst—it is one of the most essential practices for protecting life during extreme hot and humid weather.

The human body is made up of nearly 60 percent water. Water is involved in almost every vital function, including regulating body temperature, transporting nutrients, removing waste, lubricating joints and supporting the brain, heart and muscles. During hot weather, the body cools itself by producing sweat. As sweat evaporates, it removes heat from the skin. However, this cooling process also leads to a significant loss of water and important minerals such as sodium and potassium. If these losses are not replaced, dehydration begins.

Humidity makes the situation even more dangerous. In humid conditions, the air already contains a high amount of moisture, preventing sweat from evaporating efficiently. Although a person may sweat heavily, the body cannot cool itself effectively. As a result, body temperature rises rapidly, increasing the risk of heat-related illnesses.

One of the first signs of dehydration is thirst. However, waiting until you feel thirsty is not the best strategy because



the body is already beginning to lose fluids by then. Other early symptoms include dry mouth, fatigue, headache, dizziness, muscle cramps, dark yellow urine and reduced urination. If dehydration worsens, confusion, rapid heartbeat, low blood pressure, fainting and even unconsciousness may occur. Severe dehydration can lead to kidney damage, organ failure, heat stroke and death if immediate medical attention is not provided.

Children and older adults are particularly vulnerable. Young children lose water more quickly because of their

smaller body size and higher activity levels. Older adults often have a reduced sense of thirst and may suffer from chronic illnesses that increase the risk of dehydration. Outdoor workers, athletes, farmers, construction workers, traffic police and people with medical conditions such as diabetes also require special attention during hot weather.

Proper hydration offers numerous health benefits beyond preventing dehydration. It helps maintain normal body temperature, improves blood circulation, supports kidney function, aids digestion, enhances concentration and memory, re-

duces fatigue and keeps muscles working efficiently. Even mild dehydration can reduce physical performance, impair decision-making and decrease productivity.

Drinking plain water remains the best way to stay hydrated. Most healthy adults should aim to drink adequate water throughout the day rather than consuming large amounts at once. The exact requirement varies depending on age, body size, physical activity and weather conditions. During periods of excessive sweating, oral rehydration solutions, coconut water, buttermilk, lemon water with a pinch of salt and fresh fruit juices

without excessive sugar can also help replace lost fluids and electrolytes. Water-rich foods such as watermelon, cucumber, oranges, tomatoes, muskmelon, strawberries and leafy vegetables further contribute to hydration.

Certain drinks should be consumed with caution. Excessive intake of sugary soft drinks, highly caffeinated beverages and alcohol may increase fluid loss or provide unnecessary calories. Energy drinks should not be considered substitutes for water during extreme heat.

Hydration alone is not enough; it should be combined with other heat-protection measures. Wearing light-colored, loose-fitting cotton clothing, avoiding strenuous outdoor activities during the hottest hours of the day, seeking shade whenever possible, using umbrellas or hats and resting frequently are all effective ways to reduce heat stress.

Employers and schools should ensure easy access to safe drinking water and encourage regular hydration breaks.

Climate change has made heat waves more frequent, longer-lasting and more intense. Consequently, awareness about hydration has become a public health priority rather than merely a personal habit. Communities, schools, workplaces and governments must educate people about recognizing the early signs of dehydration and taking preventive action before it becomes a medical emergency.

Hydration is one of the simplest, safest and least expensive ways to protect human health. A glass of water may seem ordinary, but during extreme heat and humidity, it can be lifesaving. By drinking enough fluids, eating water-rich foods and adopting sensible summer habits, individuals can prevent dehydration, reduce the risk of heat-related illnesses and safeguard their health. In a warming world, staying hydrated is not just good advice—it is an essential habit for survival.

THE AUTHOR IS A FACULTY IN SCIENCE DEPARTMENT SRI AMRITSAR SAHIB PUNJAB.

Chief Secretary reviews the implementation of next generation business reforms

Calls for time-bound deregulation to boost EoDB in J&K

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JULY 28: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today chaired a meeting of the concerned Administrative Secretaries to review the progress achieved under the next phase of the Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) programme and assess the implementation status of the identified deregulation and compliance reduction reforms across Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting was convened to evaluate the progress of priority reforms being coordinated by the Department of Industries & Commerce under Phase-II of the Compliance Reduction and Deregulation initiative.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary undertook a department-wise review of the identified reform measures and impressed upon all Administrative Secretaries to ensure their timely implementation in a coor-

ordinated manner.

He emphasized that reducing unnecessary regulatory burdens, simplifying procedures and improving the overall business ecosystem are essential for fostering investment, entrepreneurship and economic growth in the Union Territory.

While reviewing the pending reforms, the Chief Secretary directed the concerned departments to address outstanding issues expeditiously, particularly those requiring reconsideration or acceptance on the central portal, so that all identified reforms are completed within the stipulated timelines.

The Commissioner Secretary, Industries & Commerce, Vikramjit Singh took this occasion to reveal that out of the 28 identified Priority Areas (PAs) under the reform programme, nine reforms have already been accepted by the Government of India as fully implement-



ed, while sixteen reforms are presently under implementation by the concerned departments. One reform is awaiting acceptance on the national portal by the Deregulation Cell, whereas two reforms have been returned for reconsideration.

Giving out the details the Director, I&C Jammu, Arun Manhas divulged that the reforms already accepted

include liberalisation of regulations governing shops and commercial establishments, enhancement of the frequency of SEAC/SEIAA meetings along with creation of a land bank for degraded forests, elimination of minimum land requirements for private universities, rationalisation of infrastructure norms for non-government higher educational institu-

tions, appointment of a single nodal agency for healthcare-related licences, monitoring and reduction of turnaround time on the Single Window System.

Additionally it was brought out that the establishment of an auto-appeal mechanism under the Right to Services framework, adoption of the amended Water (Prevention and Control of

Pollution) Act, 2024, and compilation of testing facilities in government institutions for facilitating MSMEs had also been accepted by the Deregulation Cell of the GoI.

The Chief Secretary also reviewed the reforms proposed to be operationalised through bringing of a legislation. These include elimination of change in land use requirements for landowners, demand-driven zoning, optimisation of industrial land use, removal of dual licences for businesses, strengthening of MSME self-certification mechanisms.

In addition to that the simplification of medical practitioners' registration procedures, introduction of an affidavit-based clearance system also comes under the proposed Right to Business framework, and the Omnibus Bill aimed at harmonising various regulatory provisions.

The meeting further re-

viewed the status of other important reforms relating to streamlining of building permission processes, simplification of licensing under the Weights and Measures framework, promotion of quality and affordable tourism accommodation and removal of regulatory requirements relating to private schools.

Concerned departments apprised the Chair regarding the present status and timelines for completion of these reforms.

Reiterating the Government's commitment to create a transparent, predictable and investor-friendly regulatory framework, the Chief Secretary observed that effective implementation of these reforms would significantly enhance the ease of doing business in Jammu and Kashmir, reduce compliance burdens on businesses and strengthen the our competitiveness as an attractive investment destination.

World Nature Conservation Day celebrated with Nature Walk, Tree Talk in Sidhra

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JULY 28: To mark World Nature Conservation Day, the Forest Department, in collaboration with members of the Tree Talk Group and Vibe Tribe Club, Jammu organised a Nature Walk and Tree Talk programme in the Sidhra forestlands.

The event aimed to acquaint forest field staff, wilderness explorers, herbal innovators and botany experts with the rich biodiversity of the neighbourhood forests while promoting awareness about conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

The programme commenced with a ceremonial tree plantation. Among those present were Pradeep Wahule, Conservator East Circle Anurag Arya, Divisional Forest Officer Jammu Bishan Das Thakur, Divisional Forest Officer Research Division Kalpna Vinay, founder of Tree Talk Om Prakash Sharma "Vidyarthi" and herbal innovator Pooja Kapoor Suri.

During the nature walk, Om Prakash Sharma "Vidyarthi" introduced participants to the diverse flora of the Sidhra forests and highlighted the edible, medicinal and ornamental significance of several important species.

Under the guidance of herbal innovator Pooja Kapoor Suri, Om Prakash Sharma "Vidyarthi" and Dev Raj Sharma, forest field staff displayed plant specimens, edible flowers, seasonal leafy vegetables, aromatic and medicinal plants, quality saplings and a range of forest-based foods.

The exhibition featured Oleaster Sauce, Tinbru Chutney, Gokhru Snacks, Punarnava Pakodas, Commelina Snacks, Trianthema Pakodas, Rhododendron Tea, Arjun Bark Tea, Mango Modak, Vidari Kheer, Parijat Tea, Gwalmanda Dahi and other value-added forest products.

Addressing the gathering, Pradeep Wahule said forests are vital ecosystems supporting an extraordinary diversity of plants and wildlife and cautioned that overexploitation of natural resources leads to soil degradation, depletion of water resources and the decline of threatened species.

Participants planted indigenous and ecologically important tree species, including Butea monosperma, Bauhinia variegata, Terminalia chebula, Azadirachta indica, Moringa oleifera, Erythrina indica, Syzygium cumini and Sapindus mukorossi.

Learning Beyond Classrooms: GHSS Ajas students explore Waqar Knowledge Centre Bandipora

Exposure visit enhances students' awareness of Government Schemes, Career Opportunities

HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, JULY 28: As part of an initiative of the District Administration Bandipora, conceptualised and guided by the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, students from Government Girls High School Ajas on Tuesday visited the Waqar Knowledge Centre, Mini Secretariat Bandipora, as part of an exposure visit aimed at promoting awareness about government schemes, career opportunities, and public welfare initiatives.

Chief Education Officer (CEO) Bandipora, Deputy Chief Education Officer, Knowledge Centre

employees, and escort teachers attended and interacted with the students during the exposure visit.

During the visit, Resource Persons at the Waqar Knowledge Centre introduced the students to their respective desks and provided detailed information about the services, government schemes, career guidance, and public welfare initiatives being facilitated through each section. They also highlighted the broader vision behind the Knowledge Centre as a shared learning and awareness platform designed to provide guidance, promote informed decision-making, and connect youth with various opportunities offered



by different government departments.

The students were familiarised with the different services and initiatives available at the Knowledge Centre, particularly those related to career guidance, youth empowerment, public welfare programmes, and citizen-centric government services.

2-day seminar on Makhana cultivation launched at Jammu to promote crop diversification, farmers' income

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JULY 28: The Directorate of Agriculture Production and Farmers Welfare, Jammu under the guidance of Director Agriculture Jammu and Nodal Officer for Makhana Cultivation in Jammu and Kashmir Anil Gupta, today organised a two-day seminar on Makhana cultivation at Baba Jitto Kissan Kendra, Talab Tillo, Jammu.

The seminar aimed to promote Makhana as a high-value crop and create awareness among officers, experts and farmers on its scientific cultivation, production technologies, value addition and income-generation potential.

The keynote technical session was delivered by Principal Scientist and Head, ICAR-Research Centre for Makhana (RCM), Darbhanga, Bihar, Dr Indu Shekhar Singh, the main resource person. He gave an extensive presentation on the sci-

entific cultivation of Makhana, covering its agro-climatic and soil requirements, water and nutrient management, crop establishment, harvesting and post-harvest handling.

Dr Singh informed participants that about 85 per cent of India's Makhana cultivation is presently concentrated in Bihar, while Jammu Division possesses favourable agro-climatic conditions for expanding cultivation in suitable pockets. He stated that India's Makhana industry is currently valued at around 3,000 crore and the global market at nearly USD 138 million, indicating significant opportunities for production, value addition and exports. He also addressed farmers' and officers' queries on cultivation techniques, economics and marketing during an interactive session.

The seminar, held from July 28-29, 2026, comprises technical

sessions on sustainable cultivation practices, quality seed production, scientific crop management, value addition, processing and marketing strategies.

Among those present at the inaugural session were Joint Director Agriculture (Inputs) Sanjay Anand, Joint Director Agriculture (SLUB/Farms) Aman Jyoti Sharma, Joint Director Agriculture (Extension) Idrees Bashir Ahmed, Chief Agriculture Officer Jammu Manohar Lal Sharma, Agriculture Economist Tilak Raj Sharma, Deputy Directors, Sectoral Heads, Subject Matter Specialists at regional, district and sub-divisional levels, Agricultural Extension Officers (AEOs), Junior Agricultural Extension Officers (JAEOs), Agricultural Extension Assistants (AEAs), agripreneurs, progressive farmers and scientists and faculty members from SKUAST-Jammu. SMS-DL Rajeev Katoch conducted the proceedings.

District Level Environment Plan Committee Meeting held in Kishtwar

HT NEWS NETWORK

KISHTWAR, JULY 28: Under the directions of the Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar Pankaj Kumar Sharma, who is also the Chairman of the District Level Environment Plan Committee, the Additional Deputy Commissioner Pawan Kotwal, Member Secretary of the Committee, today chaired a meeting to review the progress achieved under the District Environment Plan.

During the meeting, various aspects of environmental management were discussed, including Solid Waste Management, Biomedical Waste Management, Plastic Waste Management, Domestic Sewerage Management and E-Waste Management.

While reviewing the status of the implementation



of the Solid Waste Management Plan, the ADC directed all the concerned departments to ensure the effective implementation of the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026.

He instructed all the departments to follow the prescribed procedures and dispose of waste as per the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) under the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026 and the Construction and Demolition Waste Management Rules, 2025. He further directed all the concerned departments to strictly implement the prescribed guidelines.

The ADC emphasized the need for comprehensive environmental conservation measures in the district, including extensive plantation initiatives, reduction in the use of plastic and polythene and improved waste disposal practices.

Various other environmental issues were also discussed during the meeting and detailed deliberations were held.

The meeting was attended by ACP Neeraj Sharma, CEO Mirza Mumtaz Iqbal, DFO Vishal Chaudhary, DFO Mahesh Thakur, Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti Department Rohit Wadera, CEO Sanjay Dogra, DSHO Dr. Jamil Nasir besides other concerned officers and officials.

World Hepatitis Day observed with awareness programme, symposium competition in Doda

HT NEWS NETWORK

DODA, JULY 28: World Hepatitis Day was observed across district Doda with the aim of raising awareness about viral hepatitis, its prevention, early detection and timely treatment. In this connection, a District-Level Awareness Programme-Symposium Competition was organized today by the District Health Society Doda at Government Nursing College Doda.

Chief Medical Officer Doda Dr. Vinod Sharma was the Chief Guest on the occasion. District Health Officer, Doda, Dr. Raj Kumar Sharma, BMO Ghat Dr. Abdul Gafoor, faculty and staff of Government Nursing College and students attended the pro-

gramme.

The programme commenced with a welcome address by District Epidemiologist, Umar Anayat, who highlighted the importance of observing World Hepatitis Day and strengthening community awareness regarding prevention and control of viral hepatitis.

DHO Doda, Dr. Raj Kumar Sharma delivered an informative lecture on hepatitis, focusing on its causes, modes of transmission, preventive measures, screening and the importance of timely treatment.

The programme also featured guest lectures by Dr. Summatul-Khurshid, HOD, Department of Pathology, GMC Doda and Dr. Imran Zaffar, Senior Resident, Department of Community



Medicine, GMC Doda, who sensitized the participants about various aspects of viral hepatitis, including diagnosis, prevention and public health interventions.

CMO emphasized the importance of awareness, screening

and early diagnosis in reducing the burden of hepatitis. He called upon healthcare workers and students to actively disseminate correct information among the community and contribute towards the goal of eliminating viral hepatitis as a public health threat.

A symposium competition was also organized as part of the programme, in which eight nursing students from GNC Doda and Hussain Paramedical Institute Ghat participated and showcased their knowledge and understanding of viral hepatitis.

Hadiya Manzoor, Sanjana Sharma and Pakiza Majeed secured first, second and third positions respectively and were awarded prizes, while consol-

ation prizes were also presented to the other participants, namely Zubair Ahmed, Jyoti Devi, Aliza Jan, Rukaya Malik and Muzamil Ahmed, in recognition of their participation.

The proceedings of the programme were conducted by Faizan A. Tramboo.

Meanwhile, Hepatitis screening camps were also organized at Government Medical College Doda and Sub-District Hospital, Baderwah, providing screening services and awareness to the public.

The programme concluded with a renewed commitment by the Health Department to intensify awareness, screening and preventive activities against viral hepatitis across the district.



Three BHKs make up 46pc of housing supply, but two BHKs remain buyers' top choice: Report

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JUL 28: India's residential real estate market is witnessing a widening divide between supply and demand, with developers increasingly focusing on premium, larger homes even as affordability continues to shape buying decisions in several cities, according to the latest Magicbricks PropIndex for April-June 2026.

The report shows that developers remain optimistic about demand for spacious homes, with 3 BHK apartments accounting for 46 per cent of the country's active housing supply, significantly higher than the 32 per cent share of 2 BHK units.

The trend reflects the continued shift in buyer preferences following the pandemic, as households seek additional space for hybrid work, children's study areas and multi-generational living.

However, demand tells a slightly different story. Two-bedroom homes continue to attract the largest share of buyer interest at 42 per cent, while 3 BHK units account for 37 per cent of demand, indicating that budget considerations remain a key factor despite aspirations for larger homes.

Properties measuring between



750 sq ft and 2,000 sq ft make up nearly 70 per cent of overall housing demand, underscoring the continued popularity of mid-sized residences.

The report also highlights sharp regional differences in pricing preferences. Buyers in Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Pune and Greater Noida continue to favour homes priced below Rs 75 lakh, reflecting strong demand for value-driven housing in cities where improving infrastructure and employment opportunities are attracting first-time buyers and end users.

At the other end of the market, demand for premium homes priced between Rs 1.5 crore and Rs 3 crore is gathering pace in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Gurugram and Noida, supported by rising household incomes, changing lifestyle preferences and sustained growth in India's technology and business hubs.

Luxury housing remains concentrated in Mumbai, Gurugram and New Delhi, reaffirming these cities as the country's leading destinations for ultra-premium residential demand.

Overall, residential demand

across India remained largely stable during the April-June quarter, easing by around 1 per cent compared with the previous three months.

In contrast, housing supply increased 1.2 per cent, while average residential prices rose about 1 per cent, suggesting developers continue to launch new projects even as homebuyers become more selective.

The report also points to an increasing divergence in regional market performance. Kolkata emerged as the strongest-performing city during the quarter with a 7.5 per cent sequential rise in buyer demand, followed by Noida (5.5 per cent), Greater Noida (4.1 per cent) and Pune (2.1 per cent). Meanwhile, buyer enquiries softened in Hyderabad, Chennai and Bengaluru, although residential prices continued to appreciate in several of these markets.

According to Magicbricks, the evolving trends indicate that India's housing market is no longer moving in one direction.

While affordability continues to drive purchasing decisions in many emerging cities, developers are steadily expanding the supply of larger and premium homes to cater to rising aspirations, creating increasingly distinct housing markets across the country. UNI

India's Engineering exports rise 21 pc as Oman shipments surge after trade pact

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JULY 28: India's engineering goods exports rose 21% year-on-year in June, supported by strong demand from major markets including the US, Germany, China, Singapore and Oman, according to data released by the Engineering Export Promotion Council (EEPC) India.

Engineering shipments climbed to \$11.48 billion in June 2026 from \$9.51 billion a year earlier, extending a period of robust export performance despite global trade uncertainties and geopolitical disruptions.

Exports to Oman jumped more than five-fold to \$258.97 million during the month, driven by increased trade flows following the implementation of the India-Oman Free Trade Agreement. Shipments to China also recorded strong growth, rising 74% year-on-year to \$361.47 million.

The surge in Oman exports helped offset weakness in some Middle Eastern markets, with shipments to countries including the UAE and Saudi Arabia declining during the month. Engineering exports to the wider West Asia and North Africa (WANA) region remained positive, aided by the sharp rise in Oman-bound shipments.

The US continued to be India's largest destination for engineering goods, accounting for exports worth \$1.95 billion in June.

"Engineering exports have shown immense resilience amid global uncertainty and trade flow disruptions arising from the crisis in West Asia and the

Middle East," EEPIC India Chairman Pan-kaj Chadha said. He added that the sector has adapted to changing trade conditions but needs continued government support to sustain growth momentum.

India recorded export growth across all major regions in June, with Turkey continuing its positive trajectory after witnessing a significant decline last year.

Of the 34 engineering product panels, 27 registered year-on-year growth in June. Seven segments, including lead and products, internal combustion engines, ATM machinery, cranes, lifts and winches, office equipment and prime mica, reported declines.

Engineering goods accounted for 28.4% of India's total merchandise exports in June 2026, according to government quick estimates.

For the first quarter of fiscal year 2026-27, cumulative engineering exports rose to \$34.14 billion, compared with \$28.91 billion in the same period last year, marking an 18.09% increase.

The sector's share in India's overall merchandise exports stood at 26.4% during April-June.

During the quarter, 29 of 34 engineering panels recorded growth, while five categories — including lead and products, internal combustion engines, cranes, lifts and winches, office equipment and prime mica — posted declines.

Region-wise, North America remained the largest market for Indian engineering exports, accounting for 20% of shipments during April-June, followed by the European union at 17%, WANA at 14%, ASEAN at 11%, and North East Asia at 9%. UNI

Sund Fin celebrates 25 yrs of service at Chennai branch

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

CHENNAI, JULY 28: Sundaram Finance marked a meaningful milestone today as its Chennai Whites Road Commercial branch completed 25 years of continuous service.

More than a celebration of time, the event recognized the enduring partnership with customers, the dedication of employees, and the support of their families who have shaped the branch's legacy. "At Sundaram Finance, what sustains us is not just longevity, but the spirit of truth, fairness, and service that defines our relationship with people. This branch has endured because of the values it lives by and the community it serves and belongs to," Mr. Rajesh Venkat, Senior Vice President and Head – Tamil Nadu Region, said.

"Established in 1993, the Chennai Whites Road Commercial Branch has played a vital role in expanding financial access in Chennai, often serving customers who were outside the reach of mainstream finance.

Small business owners, first-time borrowers, self-employed professionals, and transport operators have all found a dependable financial partner in this branch," b Ramesh Babu, Senior Branch Manager, said.

The branch has stood for more than financial support. It has stood for transparency, dignity, and a human touch, helping generations of customers build livelihoods and live with confidence, a company release said.

The strength of the Chennai Whites Road Branch lies in its people. Many employees have spent significant parts of their careers here, serving not just with competence, but with honesty, empathy, and purpose.

Their bond with customers goes beyond transactions. It is built on mutual respect and shared progress.

This milestone also honours the families of employees, who have quietly stood behind every achievement. Letters of heartfelt appreciation personally signed by Rajesh Venkat were presented to family members, acknowledging their role in making this journey possible.

As Sundaram Finance prepares to celebrate 75 years in 2029, this branch milestone serves as a reaffirmation of the company's founding philosophy: to serve with integrity, grow with humility, and remain rooted in community. UNI

CRISIL reaffirms ESL Steel's AA Rating, removes 'Rating Watch' tag

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JUL 28 : CRISIL Ratings has reaffirmed ESL Steel Ltd's long-term credit rating at CRISIL AA/Stable and removed it from "Rating Watch with Developing Implications", signalling confidence in the company's business outlook as the Vedanta Group completes its demerger and strengthens its steel business.

The ratings agency said ESL Steel is an integral part of Vedanta Iron and Steel's long-term strategy and expects the company to emerge as the largest contributor to the parent company's earnings in the medium term. The assessment is backed

by continued operational, managerial, and financial support from Vedanta Iron & Steel Ltd, including unconditional and irrevocable corporate guarantees for ESL's long-term debt.

According to CRISIL, the reaffirmation follows a comprehensive review of the Vedanta Group after the successful completion of its demerger. The agency also upgraded ratings for other Vedanta Group entities, including Vedanta Ltd, Vedanta Aluminium, Vedanta Oil & Gas, and the guaranteed facilities of Vedanta Power.

The rating action comes as ESL Steel's operational performance improved significantly in the fourth quarter of FY26.



The company reported a sharp increase in liquidity, with cash and cash equivalents rising to Rs 464 crore, nearly 90 per cent higher than Rs 245 crore a year

earlier. CRISIL said management expects the improved operating performance to continue even as the company expands its operations.

CRISIL also highlighted the improving financial profile of the Vedanta Group following the demerger. It noted that the group's net debt-to-EBITDA ratio improved to 2 times in FY26, compared with 2.55 times in the previous fiscal year, and is expected to strengthen further. The agency said Vedanta's diversified metals portfolio, scale of operations, and cost-efficient business model continue to support its overall credit profile.

The reaffirmation is expected to support Vedanta's plans to expand its steel business, with ESL Steel playing a central role in the group's long-term growth strategy. UNI

Rajasthan gets first robotic heart surgery

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

BENGALURU, JULY 28 : Eternal Hospital, Jaipur, has introduced Rajasthan's first da Vinci Xi Robotic Cardiac Surgery Programme for coronary bypass surgery, offering patients access to advanced minimally invasive heart surgery closer to home.

The programme, launched in March 2026, enables the hospital to perform Robotic Coronary Artery Bypass Grafting (Robotic CABG) using the state-of-the-art da Vinci Xi Surgical System, with the hospital reporting encouraging clinical outcomes.

Robotic CABG is a minimally invasive alternative to conventional open-heart bypass surgery, allowing surgeons to perform coronary artery bypass procedures through small incisions without cutting the breastbone. The robotic platform provides high-definition three-dimensional visualisation and enhanced surgical precision, helping reduce surgical trauma while main-

taining clinical standards.

Compared to traditional open-heart bypass procedures, robotic CABG can offer benefits including smaller incisions, reduced postoperative pain, lower blood loss, fewer wound-related complications, shorter hospital stays and quicker recovery, the hospital said.

Speaking on the development, Dr Ajeet Bana, Chairman, Cardiac Sciences, Eternal Hospital, said the introduction of the da Vinci Xi system marked a major step in advancing cardiac care in Rajasthan.

"The robotic surgical system has transformed the way we perform coronary bypass surgery. By enabling surgery through small incisions without dividing the breastbone, robotic CABG offers patients a less invasive treatment option with faster recovery while maintaining surgical excellence," he said.

Dr Bana said the hospital's objective was to make advanced cardiac treatment accessible to patients across Rajasthan and neighbouring

states.

With the launch of the robotic cardiac surgery programme, Eternal Hospital said it aims to strengthen access to minimally invasive cardiovascular procedures by combining robotic technology with the expertise of its multidisciplinary cardiac team.

Dr Bana, who has over three decades of experience, has performed more than 20,000 cardiac surgeries and specialises in complex valve surgery, minimally invasive cardiac surgery, aortic surgery, redo cardiac surgery and structural heart interventions. Eternal Hospital, Jaipur, is a NABH and JCI-accredited multi-speciality tertiary and quaternary care hospital affiliated with Mount Sinai, New York. Its Cardiac Sciences programme provides integrated care across preventive cardiology, interventional cardiology, electrophysiology, structural heart interventions and cardiothoracic surgery through a multidisciplinary Heart Team approach.

FSID, C-DOT sign pact to establish telecom CoE at IISc

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

BENGALURU, JULY 28: The Foundation for Science Innovation and Development (FSID) on Monday signed an agreement with the Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT) to establish a new Centre of Excellence (CoE) at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), aimed at accelerating indigenous research and innovation in advanced communication technologies.

The CoE, to be hosted by FSID at IISc, will focus on research in wireless communications, quantum technologies, cybersecurity and artificial intelligence-based applications. It will also support joint research, prototype development, intellectual property creation, startups, and academic-industry collaboration in emerging telecom technologies.

The agreement was signed in the presence of FSID CEO Omprakash Subbarao and C-DOT CEO Dr Rajkumar Upadhyay, along with faculty members of IISc and senior C-DOT officials. The signing was followed by the inauguration of the new Centre of Excellence.

The new facility is the fifth such CoE established by C-DOT, following similar centres at IIT Hyderabad, IIT Kanpur, IIT Gandhinagar and IIT Roorkee.

According to the organisers, the centre will undertake research in key areas including 5G Advanced and 6G technologies, very largescale MIMO systems, sensing mechanisms, AI-integrated communication networks and devices, and quantum and post-quantum communications.

It is also expected to strengthen academia-industry collaboration and contribute to India's technological self-reliance in the telecom sector.

The CoE will leverage C-DOT's expertise in indigenous telecom technologies while enabling continuous knowledge exchange through workshops, training programmes and collaborative research involving students, researchers and start-ups.

Speaking on the occasion, Omprakash Subbarao said the collaboration would help bridge the gap between industry and research and promote joint innovation for the advancement of India's scientific ecosystem.

Dr Upadhyay said the partnership combines IISc's academic excellence with C-DOT's research capabilities to develop homegrown telecom technologies, reduce dependence on foreign systems and position India as a leader in advanced domains such as 5G, 6G, AI and secure communication networks. UNI

IPO rush ahead: Zepto, Shiprocket among firms eyeing over Rs 25,000 Cr

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JUL 28: India's primary market is poised for another busy phase, with more than a dozen companies preparing to launch their initial public offerings (IPOs) over the coming month in what could collectively be one of the largest fundraising pipelines of the year.

The upcoming public issues are expected to mobilise over Rs 25,000 crore, with companies from quick commerce, housing finance, logistics, education, dairy and financial services looking

to tap investor interest through a combination of fresh equity issuance and offer-for-sale (OFS) components.

Among the biggest planned offerings is Zepto, which has proposed a fresh issue of up to Rs 8,010 crore, in addition to an OFS of up to 11.34 crore equity shares. Housing finance company Truhome Finance is targeting Rs 3,000 crore, split equally between a fresh issue and an OFS. Education infrastructure company Elevate Campuses plans to raise Rs 2,550 crore entirely through a fresh issue, while lo-

gistics platform Shiprocket has filed papers for a Rs 2,342.35-crore IPO comprising a fresh issue of up to Rs 1,100 crore and an OFS worth Rs 1,242.35 crore.

The IPO pipeline also includes Innovativetiv India, which intends to raise up to Rs 2,000 crore entirely through an offer for sale, and Milky Mist Dairy Food, which is planning an issue worth Rs 1,553 crore.

Several other companies are also preparing to make their stock market debut, including Dhoot Transmission, ARCIL (Asset Reconstruction Company India Ltd),

Ardee Industries, Gaja Alternative Asset Management, Rays of Belief, Hy-Tech Engineers, Shankesh Jewellers and Learn-fluence Education.

The strong pipeline reflects continued momentum in India's primary market, supported by improving investor sentiment and robust appetite for new listings. Companies are increasingly looking to capitalise on favourable market conditions to raise growth capital while providing exit opportunities to existing investors through OFS components.

IPO activity has remained strong throughout the year. So far in 2026, 36 companies have launched public issues, including nine IPOs during the current month alone.

The momentum is expected to continue in the near term, with Manipal Health Enterprises and Juniper Green Energy scheduled to open their public issues on July 29 and July 30, respectively. MV Electrosystems is also set to enter the primary market next week, further adding to an already packed issuance calendar. UNI





Having conceded 78 in the first seven overs, another 200-plus chase was in the offing for Zimbabwe. But the spinners strung a few quiet overs to limit the scoring. Kishan struck a laborious 29 off 26 balls and was undone by a skiddy Raza delivery. Evenly found the going tough initially, before he laid into Madhevere, taking him for two consecutive fours in the 15th over.

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But that proved to be the high-water mark of his tenure. Brendon McCullum's Test team were given priority whenever tours clashed - and they often did in the post-Covid backlog - which left Mott and Buttler without their best players for most bilateral series. England hoped that they would slip straight back into the groove of ODI cricket when they went to India to defend the 50-over World Cup in 2023.

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

A black and white line drawing of a right hand holding a pen, writing on a notepad. The hand is wearing a striped sleeve. The notepad has some faint, illegible writing on it. The pen is a simple ballpoint pen.

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