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“Science, Technology and Innovation Must Serve Humanity”: Jitendra Singh

BRICS adopts Chennai Declaration with focus on people-centric innovation, joint research and Global South cooperation



HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 22: BRICS countries have unanimously adopted the Chennai Declaration, placing a people-centric and humanity-first approach at the heart of cooperation in science, technology and innovation. Announcing the consensus at the 14th BRICS Science Ministerial Meeting, Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh said member nations must move beyond dialogue towards joint projects, shared research infrastructure and tangible outcomes, with cooperation spanning artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, biotechnology, healthcare, climate change and other emerging fields,

SEE ON P-2

“IIM Jammu Must Aim to Be Among the World’s Best” :LG Manoj Sinha

LG calls for distinctive academic identity, border-economy research and real-world learning as IIM Jammu marks 10 years

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, AUGUST 22: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, while joining the 10th anniversary celebrations of IIM Jammu, called upon the institute to use its remarkable growth as a foundation for global excellence, urging faculty, students and alumni to build a distinctive academic identity rooted in Indian enterprise and the realities of Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh. Recalling the institute's modest beginning with 56 students on a temporary Canal Road campus, Sinha highlighted its international partnerships, accreditations and expanding research output, and said its next decade should focus on experiential learning, entrepreneurship, border-economy research and producing graduates capable of creating enterprises and contributing to nation-building.

The Lieutenant Governor, Shri Manoj Sinha joined the Board of Governors, faculty, students, alumni and dignitaries today to celebrate 10 years of IIM Jammu. Reflecting on IIM Jammu's remarkable journey, the Lieutenant Governor said that from a modest beginning to its current standing as one of India's fastest-emerging



business schools, the Institute has scripted a new history while setting out an ambitious roadmap for the decade ahead.

Recalling that IIM Jammu started a decade ago with just 56 students on a temporary campus on Canal Road, the Lieutenant Governor noted that the institute has since grown into a nationally recognised and internationally engaged centre for management education. He observed that IIM Jammu is now the fifth IIM in the country

SEE ON P-2

J&K power tariff hiked by 6.83%

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, AUG 22 : Consumers in Jammu & Kashmir will have to pay more for electricity consumption as the power regulator for J&K has approved a 6.83% average hike in tariff across the Union Territory.

In an order, a copy of which is in possession of the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission (JERC) approved a 6.83% average increase in power tariff-1.83% higher than what was proposed by the power distribution utilities.

SEE ON P-2

76-Year-Old Non-Local Found Dead in Srinagar

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, AUG 22.: A 76-year-old non-local man was found unconscious at Hanuman Mandir in Amira Kadal area of Srinagar and was later declared brought dead at SMHS Hospital, police said.

The deceased has been identified as Mahant Vishnu Dass, son of Baba Bajrang Dass, a resident of Uttar Pradesh who was presently residing at Durganag, Dalgate, Srinagar.

According to the police party of Police Station Shaheed Gunj, the man was found unconscious at the temple and

SEE ON P-2

“This Is Not Relief; It Is a Betrayal of Trust” : Sunil Sharma

LoP attacks NC government over reported 6.83% power tariff hike and unfulfilled 200-unit free electricity promise



HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 22: Leader of Opposition Sunil Sharma has accused the National Conference-led government of betraying its electoral commitment to provide 200 units of free electricity to

households, saying that instead of delivering on the promise, consumers are now facing a reported 6.83 per cent tariff increase from September 1. Sharma said the development had added to the financial burden on ordinary families and exposed a sharp gap between the NC's election promises and its performance in government, demanding that the Omar Abdullah administration explain why the promised free power had not been provided. Leader of Opposition in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Sunil Sharma, on Saturday strongly criticised the National Conference

SEE ON P-2

NIA Raids Two Locations in Anantnag as Part of Ongoing Probe

Searches conducted at SICOP complex in Bijbehara and Kreeri village with CRPF and police support



HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

ANANTNAG, AUGUST 22: The National Investigation Agency on Saturday conducted searches at two locations in

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“We Must Strengthen Local Production and Economic Activity” : Industrial Delegation

MPs, MLAs and FCIK representatives raise public and industrial issues with Omar Abdullah



HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 22: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today met several MPs, MLAs, industrial representatives and other

delegations at the Raabita office in Srinagar, where a range of public, constituency and economic issues were discussed. Rajya Sabha MPs Chowdhary

SEE ON P-2

Migrant Worker Dies After Alleged Hanging Incident in Srinagar s Samarbugh

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, AUG 22.: A 26-year-old non-local man died after he was found hanging inside his hut at Samarbugh in Srinagar during the intervening night of Friday and Saturday.

The deceased has been identified as Mohammad Bilu, son of Mohammad Khokan, a resident of New Friends Colony, South Delhi, who was presently residing at Samarbugh.

According to preliminary information, the man was found

SEE ON P-2

Rain brings brief relief in J&K, MeT predicts more showers

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, AUG 22 : Intermittent rain lashed parts of Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday, bringing some relief from hot and humid conditions even as the Meteorological Centre here warned of possible flash floods, mudslides and landslides in vulnerable areas due to intense showers.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the weather remained generally hot and humid across the Union Territory, with scattered to many places witnessing rain and thundershowers. Brief spells of intense rainfall were likely at isolated places, particularly in parts of the Jammu division, mainly during the early morning and afternoon hours, the MeT said.

According to the evening weather bulletin, Srinagar recorded a maximum temperature of 32.2 degrees Celsius and a minimum of 20.6 degrees Celsius, while Jammu recorded a maximum of 32.7 degrees and a minimum of 24.9 degrees.

Pahalgam recorded 25.5 degrees Celsius as the maximum and 15.4 degrees as the minimum, while Gulmarg remained the coolest among the stations, recording a maximum of 20.8 degrees and a minimum of 11.4 degrees.

SEE ON P-2

HT BOTTOM NEWS

“People Must Remain Vigilant Against Fake Job Offers” : Crime Branch

EOW Kashmir hargesheets accused in alleged fake government job fraud involving lakhs of rupees

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 22: The Economic Offences Wing Kashmir of the Crime Branch J&K has filed a chargesheet against Abdul Majeed Mir of Kalaroos, Kupwara, in an alleged fake government job fraud case, accusing him of cheating a complainant

of lakhs of rupees by promising government employment and producing a forged appointment order purportedly issued by the J&K Bank chairman-cum-chief executive officer. The chargesheet was filed before the Court of Chief Judicial Magistrate, Kupwara, while the Crime Branch said the accused had been named in 15 criminal cases across the Kashmir Valley and urged the public to remain alert against fraudulent employment offers.

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) Kashmir of the Crime Branch



J&K has chargesheeted a man in connection with an alleged fake government job fraud case, officials

said on Saturday.

The chargesheet against Abdul Majeed Mir, a resident of Lashtiyal

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“Science, Technology

while giving greater emphasis to young scientists, startups, research mobility and affordable access to frontier technologies.

: BRICS countries have unanimously adopted the Chennai Declaration, reaffirming their commitment to building a resilient, inclusive and future-ready framework for cooperation in science, technology and innovation (STI).

The declaration was adopted at the conclusion of the 14th BRICS Science Ministerial Meet, chaired by India. Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences, Dr Jitendra Singh, announced the consensus at the closing session.

The Chennai Consensus places a people-centred and humanity-first approach at the core of BRICS STI cooperation, with emphasis on sustainable development, social inclusion, resilient growth and using emerging technologies to improve people's quality of life.

Dr Jitendra Singh said the discussions demonstrated the central role of science, technology and innovation in addressing shared global challenges. The deliberations covered areas including artificial intelligence, high-performance computing, quantum technologies, advanced materials, biotechnology, healthcare, climate change and sustainability.

A key focus of the declaration is shared research infrastructure and mega-science projects. It welcomes progress towards operationalising the BRICS Global Research Advanced Infrastructure Network (BRICS GRAIN), which aims to improve access to research facilities, facilitate researcher mobility and strengthen collaboration around large-scale scientific infrastructure.

The declaration also welcomes the BRICS Science and Research Repository, envisaged as a digital platform for mapping scientific institutions, researchers, research outputs, datasets, infrastructure and collaboration opportunities among member countries.

The people and talent dimension has also been given prominence, with emphasis on exchanges among young scientists and innovators through initiatives such as the BRICS Young Scientist Forum and BRICS Young Innovator Prize. The BRICS Youth Startup Platform and greater cooperation among incubators, accelerators and early-stage investors were also highlighted.

Dr Jitendra Singh stressed that BRICS STI cooperation must move beyond dialogue towards tangible outcomes through joint projects, shared platforms, coordinated research calls and open research infrastructure. He underlined the importance of ensuring that frontier technologies are accessible, affordable and responsibly deployed, particularly in the Global South.

The Chennai Consensus covers cooperation across a broad spectrum, including AI and high-performance computing, biotechnology, health, nanotechnology, photonics, astronomy, geospatial technologies, renewable energy, ocean and polar science, disaster management and social sciences.

The meeting also endorsed the BRICS STI Calendar of Activities for 2026–27, ensuring continuity of various working groups, research initiatives, young scientist and innovator programmes and other thematic activities.

The next BRICS Science Ministerial Meeting is scheduled to be held under China's chairship in 2027.

The adoption of the Chennai Declaration marks a significant step towards strengthening BRICS cooperation in scientific research, innovation, infrastructure, talent mobility and technology-driven responses to global challenges, with a particular focus on shared progress across the Global South. (PIB)

“IIM Jammu

The Lieutenant Governor commended the hard work and a decade of consistent effort under the leadership of Director Professor B.S. Sahay, the faculty and the Board of Governors, describing the institute's trajectory as a model that other business schools are beginning to look to for inspiration.

“I have seen details of one achievement after another, along with several distinctive initiatives that have become an inspiring example, a role model, for other business schools. I am certain that, in the future, people will remember these achievements as a standard and an ideal, and will seek to emulate them,” he said.

The Lieutenant Governor invoked the founding stories of three of the world's most respected business schools - Harvard, built on the discipline of case-based learning; Stanford, built on connecting the classroom to real-world enterprise through Silicon Valley; and Wharton, built on mastering the complexities of global capital markets. Each, the Lieutenant Governor observed, succeeded not by trying to be everything, but by committing to one distinctive idea and pursuing it with patience over generations.

The Lieutenant Governor said that IIM Jammu now stands at a similar starting point and the decisions it makes over the coming years will shape its identity for decades to come. He emphasised four priorities for the IIM Jammu.

“A distinctive academic identity should be the priority. Rather than relying primarily on case studies drawn from Western business schools, IIM Jammu should build its own tradition of case writing rooted in the realities of Indian

enterprise including the logistical and entrepreneurial challenges unique to Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh.

Experiential learning. We need to move education beyond the lecture hall. Every student to undertake a real, tangible project before graduation, whether through the institute's Entrepreneurship Centre, a policy challenge, or direct engagement with local businesses supported by its Centre for Small Business Development.

Research with a sharp edge should be the focus. Building on the institute's rapid growth in research output, a deeper focus should be on questions specific to border economies, sustainable development and frontier entrepreneurship, areas where IIM Jammu is uniquely positioned to lead. Placements should be seen as a nation-building exercise. I hope within a decade, IIM Jammu graduates would be recognised for reshaping major companies and founding leading enterprises. Each graduate should be seen as a contributor to India's goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047,” the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said the real examinations take place in corporate boardrooms, markets and in life itself, where the data is often incomplete, stakeholders have differing opinions and there is no teacher to provide readymade answers.

“IIM Jammu's growth must now be converted into new discoveries. IIM Jammu must ask itself what can be done in the fields of administration, sustainable development and entrepreneurship in the economies of border areas. I believe that great institutions are great because, when the nation faces difficult questions, it looks to them for answers. If IIM Jammu continues to move forward with complete confidence over the next ten years, I am certain that its name will be spoken across the world with immense pride and respect,” the Lieutenant Governor said.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor released seven coffee-table books of IIM Jammu.

Padma Shri Dr. Milind Pralhad Kamble, Chairman, Board of Governors (BoG), IIM Jammu; Shri Sriram Dandekar, Former Chairman, BoG, IIM; Shri Anand Kripalu, Member, BoG, IIM Jammu; Prof. B.S. Sahay, Director IIM Jammu; Shri S. Shivakumar, Operating Partner, Advent International; Vice Chancellors of various Universities; Head of Departments, Faculty and students of IIM Jammu; prominent citizens and senior officials of Police and Civil Administration were present.

J&K power tariff

In their separate petitions, the Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDCL) and the Jammu Power Distribution Corporation Limited (JPDCCL) had sought a 5% hike in electricity tariff.

The JERC justified the increase on the grounds that there was still a revenue gap of Rs 502 crore even after Rs 2420.78 crore in financial support committed by the J&K Government as subsidy under Section 65 of the Electricity Act, 2003.

According to the order, the revised tariff will raise revenue to Rs 7854.94 crore, up from Rs 7352.87 crore at the existing rates, while the remaining unmet gap of Rs 2420.78 crore will be covered through government grant-in-aid.

The Commission noted that the government's financial support helped avert a tariff shock to consumers. “If this entire gap was to be met

through tariff alone, the hike would have been around 40%, which would have resulted in a tariff shock to consumers,” the order stated.

As per JERC order, the new rates would be applicable to all consumers from September 01, 2026.

“The tariff and terms and conditions approved shall continue to apply until issuance of the next Tariff Order or until further orders of the Commission, unless amended, modified or extended earlier by an Order of the Commission,” the order stated.

The JERC further directed KPDCL and JPDCCL to take immediate steps for implementation of the tariff order—(KNO)

76-Year-Old

was subsequently brought to SMHS Hospital for medical attention.

However, the attending doctor declared him brought dead.

The circumstances leading to his death are being ascertained. [KNT]

Migrant Worker Dies

hanging inside his hut, following which he was shifted to SMHS Hospital for medical treatment. However, doctors declared him brought dead at the hospita.

The circumstances leading to the incident are being ascertained by the authorities. [KNT]

Rain brings

Qazigund recorded 30.4 degrees Celsius as the maximum and 18 degrees as the minimum, Kupwara 31 degrees and 17.9 degrees, and Kokernag 30.6 degrees and 17.6 degrees, respectively.

Banihal recorded a maximum of 28.4 degrees Celsius and a minimum of 18.5 degrees, Batote 27.4 degrees and 19 degrees, Katra 31 degrees and 23.5 degrees, and Bhaderwah 29.6 degrees and 18 degrees.

During the 24 hours ending 8:30 am, Pahalgam received 1 mm of rainfall and Jammu 3.2 mm, while Srinagar recorded 0.0 mm. During the period from 8:30 am to 5:30 pm, Pahalgam received 4 mm, Srinagar 0.6 mm and Jammu 0.3 mm of rainfall.

The MeT said the weather is expected to remain mostly fine on August 23, though a few places could receive thundershowers during the early morning and afternoon hours. A short-duration shower is possible at a few places on August 24, while similar conditions are likely on August 25 and from August 26 to 28, mainly towards the afternoon.

From August 23 to 28, the overall weather is expected to remain largely hot and humid, with brief spells of rain and thundershowers at scattered places.

The department has also forecast another spell of light to moderate rain and thundershowers at scattered to many places from August 29 to 31, with brief intense showers likely, particularly in the Jammu division.

The MeT cautioned that localised heavy rainfall could trigger flash floods, mudslides and landslides in vulnerable areas and advised people to exercise caution during periods of intense rainfall.

“Risk of high-intensity showers will continue. As such, flash floods are possible in a few spots,” the weather department said.

Farmers have been advised to continue harvesting and other agricultural operations according to local weather conditions.

The MeT also advised orchardists to

ideally be completed by late morning, preferably by noon, to minimise the risk of showers developing during the afternoon.

In the plains, spraying can be extended into the afternoon if required, while farmers in hilly areas have been advised to complete the activity by late morning and, where possible, in installments.

The weather department said mostly dry conditions are expected over much of the coming week, but intermittent showers and the possibility of high-intensity rainfall at isolated locations will continue—(KNO)

“We Must Strengthen

Mohammad Ramzan and Gurwinder Singh Oberoi, MLAs Zafar Ali Khatana and Choudhary Mohd. Akram, besides representatives of the Federation Chamber of Industries, Kashmir, apprised the Chief Minister of issues concerning their respective constituencies and the industrial sector, including strengthening local production, supporting enterprises and accelerating economic activity across Jammu and Kashmir.

: A number of public representatives, industrial representatives today called on Chief Minister Omar Abdullah at Raabita office here and discussed various matters of public importance.

Rajya Sabha MPs Chowdhary Mohammad Ramzan and Gurwinder Singh Oberoi called on the Chief Minister and discussed various matters of public importance.

MLAs Zafar Ali Khatana from Kokernag and Choudhary Mohd. Akram from Surankote also called on the Chief Minister and apprised him of various issues and matters pertaining to their respective constituencies.

President of the Federation Chamber of Industries, Kashmir (FCIK), Shahid Kamili, former FCIK President Shakeel Qalander and FCIK General Secretary Afaq Ahmad also called on the Chief Minister. During the meeting, the delegation raised key issues concerning the industrial sector and discussed measures to strengthen local production, support enterprises and boost economic activity across Jammu & Kashmir.

Several other individuals and delegations called on the chief minister and apprised him of several issues and grievances.

The Chief Minister heard the delegations and representatives and discussed the issues raised during the meetings. (KNS)

NIA Raids Two

Anantnag district as part of an ongoing investigation, with teams accompanied by CRPF and local police personnel. The searches were carried out at the SICOP complex in Bijbehara and at Kreeri village in the Dooru area, while officials maintained silence on the precise nature of the case and sources indicated that the operation could be linked to a probe involving suspected terror-related activities.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday carried out raids at two locations in Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag district, with teams accompanied by CRPF and local police personnel, officials said.

The searches were conducted at the SICOP complex in Bijbehara and at Kreeri village in the Dooru area, they said, adding that the operations were part of an ongoing investigation being pursued by the federal anti-terror agency.

While officials remained tight-lipped

activities with possible terror angles. The presence of central paramilitary forces underscored the sensitivity of the operation.

Further details were awaited at the time of filing this report. (KNS)

“This Is Not

(NC)-led government over the reported 6.83 per cent increase in electricity tariffs, terming the move a betrayal of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Sharma said the NC had come to power with a clear promise of providing 200 units of free electricity to every household, but nearly two years after the 2024 Assembly elections, the commitment remained unfulfilled. Instead, he said, consumers were now being burdened with higher electricity bills.

“The NC government promised 200 units of free electricity to every household. But instead of fulfilling that commitment, people are now facing an increase in electricity tariffs. This is not relief; it is a betrayal of the trust placed in the government,” Sharma said.

He said the 6.83 per cent tariff hike, expected to come into effect from September 1, would further increase the financial burden on ordinary families already struggling with inflation and rising household expenses.

Sharma said the development highlighted a stark contradiction between the NC's electoral promises and its performance in government.

“Before the elections, the promise was 200 units of free electricity; after the elections, the reality is higher electricity bills. The government must explain why the promises made to the people have not been fulfilled,” he said.

The Leader of Opposition also questioned the Omar Abdullah-led government's commitment to the NC's manifesto promise of providing 200 units of free electricity.

“The people of Jammu and Kashmir deserve answers, not slogans. The NC must explain where the promised 200 units of free electricity are and why, instead of fulfilling its commitment, the government is increasing the burden on consumers,” Sharma said.

Sharma warned that the BJP would continue to raise the concerns of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and hold the NC-led government accountable for the promises made during the 2024 Assembly elections. (KNS)

People Must

chairman-cum-chief executive officer of J&K Bank.

A probe was ordered following a written complaint and the allegations were found to be established during the investigation based on evidence collected, officials said.

The case has now been concluded with the presentation of the chargesheet before the court for judicial determination, they said.

Mir is a habitual offender and has been involved in 15 criminal cases registered across the Kashmir Valley, the Crime Branch said.

He was arrested on July 18, 2026, and is presently lodged in Central Jail Srinagar in connection with FIR No. 12/2026 of the EOW Kashmir, it added.

The Crime Branch has advised people to remain vigilant against economic frauds, particularly fake job offers, and report suspicious activities to the SSP, EOW Kashmir. (KNS).

United Welfare Foundation of India organises Free Medical Camp in Shopian, Over 600 Patients Examined.

Showkat Dar

SHOPIAN, 22-Aug: United Welfare Foundation of India (UWFI) was organised a free medical camp at Tarkawangam in Shopian district on Saturday in collaboration with the

emphasised preventive healthcare, with medical professionals encouraging residents to undergo regular health check-ups and seek timely medical advice whenever required.

The United Welfare Foundation of India was expressed gratitude to the Health



Health Department, District Shopian, and the Block Medical Officer (BMO), Zainapora.

The camp was received an encouraging response from the local community, with more than 600 patients examined during the programme. The initiative was aimed at bringing accessible healthcare services closer to residents, particularly those who may face difficulties in accessing regular medical facilities.

During the camp, patients received medical consultations, basic health check-ups, free medicines and health-awareness services. Medical professionals and volunteers worked together to facilitate registration, patient management, consultations and the distribution of medicines. The programme was also

Department, District Shopian, the BMO Zainapora, medical professionals, volunteers, supporters and members of the local community for their cooperation in making the camp successful.

The Foundation said it would continue organising similar community-based healthcare initiatives in the future, with the objective of reaching more people and extending healthcare support to underserved communities.

With over 600 patients examined, the medical camp marked a significant community healthcare initiative in Shopian and highlighted the Foundation's commitment to promoting accessible and preventive healthcare services for the local population.

Care Foundation and Charitable Trust Youth President Umair Ashraf Meets DC Srinagar to Discuss Drug Menace

Wani Arafat

SRINAGAR, August 22: Care Foundation and Charitable Trust, founded by Dr. Mehjabeen Nabi, today held an important meeting with the Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar, to discuss critical concerns and challenges related to the growing problem of drug abuse across the district.

The meeting was successfully coordinated by Youth President Umair Ashraf, along with active member Syed Farhat, who represented the organisation during the detailed discussions. A major focus of the interaction was the widespread abundance and cultivation of cannabis across the Zakura-Gulab Bagh areas and the outskirts of Srinagar city. The representatives strongly emphasized the urgent need for timely, coordinated intervention and sustained on-ground action in these identified pockets to curb the menace effectively. During the discussions, the foundation also emphasized the critical importance of educating the youth about the harmful effects of substance abuse on the brain and overall long-term health.

They stressed the need for bringing active participation from young people and sensitizing them through behavioral reinforcement to encourage healthy choices. Furthermore, the members discussed various possible interventions to meaningfully engage local young people in rehabilitation programs, community prevention strategies, and long-term drug-awareness initiatives. The Deputy Commissioner acknowledged the growing

public concern surrounding substance abuse in the region and assured priority assistance, prompt action, and complete coordination from the J&K Police, the Excise Department, as well as other concerned government administrative bodies. He expressed his



complete willingness to support an immediate, coordinated drive in the identified locations. The meeting also detailed the critical importance of strengthening localized drug-related intelligence networks and improving inter-departmental coordination to facilitate a much more effective prevention and response system against illegal drug-related activities.

The meeting concluded on a positive note, with the Care Foundation and Charitable Trust officially honouring the Deputy Commissioner with a Citation of Commitment. This gesture was presented in recognition of his unwavering dedication to anti-drug initiatives and his highly active, continuous role in advancing the objectives of the Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan in the district.



DC Srinagar lays foundation stone for Additional Accommodation Block at Zila Sainik Bhawan

Additional Facility to enhance welfare service for wards of ex-servicemen, war widows, martyrs & their families, besides providing Skill Development opportunities

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 22: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, who is also the President, Zila Sainik Welfare Board today laid the foundation stone for the construction of an Additional Accommodation Block at Zila Sainik Bhawan in presence of Director Sainik Welfare Department, J&K, Brigadier Pankaj Chib, SM, VSM.

The proposed block is aimed at strengthening the existing infrastructure of Zila Sainik Bhawan and providing additional accommodation and welfare facilities for ex-servicemen, war widows, serving personnel and their families from across the districts of the Kashmir Division.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted the commitment of District Administration Srinagar towards the welfare and safe and comfortable accommodation for ex-servicemen and their dependents. He emphasized the need to ensure accessible and adequate support to members of the armed forces community through dedicated welfare infrastructure.

The DC said that the additional accommodation block will enhance the accommodation capacity of Zila Sainik Bhawan and facilitate better delivery of various welfare



services to eligible beneficiaries, particularly wards of ex-servicemen and martyrs who temporarily stay in Srinagar for educational purposes. He further stressed the need to incorporate a Skill Development Training Centre

in the proposed block to impart skill-based training to wards of ex-servicemen and martyrs, besides local students, thereby enhancing their employability and self-reliance.

On the occasion, the DC appreciated the

efforts of the concerned Officers, including the Chief Planning Officer Srinagar, Superintending Engineer R&B, Executive Engineer R&B and the Zila Sainik Welfare Board, for their dedicated efforts in accelerating and completing various projects at Zila Sainik Bhawan, including the parking shed and solarisation.

The DC also mentioned that 100 bedded hostel for wards of ex-servicemen and martyrs has already been completed at Peerbagh and urged the Zila Sainik Welfare Board to take necessary steps for its early operationalisation so that the intended beneficiaries can avail benefit of the facility.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Mir Imtiyaz Ul Aziz, Additional Deputy Commissioner Aadil Fareed, IAS Probationer Aakash Garg, Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Superintending Engineer, R&B North, Shabir Ahmad, Executive Engineer R&B Karan Nagar Division, Abdul Qayoom, District Social Welfare Officer, Mohammad Yousuf, Tehsildar South, Sajad Rasool Shah and senior official of Zila Sainik Bhawan including Abdul Rasid War were present on the occasion.

A number of ex-servicemen, war widows, veterans and family members from various districts of the Kashmir Division also attended the event.

MPs, MLAs, industrial representatives call on CM Omar Abdullah at Raabita

■ HT News Network



SRINAGAR, AUGUST 22: A number of public representatives, industrial representatives today called on Chief Minister Omar Abdullah at Raabita office here and discussed various matters of public importance.

Rajya Sabha MPs Chowdhary Mohammad Ramzan and Gurwinder Singh Oberoi called on the Chief Minister and discussed various matters of public importance.

MLAs Zafar Ali Khatana from Kokernag and Choudhary Mohd. Akram from Surankote also called on the Chief Minister and apprised him of various issues and matters pertaining to their respective constituencies.

President of the Federation Chamber of Industries, Kashmir (FCIK), Shahid Kamili, former FCIK President Shakeel Qalander and FCIK General Secretary Afaz Ahmad also called on the Chief Minister. During the meeting, the delegation raised key issues concerning the industrial sector and discussed measures to strengthen local production, support enterprises and boost economic activity across Jammu & Kashmir.

DC Budgam reviews progress under Mission YUVA, HADP, JKCIP & PMFBY

■ HT News Network

BUDGAM, AUGUST 22: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan, today reviewed implementation and progress under Mission YUVA, Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), Jammu and Kashmir Competitiveness Improvement in Agriculture and Allied Sectors Project (JKCIP) and Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) in the district. At the outset, the Deputy Commissioner called for fast-track processing, sanctioning and timely disbursement of cases under Mission YUVA. He directed the concerned departments and agencies to ensure that eligible aspiring entrepreneurs receive the benefits under the scheme without unnecessary delay.

The DC emphasized the need for extensive capacity-building and awareness programmes among aspiring youth regarding



various government schemes and flagship programmes. He said that better awareness, handholding and capacity-building would enable the youth to avail available opportunities and improve their economic and employment prospects. Reviewing the onboarding of businesses on the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), the Deputy Commissioner stressed the need to register shopkeepers, business unit holders, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), grocery sellers and other eligible stakeholders on the platform to facilitate greater market access and better economic opportunities to them.

Emphasized maximum enrolment of farmers under Daksh Kisan, with focused efforts towards their skill development and capacity-building, the DC directed the concerned departments to undertake sustained awareness and mobilization campaigns to ensure wider participation of farmers and enhance their skills for improved productivity and livelihoods. While reviewing the implementation of HADP and JKCIP, the DC asserted that the concerned departments must focus on timely approval and establishment of units under agriculture and allied sectors. He stressed upon the officers.

DC Kulgam Inaugurates Blood Donation Camp at District Hospital

■ Farooq Rather

KULGAM, AUGUST 22: The Health Department today organised a voluntary blood donation camp at District Hospital Kulgam as part of efforts to strengthen emergency healthcare services, replenish blood reserves and promote the spirit of community welfare.

Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Shahzad Alam (IAS), inaugurated the camp in the presence of officers and officials of the district administration. The event witnessed active participation from the Ex-DDC Chairperson Mohammad Afzal paray, Kulgam, Medical Superintendent District Hospital Kulgam Dr Masood, senior health officials, medical officers, administrative staff and local youth volunteers.

The camp was organised with the objective of replenishing blood stock reserves and creating greater



public awareness about the importance of voluntary blood donation. A good number of units of blood were collected during the day-long drive.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner appreciated the voluntary donors, including local youth, civil society members, government employees and healthcare professionals, for coming forward to support the noble cause. He highlighted that voluntary blood donation is one of the highest forms of humanitarian service, as donated blood can help save precious lives during emergencies, critical

surgeries and cases of medical trauma.

The DC urged people across the district to participate regularly in voluntary blood donation drives and contribute towards strengthening the availability of blood for patients in need.

The Medical Superintendent briefed the Deputy Commissioner about the arrangements put in place to ensure a smooth, safe and hygienic donation process. Standard medical protocols were strictly followed, with preliminary health check-ups and screening of every donor conducted before blood collection.

DC Srinagar chairs DLSCC meeting; several cases recommended for compassionate appointment and cash compensation under SRO-43

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 22:- A meeting of District Level Screening cum Coordination Committee (DLSCC) was today held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo here at the meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex. The meeting conducted a detailed review of cases and claims submitted under SRO-43 by the next of kin (NoKs) of persons killed in terror-related incidents in Srinagar District. The meeting was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Aadil Fareed, IAS Probationer, Aakash Garg, SP headquarter, Umer Shah, Additional SP CID, Ashok Kumar, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Umar Gulzar, District Social Welfare Officer, Mohammad Yousuf, District Health Officer, Dr Rubeena, Tehsildars of South, Eidgah, Khanayr & Shalteng, senior officers from BSF, Army and other security agencies, besides Officials from the concerned departments. At the outset, the Committee undertook a comprehensive deliberation on various cases/claims and supporting documents submitted under SRO-43 by NoKs of those killed in terror related incidents in Srinagar district.

Director Agriculture Kashmir visits S.M Farm Tapper Kreeri, takes stock of Agriculture activities

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 22:- Director Agriculture Kashmir, Sartaj Ahmad Shah visited Seed Multiplication Farm Tapper Kreeri and took stock of various agriculture activities there.

The Director inspected different blocks, hi-tech poly houses at the farm and reviewed various innovative interventions and technologies adopted at the farm.

Speaking on the occasion, the director expressed satisfaction over the transformation of the farm and appreciated the concerned officers for their role in the successful implementation of different modern technologies.

The director said that the department is committed to transform all the seed multiplication farms of Kashmir into model farms so as to achieve the seed production at optimum levels. He said Tapper form is one of the most productive vegetable farms in the UT of J&K. He asked the concerned officers to strategize the cultivation operations in an environment friendly manner with minimum stress on natural resources.

Director Agriculture was accompanied



by Chief Agriculture Officer Baramulla and Seed Production Officer Srinagar. Speaking on the occasion, the director expressed satisfaction over the transformation of the farm and appreciated the concerned officers for their role in the successful implementation of different modern technologies.

The director said that the department is committed to transform all the seed multiplication farms of Kashmir into model farms so as to achieve the seed production at optimum levels. He said Tapper form is one of the most productive vegetable farms in the UT of J&K. He asked the concerned officers to strategize the cultivation operations in an environment friendly manner with minimum stress on natural resources.

JK Judicial Academy organises workshop on Arbitration, Mediation Act

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 22: The Jammu & Kashmir Judicial Academy, under the patronage of Acting Chief Justice, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, and the guidance of Justice Rajnesh Oswal, Judge, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh and Chairman, Governing Committee, the J&K Judicial Academy, today a one day workshop on "Arbitration & Conciliation Act, 1996; Mediation: Role of Judges in referral with special reference to The Mediation Act, 2023" at the J&K Judicial Academy, Mominabad, Srinagar.

The workshop commenced with the inaugural address by Justice Moksha Khajuria Kazmi, Judge, High Court of J&K and Ladakh and Member, Governing Committee, J&K Judicial Academy.

In her address, Justice Kazmi emphasized that while adjudication remains central to the rule of law, arbitration, conciliation and mediation should be viewed as appropriate dispute resolution mechanisms suited to the nature and circumstances of each dispute. She observed that mediation



enables parties to participate in shaping a resolution, fostering ownership and commitment to settlement.

She stressed that its success should be measured not merely by disposal but by the ability of settlements to endure and underscored the need for trained mediators, appropriate judicial referrals and institutional support. She emphasized that adjudication, arbitration and mediation are complementary instruments of justice aimed at making the justice delivery system more accessible, humane, responsive and effective.

The first technical session was conducted

by Justice Rashid Ali Dar, Former Judge, High Court of J&K and Ladakh, on "Arbitration: Basic Principles, Court's Role and Interface with Judicial Proceedings." He emphasized that arbitration is a legally recognized mechanism distinct from, yet closely connected with the judicial system requiring a balance between party autonomy and minimal judicial intervention.

He stressed that courts should facilitate rather than obstruct arbitration while ensuring fairness, legality and natural justice. The session covered key provisions of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act,

1996, including arbitration agreements, referral to arbitration, appointment and jurisdiction of arbitral tribunals, interim measures and the complementary roles of courts and tribunals.

Thereafter, Mohan Singh Parihar, Former District and Sessions Judge, conducted sessions on "Mediation - Role of Judges in Referral and Facilitation of Settlement" and "Mediated Settlements - Recording, Enforcement, Challenges and Implementation." He provided practical insights into mediation as an important ADR mechanism and emphasised the role of judicial officers in identifying suitable cases for mediation. He stressed that before making a referral, the court should understand the facts and nature of the dispute and assess whether there is an element of settlement that can appropriately be explored through mediation.

He also explained the procedural framework governing mediation, including referral to District Mediation Centres, the role of mediators and the procedure to be followed in successful and unsuccessful mediations.



SANJY-2026: Chhari Mubarak received warmly at Bijbehara; commences final journey to Holy Cave

■ **HT News Network**

ANANTNAG, AUGUST 22: The Holy Mace, Chhari Mubarak, associated with the annual Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra (SANJY-2026), was today received with traditional fervor, enthusiasm, and solemnity upon its arrival at Bijbehara.

Deputy Commissioner, Anantnag (Yatra Officer, Pahalgam Axis), Dr. Bilal Mohiuddin Bhat formally received and welcomed the custodian of the sacred symbol, Mahant Deependra Giri, at Pujteng.

SSP, Amod Ashok Nagpure, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Dr. Muzammil Maqbool Beigh, SPs, Sunny Gupta and Dr. Rameez Raja, SE, PWD, Syed Ishfaq Ahmad, SDM and Tehsildar, Bijbehara, CMO and other officers from the civil and police administration were present during the reception.

Mahant Deependra Giri, led the procession accompanied by a large gathering of sadhus and devotees chanting devotional hymns.

Special pujas and traditional rituals were performed at the Shiv Temple in Bijbehara, followed by ceremonies at the historic Martand Tirth, Mattan. The Chhari Mubarak will pay visits and



perform religious rites at several traditional halts and ancient temples

including Gourishankar Temple, Pahalgam over the coming days.

The Holy Mace is scheduled to reach the Holy Cave on August 28, 2026, coinciding with Shravan Purnima (Raksha Bandhan), marking the formal culmination of the SANJY-2026 pilgrimage.

Meanwhile, the district administration has made all necessary arrangements regarding security, traffic management, accommodation and sanitation besides put in place the essential facilities including firewood, food, pooja samagri and drinking water for smooth and safe journey of Chhari Mubarak along with Mahant Ji, accompanying sadhus and the devotees to the Holy Cave. SSP, Amod Ashok Nagpure, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Dr. Muzammil Maqbool Beigh, SPs, Sunny Gupta and Dr. Rameez Raja, SE, PWD, Syed Ishfaq Ahmad, SDM and Tehsildar, Bijbehara, CMO and other officers from the civil and police administration were present during the reception.

Mahant Deependra Giri, led the procession accompanied by a large gathering of sadhus and devotees chanting devotional hymns.

JNV Kulgam holds Parent-Teacher Council Programme to strengthen School-Parent Partnership



■ **Farooq Rather**

KULGAM, AUGUST 22: Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV), Kulgam, today organised a Parent-Teacher Council (PTC) programme under the leadership of its Principal, Shafak Shamsi.

The programme marked an important step towards strengthening parent-school collaboration and promoting the holistic development of students. Parents participated enthusiastically and engaged in meaningful discussions on academic excellence, student welfare, discipline, character building and the overall growth of students.

As part of the programme, PTC members were duly selected, including Mohd. Shareef,

Mubarak Ahmad Dar, Humaira Hammed, Haseena Hassan, Shabeer Ahmad Khan, Yasir Rasool Shah, Kulsuma Banoo, Nageena Akhter, Haji Ghulam Hassan Shad, Mohd. Ashraf Mir, Rehana Akhter and Sumi Jan.

Their active involvement is expected to further strengthen the vital bridge between parents and the school community.

Addressing the gathering, Principal Shafak Shamsi emphasised the indispensable role of parents in shaping students' academic journey, values, confidence and future prospects. She called for active participation, constructive dialogue and collective responsibility to build an inspiring, supportive and nurturing educational environment.

HUDD J&K warns against sale and use of electric shock devices for street dogs

■ **Farooq Rather**

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 22: The Housing & Urban Development Department (HUDD), J&K, has taken serious note of the advertisement and sale of an electrically operated shock device being marketed as a "Dog Stick" and promoted for "safety from dogs and wild animals in streets."



The device is being advertised by M/s Gambis Enterprises, Old Bus Stand, Pulwama, Jammu & Kashmir.

The Department has cautioned that electric shock guns, stun devices, electric prods or similar devices shall not be used for stray animals as it violates Sections 3 and 11(1)(a) of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, which impose a duty to prevent unnecessary pain or suffering to animals and prohibit treating an animal so as to subject it to unnecessary pain or suffering.

The Department has also drawn attention to the Arms Act, 1959 and Arms Rules, 2016. Under Section 5 of the Arms Act, sale, transfer, exposure or offer for sale, or possession for sale of firearms or other prescribed classes of arms requires the requisite licence. Contravention of Section 5 may attract Section 25(1)(a) of the Act.

The Arms Rules, 2016 specifically regulate Electronic Disabling Devices (EDDs). Depending upon their statutory classification and specifications, such devices may fall within the restricted or permissible arms categories, and Rule 89(3) provides that EDDs shall be sold only through authorised arms and ammunition dealers holding the requisite licence. The Department has accordingly taken cognisance of the advertisement by M/s Gambis Enterprises and is examining the matter with the competent authorities to ascertain the legal classification of the device, the authority/licence under which it is being sold and its intended use.

All dog catchers, ABC agencies, contractors, Animal Welfare Organisations, municipal bodies and members of the public are also advised not to procure or use electric shock devices for catching, restraining or handling street dogs.

ABRSM Demands Strict Action Against Teacher Accused of Raping Minor Student

■ **HT News Network**

Jammu 22 August 2026:- Demand for Strict Action Against Teacher Accused of Alleged Rape of Minor Student.

The Akhil Bharatiya Rashtriya Shaikshik Mahasangh (ABRSM) has termed the alleged rape of a 14-year-old student an extremely serious, unfortunate and shameful incident and has demanded the strictest action under law against the accused teacher, Khalid Hussain.

ABRSM State President Rattan Sharma expressed deep

concern over the incident and urged the Jammu and Kashmir Government to ensure a fair and speedy investigation. He further demanded that, if the allegations are proved, the accused should be dismissed from service and awarded the strictest punishment as per law.

He stated that a teacher holds a highly respected position in society as a mentor, guide and character-builder. An alleged incident of such a grave nature involving a minor student by a teacher is deeply disturbing and casts a serious shadow on the reputation of the entire

teaching community. Schools must remain safe spaces where children can learn, grow and develop without fear. Any compromise with the safety and dignity of children is unacceptable.

The Mahasangh has urged the Government to strengthen child-protection mechanisms in all educational institutions, ensure effective monitoring of teachers' conduct, strengthen grievance-redressal systems, and guarantee immediate action on complaints raised by children.

DC Budgam visits Qazibagh, Ichgam for land Identification for development of playfields

■ **HT News Network**

BUDGAM, AUGUST 22: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan, today visited Qazibagh and Ichgam areas to identify and survey suitable land patches for the development of playfield facilities for the local youth and sports enthusiasts.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner inspected various potential sites and shall explore the availability and suitability of land for the establishment of playfields in both areas.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned officers to undertake the necessary survey and complete other requisite formalities for taking



forward the development of sports infrastructure in both villages. During visit and inspection of land patches, the Deputy Commissioner interacted with local youth delegations and sports lovers, who apprised him of their demands regarding the development of playfields and other sports facilities, including construction of approach roads, boundary walls and augmentation of essential infrastructure. Urging the

younger generation to embrace sports for positive growth and development, the Deputy Commissioner said, "Sports play a vital role in channelising the energy and potential of our youth in a positive direction. The District Administration is committed to creating better sporting infrastructure and providing adequate facilities to enable young people to participate and excel in sports."

He further said that the development of playfields and sports infrastructure remains a priority of the District Administration, with focused efforts being made to provide youth with appropriate platforms to showcase their talent and promote a vibrant sports culture in society.

Sankalp Hub organises Awareness Programme at AWC Dairoo, Shopian



■ **HT News Network**

SHOPIAN, AUGUST 22: Sankalp Hub for Empowerment of Women, Mission Shakti, Shopian, organised an awareness programme at Anganwadi Centre (AWC), Dairoo, Shopian, with the objective of sensitising women about their rights, government welfare schemes, women-centric initiatives and support services available to them.

During the programme, participants were sensitised about various government schemes and initiatives aimed at promoting the social, economic and overall empowerment of women. The team also elaborated on the objectives of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), emphasising the importance of protecting, educating and empowering the girl child and ensuring equal opportunities for girls.

Detailed awareness was also imparted regarding the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, with particular emphasis on preventing sex selection, safeguarding the dignity of the girl child and promoting a healthy gender balance in society.

The participants were further informed

about important helpline numbers and support services available to women, enabling them to seek timely assistance in cases involving violence, distress, exploitation or other challenges.

As part of the programme, an interactive grievance-redressal session was conducted, providing women with an opportunity to openly share their concerns, problems and difficulties. The Sankalp Hub team patiently heard their grievances and provided appropriate guidance regarding relevant schemes, services and institutional mechanisms available for resolution. The participants were encouraged to approach the concerned departments and support institutions whenever necessary.

The programme witnessed active participation from women and served as a meaningful platform for awareness, dialogue and grassroots-level problem-solving. The initiative reaffirmed the commitment of Sankalp Hub for Empowerment of Women, Mission Shakti, Shopian, towards reaching women at the community level, enhancing awareness about their rights and entitlements, and strengthening their access to welfare schemes, support services and grievance-redressal mechanisms.

Stronger Organisation, Empowered Women, Stronger J&K - Adv. Neha Mahajan

BJP Mahila Morcha President Adv. Neha Mahajan Undertakes One-Day Organisational Outreach in Kashmir Division

■ **HT News Network**

BARAMULLA, AUGUST 21: Ajeet Kumar Sahu, Union Joint Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, who is also serving as the Central Prabhari Officer for the Aspirational District Programme (ADP) for Baramulla today presided a meeting to review the implementation and progress of ADP, Prime Minister Dhan-Dhanya Krishi Yojana (PMDDKY) and PM SHRI School at Dak Bungalow, Baramulla.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, S.F. Hamid, Principal Government Medical College Baramulla, Chief Planning Officer (CPO), Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD) and sector officers from concerned

departments.

At the outset, the CPO Baramulla presented a comprehensive overview of the district's performance under 5 key indicators of the ADP, including Health and Nutrition, Education, Agriculture and Water Resources, Financial Inclusion and Skill Development, and Infrastructure.

During the meeting, the Central Prabhari Officer undertook a detailed review of the progress achieved under the Aspirational District/Block Programme, with particular focus on key indicators, developmental outcomes and the interventions being undertaken to improve the socio-economic conditions of the identified areas.

Ajeet Kumar Sahu stressed the importance of outcome-oriented

planning, inter-departmental convergence and regular monitoring to ensure that the benefits of government schemes reach the intended beneficiaries in a timely and effective manner.

Meanwhile, the meeting reviewed the implementation of the Prime Minister Dhan-Dhanya Krishi Yojana, aimed at strengthening agricultural productivity, improving access to agricultural infrastructure and services, promoting diversification and enhancing the overall income farmers.

The Joint Secretary directed the concerned officers to promote the adoption of high-yielding and improved crop varieties, particularly in the horticulture sector and other high-value cash crops, to enhance



productivity, farm incomes and overall agricultural output in the district.

Earlier, the Prabhari Officer reviewed the functioning of PM SHRI

Schools where he assessed the progress of infrastructure development, availability of basic amenities, academic and co-curricular initiatives and other interventions

aimed at transforming selected schools into model institutions.

During the review, the Head of the Institutions (Hols) of PM SHRI Schools were directed to undertake a comprehensive analysis of their respective institutions, including student enrolment trends, year-wise growth, retention and other relevant parameters.

Emphasising the importance of active parental participation in the education of children, the Prabhari Officer called upon the schools to ensure greater participation of parents in Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs).

During the meeting, DC Baramulla, S.F. Hamid, highlighted certain key gaps and bottlenecks affecting the effective implementation of various developmental initiatives

in the district and brought them to the attention of the Joint Secretary for appropriate intervention at the central level.

He sought necessary support and facilitation to address the identified shortcomings, particularly those requiring coordination and action beyond the district administration, so as to ensure timely resolution and improve the overall outcomes of the concerned programmes. He sought necessary support and facilitation to address the identified shortcomings, particularly those requiring coordination and action beyond the district administration, so as to ensure timely resolution and improve the overall outcomes of the concerned programmes.





GI QR labelling begins at Quality Control Lab of Handicrafts Dept

Lab shall certify non-textile & languishing crafts to add brand value and improve market reach

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 22: In a significant boost to Geographical Indication (GI) testing and certification, particularly for non-textile and languishing crafts, the Department of Handicrafts and Handloom, Kashmir, today formally launched the GI QR Code Management System at its Quality Control Division (QCD) in Srinagar.

Following the NABL-accredited IICT and PTQCC laboratories, the QCD has become the third GI Lab in Jammu & Kashmir. It will now test and affix GI labels on a range of products including Wagguv, Gabba, felted Namdah, Walnut Wood Carving, Chain Stitch, Khatamband and Crewel.

The introduction of GI QR labels for fading crafts such as Wagguv and Namdah is expected to provide a major fillip to these traditional skills, enhancing their brand value in domestic and international markets. "This initiative marks an important



expansion of GI certification beyond premier, high-value products such as Kashmir Pashmina, hand-knotted carpet, and Kani and Sozni embroidered shawls," he added.

The Chief Minister had recently

inaugurated the refurbished QCD Laboratory, which has been equipped with a High-Resolution Digital Microscope and other required paraphernalia. The upgradation was funded by the Ministry of Textiles

under the National Handicrafts Development Programme as well as the UT Capex Budget. Until recently, the lab had been labelling only non-GI handmade products from Kashmir.

The GI QR labelling system will certify the authenticity of selected handmade products and help them capture the affordable market segment. It will complement the Department's ongoing efforts in capacity building and improved packaging, with special focus on languishing crafts such as Namdah, Gabba and Wagguv that hold strong market potential both within and outside the Union Territory.

The Department has urged artisans, weavers, and other stakeholders to approach the QCD Laboratory to get their products labelled at nominal user charges, thereby adding much-needed brand value to Kashmir's exquisite middle-segment handmade crafts.

Big Surge of 16 Percent in College undergraduate admissions with 47,150 admissions in Phase -I



■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 23: Phase-I of undergraduate admissions to the Government Degree Colleges of Jammu and Kashmir for the academic session 2026-27 has concluded with 47,150 candidates admitted, as against about 40,800 in the corresponding phase of the preceding session — an increase of about 16 per cent. Of these, 35,040 candidates were admitted through direct allocation and 12,110 through the walk-in mode.

Admissions were conducted on the basis of 10+2 merit through the Centralised Admission Portal, jkadmissions.in, developed in-house by the Directorate of Colleges, J&K. The portal placed a single Union Territory-wide merit list before every candidate, allowed continuous upgradation of the allotted seat through successive rounds, managed the migration of fee automatically, and enabled a meritorious candidate from any part of the Union Territory to compete for a seat in the programme of their choice. The entire process, from registration to payment, was completed online by the candidate.

As per the statement of Dr. Sheikh Ajaz Bashir, Director Colleges, J&K, merit at every stage—whether allocation of college or allotment of Major, Minor, Multidisciplinary, and Skill Enhancement Courses—was the bedrock of the entire admission process. He stated that 106 colleges recorded a rise in enrollment over the preceding session and most other colleges have retained their enrollment figures. This is a remarkable achievement in view of the national trend of declining

enrollments across subject domains in higher education.

The Department of Higher Education, J&K, achieved this milestone under the visionary leadership of the Minister for Education, Sakeena Itoo. Her consistent reviews and directives that the admission process be conducted transparently, strictly on merit, and as per student convenience, gave the Department clear direction and confidence.

Decisive leadership by Ram Niwas Sharma, Commissioner Secretary, Higher Education Department, ensured the admission timeline remained on schedule throughout. His confidence in the Directorate empowered the team to fulfill its mandate and deliver these visible outcomes.

The dedication of college Principals, Admission coordinators, and verifiers ensured seamless execution on campus. Ultimately, strong student feedback regarding the quality teaching imparted by our hard-working faculty served as the biggest draw for prospective applicants—far outperforming traditional publicity.

Similar to the procedure adopted in the previous session, the Phase-II of admissions, against leftover seats, will open for candidates qualifying the biannual/supplementary examination at the higher secondary level as their results are expected to be declared in the coming days. The schedule will be notified separately upon declaration of results, and candidates are advised to monitor the Centralised Admission Portal, jkadmissions.in, for updates.

Senior Citizens Day 2026 celebrated in District Kishtwar

■ HT News Network

KISHTWAR, AUGUST 22: On the directions of Deputy Commissioner Pankaj Kumar Sharma, the Department of Social Welfare, Kishtwar today organised a programme at TRC Kishtwar to mark Senior Citizens Day 2026, with the active participation of prominent citizens, beneficiaries of the department and members of the Senior Citizens Council.

Members of the Senior Citizens Council, Kishtwar, including AM Bichoo, Dr Sanjay Sen and Prehlad Sharma, along

with several other members, participated enthusiastically and shared their views on matters concerning the welfare and well-being of senior citizens.

On the occasion, the Department of Social Welfare organised a health check-up camp in collaboration with the Department of AYUSH.

An assessment camp was also conducted in collaboration with ALIMCO to provide prosthetic aids to eligible persons and senior citizens under the ADIP and Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY) schemes. The event was conducted

under the overall supervision of DSWO Tariq Parveez Qazi.

During the camp, 142 beneficiaries were assessed. Of these, 124 were assessed under the Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY) and 18 under the ADIP Scheme. It is pertinent to mention that the Department of Social Welfare is organising assessment camps in far-flung areas under the ADIP and RVY schemes. The upcoming camps will be held at Panjdihara, Dachhan on 22-08-2026; Panchayat Ghar, Tiwari, Paddar on 24-08-2026 and Nali Bunjwah on 25-08-2026.

GHSS Bandipora Organises Dosti Discussion on Drug Abuse under NMBA

■ HT News Network

BANDIPORA, AUGUST 22: Govt. Girls Higher Secondary School (GHSS) Bandipora organised a meaningful and thought-provoking "Dosti Discussion" under the Nasha Mukti Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA) to engage students in an open dialogue on the growing menace of drug abuse and measures to prevent it.

The programme was presided over by Dr. G.M. Puiju, Deputy Chief Education Officer (Dy. CEO), Bandipora, who attended the event as the Visiting Officer. Jawaid Ahmad Magray, Principal, GHSS Bandipora, along with faculty members, officials from the Chief Education Officer's office and students, also

participated in the programme.

The interactive discussion witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, who raised questions on various aspects of drug abuse, including its causes, sources, harmful effects, preventive measures and strategies to address the problem effectively.

Dr. G.M. Puiju, along with the Principal, interacted with the students and responded to their queries with clarity and sensitivity. The interaction provided students with valuable insights into the physical, psychological and social consequences of substance abuse, while also highlighting the importance of awareness, prevention and collective action.

An Academic Initiative to Promote Kashmiri Language and Literature by centre for distance and online education university of kashmir Extension Lecture on the Development of Literary Criticism in Kashmiri.

■ HT News Network

The Centre for Distance and Online Education, University of Kashmir, has, for several years, been playing a significant role in the promotion, teaching, and wider dissemination of the Kashmiri language and literature through a range of academic programmes. The Centre offers Certificate, Diploma, and Postgraduate programmes in Kashmiri, reflecting its sustained commitment to making the language and its rich literary heritage accessible to learners through the mode of distance and online education. Over the years, several distinguished academicians

and academic administrators associated with the Centre have contributed to its growth and development. At present, under the able leadership of its Director, Professor Dr. Altaf Anjum, the Centre is making concerted efforts not only to expand the scope of distance and online education but also to provide students with meaningful opportunities for intellectual engagement with eminent scholars, writers, and literary thinkers. His academic vision and commitment to enriching the learning experience of students have given a new impetus to the Centre's scholarly and literary activities. As part of this continuing academic endeavour, the Centre organised an Extension



Lecture for students and scholars associated with Kashmiri language and literature. The programme was presided over by Professor Dr. Altaf Anjum, Director, Centre for Distance and Online Education, while Professor Majrooh Rashid, noted scholar, literary critic, and former Head of the Department of Kashmiri, was invited as the resource person. The lecture focused on the

highly significant and intellectually engaging theme, "The Development of Literary Criticism in Kashmiri." The topic holds considerable relevance in the context of the growth and evolution of Kashmiri literature. Literary criticism serves not merely as a means of interpreting and evaluating literary texts but also as an important instrument for shaping literary sensibility,

establishing critical standards, and understanding changing literary trends. The programme commenced at 11:00 a.m. Professor Tariq Ahmad Chishti, former Director of the Centre and a noted academic, formally welcomed the invited speaker and the participants. In his welcome address, he briefly highlighted the objectives and academic significance of the programme. Delivering the extension lecture, Professor Majrooh Rashid presented an insightful, comprehensive, and well-reasoned account of the development of literary criticism in Kashmiri. Drawing upon his extensive literary scholarship and critical understanding, he discussed various dimensions

of the Kashmiri critical tradition, its evolution, changing approaches, and the emergence of critical consciousness in Kashmiri literary discourse. His lecture reflected a fine synthesis of historical awareness, literary insight, and critical thought, and proved highly informative and enriching for the students and other participants. A significant feature of the programme was the address delivered by Professor Dr. Altaf Anjum, Director of the Centre. Speaking in both Urdu and Kashmiri, he elaborated upon the significance of literary criticism, its evolution, and its relevance in the contemporary literary landscape. He emphasised that academic learnings should not remain confined.

Tour note to Mankal Mawar Distt. Kupwara

■ TAJAMUL BUKHARI

A tour to Mankal Mawar Handwara was organised by worthy admn of the group of sr. citizens of Ind and commerce deptt. With collaboration of core group members on 20th of aug. 2026. The members assembled at langate coming from districts baramulla kupwara bandipora and srinagar.

The members boarded in their vehicles started their journey via kohroo maratgam hangah kalamabad and laachi and reached their destination Viz mankal safely and soundly. The journey through these villages was very pleasant cool and refreshing. Moving through these villages feel like stepping into another world. The beauty bestowed by the nature to mankal was unmatched and praiseworthy. The members sat

in the lawn of the Forest tourist hut and shared their cordial past memories and enjoyed up to their entire satisfaction.

A tasty and delicious lunch was arranged by Haji Muhammad Ashraf wani sb ex JD I/C for which all participating members expressed their thanks to haji wani sb. The absence of the other group members was felt seriously and hoped their participation in coming tours. Dua e magfirat was recited for departed employees of the department. Thanks to Mr Ab Rashid shiekh sb and FA. Khan sb for providing their contribution for organising such tours. It is in place to mention here that Mr Abdul Rashid Sheikh is nominated as Organising secretary and Mr Farooq Ahmad Khan as add. Organising secretary for running the smooth function of the

I highly appreciate Mr Bashir Ahmad Pandit for rendering the

valuable services to uphold the dignity of the forum

Regards



Ministry of Culture
Government of India

राष्ट्रीय नाट्य विद्यालय
NATIONAL SCHOOL OF DRAMA
(An Autonomous Institution of Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India)

THEATRE IN EDUCATION CENTRE, SRINAGAR
In collaboration with
J&K ACADEMY OF ART, CULTURE & LANGUAGES

ORGANISES

15 DAY WRITING WORKSHOP
FROM 3RD Sep. 2026

The National School of Drama, Theatre in Education Centre, Srinagar in collaboration with J&K Academy of Art, Culture & Languages is going to organize 15-day writing workshop in Srinagar. The workshop aims to develop the core writing skills, writing process, craft of creative writing and enhance the play writing techniques under the guidance of NSD experts.

Interested aspirants may collect the application forms from NSD, TIE Centre, Cultural Academy Campus, Lal Mandi, Srinagar from 18th August to 31st August 2026 between 11:00am to 4:00pm.

Register your name before the workshop begins

- Admissions is free on the first cum first serve basis.
- After the completion of workshop certificates will be awarded to all the participants.

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED:

1. Copy of Aadhar Card,
2. Passport size photograph.
3. Credentials in support of writing experiences.

For further information contact 9419059895

Space devoted by Headlines Today in public interest..

Director
National School of Drama





HT EDITORIAL

Beyond the Screen: Kashmir's Moment to Build a Cinematic Future

The maiden International Film Festival of Jammu & Kashmir (IFFJK-2026) is more than a celebration of cinema. For Kashmir, it represents the opening of a new window to the world and, potentially, the beginning of a meaningful cultural and economic journey that could create opportunities for a generation of young people.

For decades, Kashmir has been one of the most recognisable natural settings for Indian cinema. Its mountains, lakes, meadows and historic landscapes have repeatedly provided filmmakers with a spectacular backdrop. Yet the region has largely remained a location for stories conceived and produced elsewhere. The emergence of an international film festival in Jammu and Kashmir offers an opportunity to change that equation.

The significance of IFFJK-2026, therefore, should not be confined to the four days of screenings, masterclasses and interactions with members of the film fraternity. Its real importance will lie in whether it succeeds in creating the foundations of a sustainable cinematic culture within the region.

The reported participation of filmmakers and entries from more than 80 countries is an encouraging beginning. It demonstrates that Jammu and Kashmir possesses the visibility, attractiveness and cultural depth to engage with the international creative community. But international attention must ultimately translate into local opportunity.

Kashmir has no shortage of stories. Its history, traditions, folklore, social changes, human experiences and contemporary aspirations offer an extraordinary reservoir of material for filmmakers and writers. What is required is an institutional environment in which local talent can learn, experiment, produce and find audiences.

The festival can become an important catalyst in this process. Its masterclasses and technical sessions can expose aspiring filmmakers to professional standards and contemporary filmmaking practices, while the Emerging Filmmakers Competition can provide a valuable platform to young talent from Jammu and Kashmir. Such initiatives deserve to be strengthened and expanded in the years ahead.

The larger opportunity is equally important. A developing film ecosystem can create employment across a wide range of sectors. Filmmaking requires technicians, editors, cinematographers, musicians, designers, production personnel, location managers and numerous other professionals. It can also generate business for hospitality, transport, tourism and local services. In a region where employment opportunities for educated youth remain an important concern, the creative economy should not be overlooked.

There is also considerable potential for film tourism. Kashmir's natural beauty already attracts visitors from across the country and abroad. A carefully developed film-tourism policy could turn popular shooting locations into cultural and tourism assets while encouraging more domestic and international productions to work in the region. Such an approach, however, should ensure that local communities and local professionals are meaningful participants in the resulting economic activity.

Most importantly, Kashmir should aspire to move beyond being merely a picturesque location for other people's films. It should become a place where its own filmmakers write their scripts, develop their projects, produce their films and take their stories to national and international audiences.

That transformation will not happen through one festival alone. It will require continuity, investment and a long-term institutional vision. Film schools and training programmes, scriptwriting and documentary workshops, production support, film societies, archiving initiatives and regular engagement with national and international festivals can gradually build the infrastructure required for a genuine film culture.

The government has taken an important first step by providing a platform for international cinematic engagement. The private sector, educational institutions, tourism industry and local creative community must now become partners in ensuring that the initiative develops beyond an annual event.

There is a particular responsibility to ensure that young people from Jammu and Kashmir are not merely spectators at this new cinematic chapter. They should be its writers, directors, actors, technicians, producers and storytellers.

IFFJK-2026 should therefore be judged not simply by the stature of the guests it attracts or the number of films it screens, but by the opportunities it creates after the festival is over. If it becomes a continuing platform for talent, investment, collaboration and storytelling, its impact could extend far beyond cinema.

Kashmir has been a favourite canvas of filmmakers for generations. The time has come for Kashmir to become a creator of cinema in its own right.

The first frame is now being set. What follows could be the beginning of a new cultural industry, a new avenue of opportunity for the youth and a new way for Kashmir to tell its story to the world.

Women Empowerment: When Women Rise, Society Rises



BY AFREEN JAN

There is a simple truth that we often forget: a society cannot move forward if half of its population is held back. Women are not merely members of families; they are students, teachers, doctors, farmers, entrepreneurs, artists, administrators, scientists, leaders, caregivers, and countless other things. They contribute to society in ways that are sometimes visible and sometimes unnoticed. Yet, despite their contributions, many women still have to fight for opportunities and respect that should naturally belong to every human being. That is why women empowerment is not just a fashionable phrase or a topic for speeches. It is a real social need. Women empowerment means creating a world in which women have the freedom, confidence, education, resources, safety, and opportunities to make decisions about their own lives. It does not mean putting women above men. It means

removing the barriers that prevent women from standing beside men as equal participants in society. One of the strongest foundations of women's empowerment is education. Education does much more than help a person find a job. It teaches people how to think, question, understand their rights, and make informed decisions. When a girl receives a good education, the benefits often extend beyond her individual life. She can become financially independent, support her family, understand health and legal issues better, and encourage the next generation to value learning. Unfortunately, in some communities, girls are still asked to compromise on their education because of financial difficulties, household responsibilities, early marriage, or the belief that educating a girl is less important than educating a boy. Such thinking needs to change. A daughter's education is not an expense with no return; it is an investment in the future of a family and society. Economic independence is another important part of empowerment. A woman who has the opportunity to earn, save, manage money, or start a business generally has greater freedom to make choices about her life. But economic empowerment is not simply about having a job. Women also need fair wages,

safe working environments, opportunities for promotion, access to financial services, and the freedom to choose the work they want to do. At the same time, we should remember that not every woman wants or is able to follow a traditional career. A woman who chooses to dedicate herself to her family and household should not be considered less valuable. Homemaking involves enormous responsibility and deserves respect. True empowerment means giving women choices rather than forcing them into a particular definition of success. Another major obstacle is the presence of stereotypes. From childhood, boys and girls can be taught different expectations. Boys may be encouraged to be ambitious and independent, while girls may be expected to be quiet, obedient, and cautious. A girl who speaks confidently may be labelled negatively, while the same behaviour in a boy may be praised as leadership.

These double standards can quietly shape a person's entire life. We need to teach children that qualities such as courage, kindness, intelligence, leadership, responsibility, and ambition do not belong to one gender. A girl should be allowed to dream of becoming an engineer, pilot, police officer, teacher, entrepreneur, scientist, athlete, civil servant, or anything else

she is capable of becoming.

Safety is also fundamental to empowerment. It is difficult to speak about freedom when women are afraid of harassment, violence, discrimination, or exploitation. Women should be able to travel, study, work, and participate in public life without constantly feeling unsafe. Strong laws are important, but laws alone cannot solve the problem. Society must also develop a culture in which violence and harassment are never normalised or excused. Families have an especially powerful role to play. Empowerment does not always begin in a parliament, office, or courtroom. Sometimes it begins at a dinner table. It begins when parents listen to their daughter's opinion. It begins when a family invests equally in the education of sons and daughters. It begins when a brother learns to respect his sister's choices and when a father tells his daughter that her dreams matter. Women themselves also play an important role in this journey. Supporting other women, sharing knowledge, mentoring younger girls, and speaking against discrimination can create a chain of empowerment. Progress becomes much stronger when women do not have to compete with one another simply to receive opportunities.

A Journey Through Darkness, Faith, and Hope: Mohammad Sami's Battle with Severe Acute Pancreatitis



Asif Malik (KAS)

On 15 July 2026, Mohammad Sami was admitted to Government Medical College (GMC), Anantnag, with severe abdominal pain, persistent vomiting, abdominal swelling, and immense physical and emotional distress. He was diagnosed with acute pancreatitis. Like every family, we believed that with treatment he would recover. Little did we know that this would become one of the most difficult journeys our family would ever endure.

As his condition deteriorated, he was shifted to SKIMS, Srinagar, on 19 July 2026. He spent two nights in the Gastroenterology ward, but despite every effort, his condition continued to worsen. Soon, he slipped into "Multiple Organ Dysfunction Syndrome (MODS)". His kidneys were severely affected, he became hemodynamically unstable, developed respiratory failure, massive third-space fluid accumulation, and numerous other life-threatening complications.

He was then shifted to CCU (Bed No. 12) under the leadership of "Dr. Akbar", Head of the Department of Critical Care Medicine.

"Being an engineer by academic training and a civil servant by profession", I had very little understanding of the complexities of critical care medicine. During those anxious days, some of my childhood friends and colleagues working as doctors at SKIMS stood beside me through every difficult moment. "They patiently explained every investigation, every complication, and every treatment while I struggled to comprehend what was unfolding before my eyes."

The most critical phase began on 20 July, when the treating team was discussing the possibility of "dialysis and mechanical ventilation". Most doctors honestly informed us that the mortality risk was extremely high because Mohammad Sami had progressed to multiple organ failure. Hearing those words was heartbreaking. My maternal uncle—"Sami's father"—would repeatedly ask me, "How is he? What are the doctors saying?" I would reassure him that everything was under control, while inside I was fighting

one of the hardest emotional battles of my life."

I still remember that Friday when the weight of uncertainty became unbearable. I called my father and requested him to arrange special prayers in every mosque possible and to offer charity and sacrifice, seeking Allah's mercy and healing for Sami. It was one of those moments when medicine and faith walked hand in hand.

Yet, despite the overwhelming odds, the CCU team at SKIMS never stopped fighting. Under the leadership of "Dr. Akbar", every investigation was meticulously reviewed, every change in Sami's condition was closely monitored, and every decision was taken with remarkable precision, urgency, and teamwork. Through their collective wisdom, timely interventions, and comprehensive intensive care—including the introduction of "Ulinostatins"—they continued to battle for his life when many feared the worst.

From that Friday onward, by the infinite mercy of Allah and the relentless efforts of this extraordinary medical team, Mohammad Sami slowly but steadily began to improve. What once appeared impossible gradually transformed into a story of hope, resilience, and recovery. Watching him respond to treatment felt nothing short of miraculous.

"The road to recovery, however, was long and exhausting. Mohammad Sami underwent countless blood investigations, X-rays, ultrasounds, CECT scans, blood transfusions, pigtail drain placements, pleural fluid tapping, intensive antibiotic therapy, IVIG, physiotherapy, management of bedsores, nutritional support, and numerous other procedures. Every day presented a new challenge, but every day also reinforced our faith and strengthened our resolve."

As of "20 August 2026, it was the 29th day of Mohammad Sami's journey in the ICU/CCU". After 29 long days of uncertainty, fear, prayers, procedures, setbacks, and moments of hope, we received news that felt almost unbelievable: his parent department had received a call regarding his shifting from the ICU to the main ward.

"For our family, this news was nothing short of a new dawn."

The journey from the ICU to the ward represents the first major challenge that Mohammad Sami has successfully crossed. The ICU was a place where

every hour mattered, where every change in his condition could bring either hope or fear. "To hear that he was now being considered for transfer to the main ward felt like a milestone we had once only prayed for."

Drone warfare and India's preparation for the future battlefield



Dr. Priyanka Saurabh

The first flight of the indigenously developed Divyastra Mk3 is a positive step, as the Indian Army increasingly relies on UAS technology in warfare. Today's warfare is undergoing a fundamental shift: battles are no longer measured solely by the number of tanks, fighter jets, missiles, and troops. UAS are increasingly becoming the preferred tool for surveillance, targeting, precision strikes, and electronic warfare. Therefore, the successful flight of the indigenous Divyastra Mk3 jet in August 2026 is not only a technological breakthrough, but also a sign of India's efforts to adapt to a more networked, technology-driven, and independent battlefield. Drone warfare uses unmanned aerial systems to gather intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), locate targets, conduct precision strikes, electronic warfare, and provide communications support. Recent wars have demonstrated that the use of drones can revolutionize the way wars are fought and economic operations. Drones also have the potential to transform the nature and economics of military operations, as evidenced by recent wars. The Russia-Ukraine war demonstrated the threat posed by relatively inexpensive drones to expensive tanks, artillery, warships, and other conventional military equipment. When it comes to military superiority, it's no longer just about possessing expensive platforms, but about the ability to deploy large numbers of inexpensive, flexible, and intelligent systems.

The benefits of using drones are vast, and one of the most significant is that they save human lives in dangerous operations. ISR drones can be used to reconnoitre enemy territory, keeping pilots and soldiers safe from danger. They can provide commanders with real-time information about enemy locations, troop numbers, and battlefield conditions. This leads to a better understanding



Divyastra Mk3 is a significant development in building India's indigenous precision-strike capability and reducing the time from target detection to attack. Drones are also impacting the economics of war. Low-cost unmanned platforms can damage or destroy assets costing many times more. This poses a serious challenge to conventional armies. Commercially available technologies were rapidly put to military use during the Russia-Ukraine war, as evidenced by the use of first-person view (FPV) drones. However, small drones carrying cameras and explosives can target vulnerable points in tanks and other armored vehicles at a much lower cost than precision-guided weapons. Therefore, the ability to adapt civilian technology to military needs and rapidly develop new ideas will become even more important in the future context of warfare.

The second major change is drone swarms. Large numbers of coordinated drones can overload or "overwhelm" conventional air defense systems. Conventional air defense missiles are very effective at shooting down a single aircraft or missile, but it is not economically viable to shoot down a hundred or more cheap drones with expensive missiles. Defenders will face significant cost challenges in the event of a large-scale drone attack. This means that the battlefield of the future may become a struggle

between drone fleets and multi-layered anti-drone (CD) capabilities capable of detecting, pursuing, and neutralizing multiple threats simultaneously.

The impact of artificial intelligence (AI) is expected to accelerate this transformation. AI has the potential to improve navigation, object recognition, and target identification, as well as coordinate between multiple unmanned systems. This increased independence can help drones operate in the event of communications failures due to electronic warfare. However, AI-powered autonomy also raises significant ethical, legal, and accountability questions. Responsibility for the consequences of an autonomous system's misdirection of targets is sometimes unclear. Therefore, military effectiveness must be evaluated within the context of meaningful human control, the rules of war must be transparent, and standards of accountability must be clear.

India has begun taking significant steps toward developing drone warfare capabilities. The Divyastra Mk3 enhances indigenous precision strike capabilities and is a result of the growing focus on indigenous unmanned systems. This is particularly important for indigenous propulsion, as reliance on imported engines and key components could lead to strategic vulnerabilities in times of conflict. Therefore, the development of jet engines by DG Propulsion is crucial to reducing dependence on foreign technologies and achieving technological self-reliance.

The reorganization of the Indian Army also indicates that the military is beginning to understand the importance of drones in future warfare. The Ashwini drone platoon and Divyastra battery are steps aimed at better integrating unmanned systems into battle formations. Indigenous precision-guided weapons like DRDO's ULPGM-V3 could further enhance the combat capabilities of UAV platforms. Meanwhile, the development of indigenously developed strike drones is contributing to the expansion of unmanned capabilities. Progress made so far indicates that India is moving towards the planned use of drones on the battlefield.

However, India's level of preparedness is still far from perfect. One of the biggest threats to drone use is electronic warfare. Jamming and spoofing can disrupt navigation and communication links. If a drone's navigation system or command link fails, it could become ineffective at the most critical time. Future Indian systems will need to have secure communications, anti-jamming systems, other navigation systems, and a high degree of autonomy.

Another critical requirement is anti-drone capabilities. This doesn't mean you can't find a way to shoot down a cheap drone with an expensive missile, but it's not always possible.

(Dr. Priyanka Saurabh, PhD (Political Science), is a poet and social thinker.)

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When Healing Feels Like a Lifelong Contract

Rethinking Medication Dependence, Withdrawal and Recovery in the Modern Age



By Bisma Ashraf

Depression is often described simply as sadness, but that description barely captures its reality. Depression can affect sleep, concentration, appetite, motivation, memory, relationships and, perhaps most painfully, a person's ability to imagine a meaningful future.

For many people, medication becomes an important bridge between suffering and stability. It can create enough emotional space to work, study, care for family, participate in therapy or simply begin living again.

Yet an important question remains: What happens when a medicine that once offered relief begins to feel impossible to leave?

This is not an argument against antidepressants. It is an argument for using them thoughtfully.

Medication dependence in the context of depression is a complex issue involving biology, psychology, medical practice, social circumstances and fear. Some people remain on medication because it genuinely protects them from another depressive episode. Others want to stop but experience difficult withdrawal symptoms. Some may mistake withdrawal for relapse and conclude that recovery is impossible without medication.

The contemporary conversation therefore needs to move beyond blame and oversimplification. Antidepressants are neither magical cures nor inherently dangerous substances. They are clinical tools—and, like all clinical tools, they require appropriate judgment, monitoring and individualisation.

Dependence Is Not the Same as Addiction

One of the most important distinctions is between dependence and addiction.

Addiction generally involves compulsive use, craving, loss of control and continued use despite significant harm. Antidepressants typically do not produce the same pattern of intoxication and compulsive drug-seeking associated with substances such as heroin, cocaine or alcohol.

Dependence, by contrast, can occur when the body adapts to a medicine. If treatment is stopped suddenly, the nervous system may need time to readjust. A person can therefore experience physical or emotional symptoms even when they have taken the medicine exactly as prescribed.

Some people experience dizziness, nausea, disturbed sleep, irritability, anxiety, low mood, agitation, sweating or unusual sensory sensations after suddenly stopping or reducing an antidepressant.

That does not necessarily mean the medicine is "addictive". It means that discontinuation needs to be approached carefully.

Language matters. When a medical phenomenon is described carelessly, a patient may begin to see themselves as weak, addicted or incapable of recovery when what they actually need is appropriate clinical guidance.

Why Do People Continue Treatment?

There is no single reason why someone remains on an antidepressant.

For many people, long-term treatment is medically appropriate. Depression may be recurrent, severe or chronic, and some individuals face a particularly high risk of relapse. In such circumstances, continuing medication is not a sign of weakness or failure. It may be an important component of relapse prevention.

But continued treatment can also happen simply because nobody has revisited the question.

A prescription may begin during a crisis and continue for years through automatic refills. A patient may change doctors, move to another city, lose access to therapy or become too anxious to discuss discontinuation. In a busy healthcare system, the question—"Do I still need this medicine?"—can easily disappear beneath more immediate concerns.

There is also the psychological connection between medication and safety. When a person has survived a devastating depressive episode while taking a particular medicine, the tablet can become associated with stability itself. The thought of stopping it may therefore produce intense fear.

That fear deserves to be heard, not dismissed.

The Problem With Quick Solutions

Modern healthcare often rewards speed.

A short consultation may be sufficient to renew a prescription, but it may not provide enough time to explore grief, trauma, loneliness, unemployment, family conflict, chronic pain, sleep problems or financial insecurity.

Medication can be prescribed in minutes. Psychotherapy, social support and behavioural change often require considerably more time, money and access.

The problem, therefore, is not that antidepressants are being used.

The problem arises when medication is expected to carry the entire burden of recovery.

A medicine may reduce symptoms without resolving the circumstances that caused or intensified them. Sustainable recovery may require a wider structure involving psychological support, meaningful relationships, healthy routines, physical activity, financial stability and protection from abuse, violence or discrimination.

A pill can be an important part of recovery. It should not necessarily have to be the whole recovery plan.

Withdrawal and Relapse: A Difficult Puzzle

Perhaps the most confusing part of stopping antidepressants is distinguishing withdrawal from relapse.

After reducing a dose, a person may experience anxiety, low mood, insomnia, crying, irritability or panic. These symptoms can resemble the return of depression.

Timing can sometimes provide a clue. Withdrawal symptoms may emerge relatively soon after a dose reduction or missed doses, whereas relapse may develop more gradually. However, there is no simple test that perfectly distinguishes the two in every individual.

This is why discontinuation should be monitored professionally.

If symptoms are primarily withdrawal-related, simply concluding that "the depression has returned"

may lead to an unnecessarily rapid return to the previous treatment plan. A slower reduction or smaller dose changes may sometimes be appropriate.



At the same time, relapse must never be underestimated. Depression can return, sometimes seriously. Stopping medication should never become a test of personal strength.

The objective is not to prove that someone can live without medicine.

The objective is to find the safest and most effective treatment for that individual.

Responsible Prescribing Means Planning Ahead

Good prescribing begins before the first tablet is taken.

Patients and clinicians should discuss why the medication is being prescribed, what improvements to expect, possible side effects and when treatment should be reviewed.

Treatment goals should also be practical. They might include better sleep, improved concentration, returning to work or studies, increased social engagement or restoration of daily functioning—not simply an expectation to "feel better."

Shared decision-making is equally important.

Patients deserve clear information about benefits, risks and uncertainties. They should be able to ask whether psychotherapy, behavioural activation, exercise, sleep interventions or other approaches could complement or, where clinically appropriate, replace medication.

Regular review does not automatically mean stopping medication. It means asking whether the medicine remains effective, whether side effects have emerged, whether the dose remains appropriate and whether the patient's circumstances have changed.

For some people, medication may be needed for a limited period. For others, maintenance treatment may be the safest option.

Both can be valid choices when they are informed, regularly reviewed and appropriate to the person's history.

Why Abrupt Stopping Can Be Risky

Stopping an antidepressant suddenly can increase the risk of withdrawal symptoms. The safer approach is generally a planned, gradual reduction under the

supervision of a qualified healthcare professional.

There is no universal tapering schedule that works for everyone. The appropriate approach may depend on the particular medicine, dosage, duration of treatment, previous withdrawal experiences and the individual's clinical history.

Some people may require a relatively short taper, while others may need reductions spread over weeks or months.

A taper should therefore be individualised rather than treated as a rigid timetable. If symptoms become difficult to tolerate, a clinician may recommend pausing or modifying the reduction.

Most importantly, people should not abruptly change their medication or stop treatment without consulting their prescriber.

Therapy as Part of the Recovery Infrastructure

Medication may calm the immediate storm. Therapy can help a person understand the patterns that repeatedly bring that storm back.

Cognitive behavioural therapy can help address unhelpful thinking patterns. Behavioural activation can restore routines and meaningful activity. Interpersonal therapy can address grief, conflict and social disconnection. Other therapeutic approaches can assist with trauma, emotional regulation and self-compassion.

Therapy is not a substitute for medication in every case. For severe depression, medication may be essential, and many people face limited access to psychological services.

Nevertheless, psychological support can provide something medication alone cannot always provide: additional tools for coping and recovery.

Recognising early warning signs, maintaining healthy sleep routines, managing stress, challenging destructive thoughts, asking for help and developing a crisis plan can all strengthen a person's ability to respond when difficulties return.

Panic Disorder Requires Particular Care

Panic disorder presents another important challenge. The fear of experiencing another panic attack can create a strong reliance on fast-acting medication, particularly benzodiazepines. However, long-term reliance on such medicines can create significant problems, including dependence and withdrawal.

For many people with panic disorder, longer-term approaches such as appropriate antidepressants and cognitive behavioural therapy—including exposure-based techniques—can be important components of treatment.

The principle should be prevention rather than perpetual rescue.

Benzodiazepines should never be stopped suddenly after regular use. Withdrawal can be serious and may include rebound anxiety or panic. Any reduction should therefore be planned carefully with a qualified clinician, with the pace tailored to the individual.

The Human Cost of Stigma

A person experiencing antidepressant withdrawal may feel embarrassed, frightened or dismissed.

They may ask themselves:

"Am I weak?"

"Why can't I stop?"

"Have I failed to recover?"

Such shame can prevent people from having honest conversations with healthcare professionals.

The answer should not be judgment.

The body responding to a dose reduction is not a character defect. Equally, someone who remains on medication should not be portrayed as lacking courage, independence or willpower.

A better approach is compassionate and precise:

"Your body may be adjusting."

"Let's distinguish withdrawal from relapse."

"If the symptoms are difficult, we can reassess the

pace."

Such language creates partnership rather than fear.

Patients Have a Right to Informed Choice

Patients should have enough information to participate meaningfully in decisions about their treatment.

Important questions include:

What is this medicine intended to treat?

How long might I need it?

What benefits should I expect?

What side effects should I report?

What happens if I miss a dose?

If I eventually want to stop, how can we do it safely?

What non-medication treatments are available?

How will we monitor for relapse?

Keeping a simple record of mood, sleep, anxiety, physical symptoms, side effects and medication changes can also help patients and clinicians identify patterns that may otherwise be difficult to recall during a short consultation. People taking several psychiatric medicines should also receive regular medication reviews to reduce duplication, conflicting advice and unplanned changes.

Building Better Mental-Health Systems

Individual responsibility cannot solve a systemic problem.

Bisma Ashraf is a regular contributor to Headlines Today...

Environment, Basic Knowledge and Communication Skills



Sahil Manzoor

If we want to improve our communication skills, we need a good learning environment. The people around us, our family, friends, teachers, school, books, and daily experiences all play an important role in developing the way we speak and express our ideas. Communication skills do not improve in a single day. They develop slowly through regular practice, reading, listening, speaking, and learning new things.

There are many simple ways to improve our vocabulary. Reading books, newspapers, magazines, and good articles can help us learn new words. Listening to good speakers and talking with knowledgeable people can also improve our language. We should not feel shy when we make mistakes. Mistakes are a natural part of learning. The more we practise, the more confident we become.

If someone wants to become a public speaker, teacher, motivator, educator, counsellor, or leader, having knowledge is very important. A person cannot speak effectively without having something useful to share. Sometimes, a person may know a few things and speak about them for sometime, but real communication requires proper and wide knowledge. We should have basic knowledge about the subject we are talking about. Knowledge gives us confidence and helps us explain difficult ideas in simple words.

Today, competition among students is increasing. Even primary school students are developing good communication skills. Their environment plays a major role in this development. Children learn from their parents, brothers and sisters, friends, teachers, and society. If children are surrounded by people who read, speak, discuss, and learn new things, they also develop these habits.

Teachers have a very important role in developing language and communication skills among students. A teacher can encourage students to speak in the classroom, ask questions, participate in discussions, read books, and share their ideas. Such activities slowly remove fear and hesitation from students. The mother tongue also has a very important place in education. Children can understand many difficult ideas more easily when they are explained in their



that are useful for education and communication.

According to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, children are generally expected to enter Grade 1 at around six years of age. During the early years of education, children learn many things through play and enjoyable activities. They learn the alphabet, numbers, Urdu letters, and other basic concepts through songs, rhymes, games, pictures, and activities.

Rhymes are especially useful for young children. They help students learn new words, improve pronunciation, remember information, and develop fluency. Repeating words and sentences can also help children remember what they have learned. Therefore, teachers should use interesting and simple methods while teaching young learners.

Basic learning should not stop after primary school. Even students at the secondary and higher secondary levels need regular revision of basic concepts. Teachers can keep one day every week for basic learning and revision. On that day, students can be given simple questions from different subjects such as English, Mathematics, Science, Urdu, Kashmiri, and

other subjects.

Such tests should not create fear among students. They should be simple, student-friendly, and based on basic concepts. The purpose should be to check whether students understand the foundation of a subject. A student who has strong basic knowledge can learn advanced topics more easily. On the other hand, when the basics are weak, students often become confused and lose interest and confidence.

Therefore, we should always focus on the foundation of education. A strong foundation makes future learning easier. We should not feel ashamed if we do not

know something. Instead, we should identify our weaknesses and work on them. Learning has no age limit. A person can learn something new at any stage of life.

Today, communication skills and English are receiving a lot of attention. There is no doubt that good communication skills are very important. They can help a person in education, employment, public speaking, interviews, and everyday life. However, we should also remember that communication skills are not the only measure of a person's talent. There are many talented and hardworking people who have excellent knowledge and ability but are not fluent in English or are not confident speakers.

This does not mean that they are less talented. A person may have great ideas, practical knowledge, creativity, and dedication but may need more time to improve language and communication skills.

Therefore, we should give such people opportunities to prove their abilities. During interviews and selection processes, communication skills are sometimes given too much importance. Language is important, but talent, knowledge, honesty, dedication, creativity, and practical ability are also

important. A talented person who is weak in English can improve through proper training and a supportive environment.

The country needs talented and dedicated young people. If they are given the right opportunities, they can improve their communication skills with time. A good environment can teach us many things without our even realising it. When we spend time with knowledgeable, positive, and hardworking people, we naturally learn from them.

So, how can we improve our communication skills?

The first and most important habit is reading. Every learner should develop the habit of reading books. Reading increases vocabulary and introduces us to new ideas. It also improves our understanding of sentences and helps us express our thoughts more clearly.

Reading also increases confidence. When we read regularly, we become familiar with different words, expressions, ideas, and writing styles. Slowly, we begin to use these words in our own speech and writing.

A person can join a public library if buying books is difficult. Libraries provide access to many useful books. Those who can afford it can also create a small library at home. It is not necessary to have hundreds of books. Even a few carefully selected books can be very useful. We should also read the same material more than once when necessary. Sometimes, we read a question or paragraph quickly but fail to understand its real meaning. Reading it again and thinking about it carefully can make the meaning clear. This habit is especially useful for students.

Finally, improving communication skills requires time, patience, practice, and a good environment. We should read every day, learn new words, listen carefully, speak without fear, ask questions, and interact with knowledgeable people. We should also respect our mother tongue while learning other useful languages.

Education is not only about getting marks or a job. It is about developing knowledge, confidence, understanding, character, and the ability to express ourselves. If we strengthen our basic knowledge and improve our communication skills step by step, we can become better learners and better human beings.

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The longest walk ever been undertaken



By M S Nazki

The girls can do that is unbelievable! A trek of 250 Kilometres was a big task but 28 Girls decided they would do it! The Défense Minister was there! -The mountains are calling and I must go. It is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves.The girls decided to say so!

-Climb the mountain not to plant your flag, but to embrace the challenge, enjoy the air and behold the view. Big mountains are a completely different world: snow, ice, rocks, sky, and thin air. You cannot conquer them, only rise to their height for a short time.

-Getting to the top is optional. Getting down is mandatory. In the mountains, you are sometimes invited, sometimes tolerated, and sometimes told to go home. The higher I climb, the smaller my worries feel, and the greater my gratitude for the simple beauty of the world...

-Once a mountaineer has climbed so high, for the rest of his life he dreams of returning.....

-Parang La is a high-altitude mountain pass at 5,578 meters (18,300 feet) in the Himalayas.

-It connects the Spiti Valley in Himachal Pradesh with the Changthang region and Tso Moriri lake in Ladakh, following an ancient trade route.

-Key Facts Location: Border of Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh, India. Altitude: 5,578 m to 5,600 m (18,300 ft to 18,370 ft).

-Best Time to Visit: July to September when the path is mostly clear of heavy snow.

-Trek Duration: Around 8 to 12 days depending on the starting point and acclimatization stops.

-Difficulty Level: Strenuous and challenging, meant for experienced hikers.

-Trek Route Highlights Starts from Kibber village in Spiti Valley. Traverses moraines, glaciers, and river valleys -Ends near the stunning high-altitude Tso Moriri lake in Ladakh -Spiti Valley is a high-altitude cold desert located high in the Himalayas in the northeastern part of Himachal Pradesh, India. Known as the "Middle Land" between Tibet and India, it features rugged barren mountains, ancient Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, and remote high-altitude villages. Key

-Places to Visit Key Monastery: The largest and most iconic training center for monks in Spiti, perched dramatically on a hilltop. Hikkim & Komic:

-Home to the world's highest permanent post office and one of the highest motorable villages, respectively. Langza: A scenic village famous for marine

fossils and a giant Buddha statue looking over the valley. Chandratat Lake: A stunning, high-altitude crescent-shaped lake located near the Kunzum Pass.

-Pin Valley National Park: A striking national park known for its distinct wildlife and a habitat for the snow leopard. How to Reach & Routes Via Shimla (Kinnaur Route): Open almost all year round, this route enters via NH5 through Reckong Peo and Nako, though it is a long and rugged drive. Via Manali (Atal Tunnel & Kunzum Pass): Open typically from late spring to early autumn (May to October), this shorter route takes you past the Kunzum Pass into the valley. Many travelers do a complete circuit—entering via Shimla and exiting via Manali.

India has many brave women who break records in trekking and high-altitude climbing. Famous trailblazers include Bachendri Pal (the first Indian woman to reach Mount Everest), Premalata Agrawal (the first Indian woman to scale the Seven Summits), Arunima Sinha (the first female amputee to climb Everest), and young record-setters like Kamyaa Karthikeyan and Grihitha Vichare.

-Trailblazers and Explorers Bachendri Pal: Reached the peak of Mount Everest in 1984, becoming a national

-inspiration. Premalata Agrawal: Scaled the highest peaks across all seven continents, finishing with Puncak Jaya in 2013.

-Arunima Sinha: Overcame losing a leg to climb Everest in 2013 with an artificial limb.

-Kamyaa Karthikeyan: Achieved global recognition as a young explorer by reaching extreme polar and mountain endpoints.

-Grihitha Vichare: Completed nearly 100 notable treks at a very young age, including high-altitude global base camps.

Love stories involving girls and the armed forces are built on deep strength, long-distance patience, and shared sacrifice. Whether a young woman is supporting an officer partner through rigorous academy training or wearing the uniform herself as an officer, these relationships balance intense duty with profound loyalty.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not reflect the editorial policy of Headlines Today at all and in any manner. We assume no responsibility or liability for the accuracy, completeness, or consequences of the views expressed therein....



DC Doda reviews preparations for Eid Milad-un-Nabi celebrations

■ **HT News Network**

DODA, AUGUST 22: Deputy Commissioner Krishan Lal today chaired a preparatory meeting to review the arrangements for the celebration of Eid Milad-un-Nabi in Doda district.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner issued necessary directions to all departments concerned to ensure coordinated and comprehensive arrangements for the smooth, peaceful and successful conduct of the celebrations.

He directed the Police Department to put in place adequate security arrangements and ensure effective traffic management, particularly at important locations and along routes witnessing religious gatherings.

He directed the Jal Shakti Department to ensure the adequate availability and uninterrupted supply of drinking water at all designated locations.



The Chief Medical Officer was directed to make necessary medical arrangements, including the deployment of medical teams and the availability of essential medicines and emergency services during the celebrations.

The Executive Officer, Municipality Doda/

Shaderwah was directed to ensure proper sanitation, cleanliness and waste management in the town, particularly around markets, mosques and other congregation points.

The officers concerned were also directed to conduct market checking, ensure the

availability of essential commodities at fair prices and take strict action against illegal stocking, overcharging and unfair pricing.

The Food Safety Department was directed to conduct regular inspections of food establishments and ensure that the quality and safety of food items sold to the public are maintained in accordance with prescribed standards.

The Chair stressed upon all departments to maintain close coordination and ensure that all arrangements are in place well in advance. The officers were directed to remain vigilant and responsive to public needs throughout the celebrations.

Among those present were the ADC, ASP, CMO, Executive Officer Municipality, the Executive Engineers concerned and other district officers. ADC Shaderwah, SDMs, Tehsildars and other officers concerned participated in the meeting virtually.

DC Kathua reviews progress under HADP, JKCIIP

■ **HT News Network**



KATHUA, AUGUST 22: Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Sharma chaired a meeting to review the progress and implementation status of the Holistic Agriculture Development Plan (HADP) and the Jammu and Kashmir Competitive Initiative Project (JKCIIP) in the district.

Detailed discussions were held on the physical and financial progress of various projects, beneficiary coverage, implementation of approved interventions and timelines for completion.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the departments concerned to ensure effective implementation of all components under HADP and JKCIIP, focussing on the timely delivery of benefits to farmers and the strengthening of livelihood opportunities in the agriculture and allied sectors.

DC Poonch chairs meeting of Collectors to finalise land compensation rates for GREF's Khanetar Coy OP Base

■ **HT News Network**



POONCH, AUGUST 22: Deputy Commissioner/District Collector Ashok Kumar Sharma today convened a meeting of all the Collectors concerned of District Poonch to deliberate upon and finalise the rates for land compensation in connection with the construction of the Khanetar Coy OP Base by the GREF. The Deputy Commissioner emphasised the need to adopt a fair, transparent and uniform approach while assessing the compensation rates, keeping in view the statutory provisions and applicable guidelines. He also directed the Collector concerned to examine the relevant revenue records, prevailing market rates and other applicable parameters to ensure that the compensation is determined strictly in accordance with law. The Deputy Commissioner stressed upon all the officers concerned to maintain close coordination and ensure that the interests of the affected landowners are duly protected while facilitating the timely execution of the project. The meeting was attended by all the Collectors of district Poonch.

DC flags off 'Swachhata Sankalp' awareness rally at Ramban

■ **HT News Network**

RAMBAN, AUGUST 22: Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Alyas Khan today flagged off an awareness rally at Ramban under the 'Swachhata Sankalp' programme, launched by the Directorate of Urban Local Bodies, Jammu in collaboration with the District Administration Ramban, to promote cleanliness, hygiene, responsible waste management and environmental awareness among the public.

Among those present were CPO Dr Shakeeb Ahmed Rather, CEO Oneel Bhat and Municipal Council Ramban CEO Sudershan Singh Jamwal, besides other officers and officials, students, local residents and participants.

The awareness rally was taken out through Ramban town, with students, officials and local residents participating enthusiastically. The campaign featured a series of activities, including a cleanliness drive, an awareness programme, a



cleanliness pledge and an awareness rally, aimed at encouraging greater public participation in cleanliness and environmental protection initiatives. Addressing the participants, the dignitaries emphasised that cleanliness should be embraced as a continuous community responsibility rather than being limited to a one-day campaign. They stressed the importance of responsible waste disposal, protection of public spaces, personal hygiene and active citizen participation in creating

a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. The programme concluded with the message: 'Swachhata Apnao, Swachh Jeevan Pao'. Addressing the participants, the dignitaries emphasised that cleanliness should be embraced as a continuous community responsibility rather than being limited to a one-day campaign. They stressed the importance of responsible waste disposal, protection of public spaces, personal hygiene and active citizen participation in creating

Mohd Ayaz Raina of Rajouri selected for National Award to Teachers 2026

■ **HT News Network**

RAJOURI, AUGUST 22: Mohd Ayaz Raina, Lecturer in Botany at Government Higher Secondary School (HSS) Dalhori, District Rajouri, has been selected for the National Award to Teachers 2026, becoming the only awardee from the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir this year. The award will be conferred on Teachers' Day on September 5.

The selection is a moment of immense pride for Rajouri and the entire education fraternity of Jammu and Kashmir. For the awardee, it also recognises 13 years of dedication, commitment and contribution to education.

Expressing gratitude over the recognition, Raina said the award is not merely a personal honour but a recognition of the collective efforts of his students, fellow teachers, educational institutions, family and all those who supported and encouraged him throughout his journey.

The awardee has previously earned several recognitions, including the National ICT Award 2017, the J&K UT Best Teacher Award 2021, the Global Teacher Award 2021 and the Global Best Educational Poster Award 2020.



The selection of Mohd Ayaz Raina has brought immense pride to Rajouri and Jammu and Kashmir, highlighting the remarkable contribution of teachers working in remote and challenging geographical areas.

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DDC Doda chairs District Steering Committee meeting on Green India Mission

■ **HT News Network**

DODA, AUGUST 22: Deputy Commissioner Krishan Lal chaired a meeting of the District Steering Committee for the Green India Mission (GIM) at the DC Office Complex, Doda to discuss and approve the Annual Plans of Operation (APOs) for the years 2026-27 and 2027-28.

Among those present were the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Doda; the Divisional Forest Officer, Shaderwah; the Assistant Commissioner (Development), Doda; the Assistant Commissioner (Panchayat), Doda; the Chief



Agriculture Officer, Doda; the Technical Officer, JKEDA, Doda; officials from the Tribal Welfare Office, Doda and other officials concerned.

The DFO Doda gave a detailed PowerPoint presentation on the proposed activities and targets under the Green India Mission for the years concerned.

For Doda Forest Division, an area of 340 hectares has been targeted for 2026-27, comprising 156 hectares under advance work and 184 hectares under maintenance work. The proposed activities include the establishment of a Computer and Digital Literacy Training Centre, a new nursery, a Walnut Processing Centre and a

Mushroom Cultivation and Training Centre, along with nursery maintenance and the operationalisation of the Walnut Processing Centre.

The division has also proposed works covering 241 hectares, including 85 hectares under advance work and 156 hectares under creation work, along with various livelihood and capacity-building activities.

The Village Forest Committees proposed for 2026-27 under Doda Forest Division include Koti, Wanda, Banshal, Gaadi, Bharat, Ugaad, Gadaan, Wanipora, Bagla, Balwana, Pochra, Dhara, Kulhand, Bikhriyan and Puniyala.

DC Kishtwar fixes land acquisition rates for Dulhasti Stage-II project

■ **HT NEWS DESK**

KISHTWAR, AUGUST 22: Deputy Commissioner Pankaj Kumar Sharma today finalised and approved the rates for land being acquired for construction of the Power House Site, Dumping Site and Road in connection with the 260 MW (2x130 MW) Dulhasti Stage-II Hydroelectric Project being executed by NHPC. A meeting for the fixation and approval of rates for land acquired by NHPC for the project was held in the meeting hall under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner in the presence of the Collectors concerned and



senior officers. The meeting considered the fixation of rates for 125 Kanals 15½ Marlas of un-irrigated land situated in villages Kishtwar, Pochhal and Palmar acquired for construction of the Power House Site, Dumping Site and Road for the Dulhasti stage-II HE Project.

The case was examined with reference to the relevant revenue records, material available on the case file, the average sale rates of land for the preceding three years in the villages concerned and the Stamp Duty rates notified for the year 2026. The rates proposed

by the Collector Land Acquisition were based on the notified Stamp Duty rates for 2026, after due consideration of the relevant revenue records and other material available on the case file, in accordance with the applicable provisions of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (RFCTLARR) Act, 2013, particularly the provisions governing determination of market value. After detailed deliberations, the Collectors present in the meeting concurred with and approved the rates proposed by the Collector Land Acquisition.

One-Day Kisan Mela organised under MIDH at Agriculture Extension Office, Jhullas

■ **POONCH, AUGUST 22**

Under the guidance of District Development Commissioner Ashok Kumar Sharma, the Department of Agriculture, Poonch organised a One-Day Kisan Mela under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) at the Agriculture Extension Office, Jhullas.

Assistant Commissioner Revenue Mohd Sayed inaugurated the programme, which focussed on promoting youth participation in

agriculture, horticulture and allied sectors.

Chief Agriculture Officer Jograj Slathia stressed the need for greater farmer outreach and awareness about the opportunities available in the agriculture and allied sectors. He highlighted the importance of adopting modern, sustainable and climate-resilient farming practices to improve productivity and farm income. He urged farmers and youth to actively participate in departmental programmes, training activities and schemes and to take advantage of the

technical and financial support available.

Addressing the gathering, the Assistant Commissioner Revenue highlighted the immense potential of the agriculture and allied sectors in generating employment, promoting entrepreneurship and strengthening the rural economy. He encouraged youth to adopt modern farming technologies, explore agri-based business opportunities and make optimum use of various government schemes and subsidies. He also emphasised the importance



of moving towards value addition and market-oriented agriculture to make farming more profitable. Subject Matter Specialist Charanjeet Singh Raina highlighted the growing scope of youth entrepreneurship in agriculture. He informed participants about various subsidised schemes through which eligible youth can establish startups and agri-based enterprises. He also made farmers aware of the ongoing Agri Stack initiative launched jointly by the Revenue and Agriculture departments and urged them to complete their

PM KISAN e-KYC before the release of the next installment to continue receiving their benefit. Officers of the Agriculture Department, the district heads of the Agriculture and allied departments and the Chief Scientist, KVK Poonch also participated in the event and interacted with farmers and youth, providing technical guidance, information about government schemes and advice on improved agricultural practices. The participants were encouraged to adopt new technologies and diversify their farm activities according to

local opportunities. They were also encouraged to explore opportunities in horticulture, mushroom cultivation, beekeeping, dairy farming, nursery development, food processing and other allied activities. It was further emphasised that agriculture offers opportunities not only in production but also in processing, packaging, marketing and value addition.

The Kisan Mela, organised by the staff of Sub-Division Poonch under the supervision and guidance of District Agriculture Officer.





Sakeena Itoo inaugurates new AYUSH building at Khaloora, D.H. Pora

Addresses public gathering, listens to local issues, grievances

HT News Network

KULGAM, AUGUST 22: Minister for Education, Social Welfare, Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, today inaugurated the newly constructed AYUSH building for Government Ayush Dispensary at Khaloora, D.H. Pora.

The inauguration of the healthcare centre in the village was much needed demand towards strengthening the healthcare infrastructure and enhancing access to AYUSH based healthcare services for the local population and people from adjoining areas.

Constructed at a total cost of 30 lakh, the AYUSH facility is aimed



at strengthening the delivery of AYUSH healthcare services at the grassroots level and complementing the existing healthcare infrastructure

in the region. The facility will provide an important platform for promoting traditional systems of medicine and ensuring wider availability of AYUSH

services, particularly for people living in rural and adjoining areas.

The Minister highlighted the significance of strengthening the primary healthcare structure in the rural areas. She said the government is taking several steps towards the direction of ensuring accessible and quality healthcare services for all citizens of J&K.

Sakeena Itoo also addressed a public meeting at Khaloora and interacted with the local residents, listening to their concerns and taking feedback on various developmental and public service-related issues. She assured the people that their genuine concerns would be examined on priority and necessary action

would be taken by the concerned departments.

Later, the Minister handed over engagement letters to recently engaged Anganwadi helpers of Zone DH Pora by the ICDS (Poshan Abhiyaan).

The Minister was accompanied by Director AYUSH, J&K, Dr. Ajay Kumar Tikoo; Chief Education Officer, Kulgam, Fayaz Ahmad Mir; Chief Medical Officer, Kulgam; Showkat Ahmad Parrey, CDPO, Saddam Hussain, Executive Engineer, PHE Division Kulgam; Executive Engineer, PWD (R&B) Division Kulgam/D.H. Pora, District Nodal Officer, AYUSH Kulgam and other concerned officers and officials.

Javed Rana reviews implementation of PM Van Dhan Vikas Yojana in J&K

Directs for formation of more SHGs, enhanced financial, physical progress

HT News Network



JAMMU, AUGUST 22: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, today chaired a meeting to review the implementation of the PM Van Dhan Vikas Yojana (VDVY) in Jammu and Kashmir, with focus on formation and functioning of Self Help Groups (SHGs) under the scheme.

The meeting was attended by the Mission Director, NRLM, Director Finance, Tribal Affairs Department and Joint Director Planning, Tribal Affairs Department.

During the meeting, the Minister held detailed discussions on the financial and physical progress achieved under the scheme besides assessing the initiatives undertaken for formation and strengthening of SHGs. He also reviewed the progress of activities aimed at providing livelihood opportunities to tribal communities through collective enterprise, value addition and better utilisation of locally available forest and other resources.

Javed Rana emphasised that implementation of the PM Van Dhan Vikas Yojana should translate into tangible livelihood and income-generation opportunities for tribal communities, particularly for women and other members associated with SHGs. He directed the concerned officers to accelerate the formation of more SHGs and ensure wider coverage of eligible beneficiaries across tribal areas. He stressed the need for identifying potential beneficiaries, facilitating their mobilisation and providing the necessary institutional and technical support to enable SHGs to function as sustainable livelihood groups.

The Minister called for close coordination between the Tribal Affairs Department and JKRLM to ensure effective implementation of the scheme. He directed the officers to maintain regular monitoring of both physical achievements and financial utilisation. He stressed that the benefits of the scheme should reach the grassroots level and that all interventions must be aligned with the objective of empowering tribal communities, strengthening livelihoods and promoting sustainable economic opportunities.

Javed Rana directed the officers to undertake a focused review of progress at regular intervals and address any bottlenecks hampering the implementation of the scheme.

The Minister sought detailed information regarding the training and capacity-building efforts undertaken under the scheme, particularly those targeting tribal artisans and small-scale entrepreneurs in far-flung areas.

Rana asked the officials to intensify the efforts to expand market linkages for tribal products at regional and national level, asking the departments to identify the existing implementation gaps, strengthen inter-agency collaboration and submit fresh proposals in areas where interventions are most urgently needed.

HDFC Life Moves to Expand Life Insurance Reach Across Jammu and Kashmir

HT News Network

Srinagar, Aug 22, KNT: HDFC Life has reaffirmed its commitment to expanding life insurance coverage across Jammu and Kashmir, with its senior leadership team meeting Chief Minister Omar Abdullah in Srinagar as part of its Raabita initiative.

The delegation comprised Vibha Padalkar, MD & CEO, Vineet Arora, Executive Director and Chief Business Officer, and Lavneesh Gupta, Chief Bancassurance Officer of HDFC Life.

The interaction focused on measures to deepen the company's presence in Jammu and Kashmir and expand access to life insurance for individuals and families across the Union Territory, in line with the industry's vision of "Insurance for All by 2047".

Vibha Padalkar said



financial security was a necessity for every household and that the company was working to expand the reach of life insurance across the country.

She said the interaction with the Chief Minister reflected HDFC Life's approach of building partnerships at the local level and understanding the specific

requirements of different markets.

The company said it offers life insurance solutions across various stages of life, including protection, savings and investment and retirement planning, and continues to focus on expanding access through its products, service capabilities and partnerships. [KNT]

ICICI Prudential Life Launches BSE 500 Momentum Value 50 Index Fund

HT News Network

Mumbai, Aug 22, KNT: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has launched the ICICI Prudential Life BSE 500 Momentum Value 50 Index Fund, offering customers a value-plus-momentum investment option through select unit-linked insurance plans (ULIPs).

The fund will provide exposure to a diversified basket of 50 companies selected from the BSE 500 universe and will track the ICICI Pru BSE 500 Momentum Value 50 Customized Index.

According to the company, the strategy combines two investment factors—value and momentum—with the objective of identifying companies that demonstrate strength on both parameters. The portfolio will follow a rules-based approach and will be reviewed every quarter to reflect changing market valuations and trends.

Manish Kumar, Chief Investment Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, said the strategy was designed to provide customers with a disciplined and transparent investment approach combining valuation comfort with positive market momentum. The company said that where a stock cannot



be selected due to regulatory guidelines, the subsequent eligible stock or stocks will be considered to maintain a basket of 50 stocks. The launch comes as the insurer reported a claim settlement ratio of 99.3 per cent in Q1-FY2027, with an average turnaround time of one day for non-investigated individual claims.

As of June 30, 2026, the company reported assets under management of 3.34 lakh crore and said it has maintained zero non-performing assets since inception. [KNT]

Exhibition-Kissan Mela Organised Under MIDH at Nagrota

HT News Network

Nagrota, August 22, 2026: With the objective of creating awareness among farmers regarding vegetable development, modern agricultural practices and the importance of vegetable cultivation, an Exhibition-cum-Kissan Mela under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) was organised in Zone Nagrota by the Sub Division Agriculture Office, Dansal.

The programme was graced by Chief Agriculture Officer Jammu, Sh. Manohar Lal Sharma, as the Chief Guest. District Agriculture Officer (Extension), Sh. Vinod Khajuria, along with district-level SMSs Sh. Rajeev Katoch, Sh. Munshi Ram and Sh. Kesar Durani, also participated in the programme and interacted with the farming community. The programme was organised under the guidance of SDAO Dansal, Sh. Ashwani Gupta.

JKEDI Organises Entrepreneurship Orientation Prog for BHSS Students Qalamabad

HT News Network

SRINAGAR AUGUST 22: Under the leadership of Mohammad Younis Malik, Director JKEDI, the Jammu & Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI), organised an Entrepreneurship Orientation Programme (EOP) for the students of Boys Higher Secondary School (BHSS), Qalamabad, Kupwara.

The programme commenced with an engaging brainstorming session on "Identifying Opportunities", encouraging students to look at challenges around them as potential opportunities for innovation and enterprise. The discussion soon developed into a fruitful



debate on why entrepreneurship could be the way forward for the youth, encouraging students to think beyond conventional employment and explore entrepreneurship as a means of creating value and employment. The second part of the programme featured an interactive business simulation exercise, conducted by seasoned JKEDI faculty, including Dr Sameer Jan Bhat Teaching Associate, Dr Mohammad Furqan

Khan, Assistant Faculty and Dr Irem Hussanie, Assistant Faculty. The simulation provided students with practical exposure to business decision-making, teamwork, problem-solving, opportunity assessment and market-oriented thinking.

The programme concluded with the Principal, BHSS Qalamabad, expressing gratitude to the JKEDI course team and all the staff involved in hosting the programme.

IIT Jammu Introduces Young Minds to Engineering Through Interactive SEED Initiative

HT News Network

Jammu, 22nd August 2026: The Innovation & Entrepreneurship Development Centre (I2EDC), IIT Jammu, successfully organized a one-day SEED Programme-Student Enrichment through Engineering and Design for 45 students from Pratap World School, Pathankot. The students were accompanied by five escort teachers.

The programme aimed to provide early exposure to engineering concepts while fostering creativity, innovation, and problem-solving skills

among school students through experiential learning.

During the session, students were introduced to the fundamentals of RC car engineering. Key components such as wheels, chassis, Arduino Uno, motor driver, battery, Bluetooth module, jumper wires, and other electronics were explained in a student-friendly and engaging manner by Mr. Mohammad Israil, Officer In-Charge, I2EDC, IIT Jammu.

A major highlight of the programme was the hands-on activity, where students closely observed an RC car, followed

by disassembling and reassembling it independently. This exercise enabled them to understand the working of mechanical and electronic components in a practical setting. The session also provided insights into the evolution of transportation, tracing the journey of wheels from early applications such as pottery-making and chariots to modern-day cycles, automobiles, trains, and high-speed transportation systems. The interactive format of the programme significantly enhanced students' analytical thinking and curiosity.

NALSA JAGRITI Awareness Programme Held at GDC Tangdhar, Taking Legal Awareness to Frontier Areas

HT News Network/

PIB

KUPWARA, AUGUST 22: In a significant outreach initiative aimed at taking legal awareness and access to justice to remote and far-flung areas of Jammu and Kashmir, the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Kupwara, under the aegis of the Jammu & Kashmir Legal Services Authority (JKLSA) and in furtherance of the objectives of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), today organised an awareness programme on the NALSA JAGRITI (Justice Awareness for

Grassroots Information and Transparency Initiative) Scheme, 2025, under the theme "Empowered Youth, Stronger India", at Government Degree College, Tangdhar. Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sanjeev Kumar, Acting Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Patron-in-Chief and Executive Chairman, J&K Legal Services Authority, was the Chief Guest on the occasion. The programme was attended by Mr. M. K. Sharma, Registrar General, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh; Ms. Shazia Tabassum, Member Secretary, J&K Legal

Services Authority; Manjeet Singh Manhas, Principal District & Sessions Judge, Kupwara; Mr. Shrikant Bala Sahib, Deputy Commissioner, Kupwara; Mr. Syed Tahir Geelani, SSP Kupwara, besides officers of the district administration, police and education departments, judicial officers, members of the Bar Association Tangdhar, faculty members, representatives of civil society and a large number of students.

The programme commenced with a welcome address by the Principal District & Sessions Judge, Kupwara, who highlighted the importance of taking legal



services and awareness initiatives to remote and frontier areas. Various speakers, including the Secretary, DLSA Kupwara, sensitised the gathering about the objectives and grassroots philosophy of the NALSA JAGRITI Scheme, 2025, and the mechanism envisaged for its implementation through schools, colleges, Legal Literacy Clubs, Para-Legal Volunteers, Legal Services Authorities, Taluk Legal Services Committees and other local institutions.

Addressing the gathering, Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sanjeev Kumar emphasised that legal awareness is an important

instrument of empowerment and that the justice delivery system must remain accessible to every section of society. He stressed that geographical distance and difficult terrain should never become a barrier to justice, particularly for people living in remote and frontier areas. His Lordship appreciated NALSA for bringing out the JAGRITI Scheme, 2025, and commended the efforts of the Jammu & Kashmir Legal Services Authority and DLSA Kupwara for taking the initiative to a frontier area like Tangdhar. He emphasised that legal awareness must translate into actual access

to justice, enabling people to know their rights, available remedies and where and how to seek legal assistance. The Chief Justice also highlighted the importance of understanding rights and duties, observing that both go hand in hand. He stressed the need for youth empowerment and legal literacy, noting that knowledge of law, constitutional values, rights and responsibilities enables young people to make informed decisions and become responsible citizens. On juvenile justice, His Lordship called for a sensitive, child-friendly and rehabilitative approach towards children in conflict with law.



Swine Flu in Delhi

How Worried Should We Be



Dr Mohd Adil Atique
MBBS MAMC.DNB Internal Medicine Resident

Delhi is witnessing a significant rise in influenza A(H1N1), popularly known as “swine flu”, during the current season. According to recent reports based on National Centre for Disease Control data, Delhi had recorded 1,449 H1N1 cases up to August 12, 2026—more than six times the number reported during the corresponding period last year. The increase deserves attention, but it should not create unnecessary panic.

What exactly is “swine flu”?

H1N1 is a strain of influenza A. Although the term “swine flu” became widely known during the 2009 pandemic, H1N1 has subsequently become one of the seasonal influenza viruses circulating among humans. It spreads primarily through respiratory droplets and close contact with an infected person.

Influenza commonly begins suddenly. Fever, chills, dry cough, sore throat, headache, muscle and joint aches and pronounced fatigue are typical symptoms. Children may additionally develop vomiting, abdominal pain or diarrhoea calf muscle pain

In uncomplicated influenza, fever commonly improves over several days, 5 to 7 days while cough and fatigue may continue for one to two weeks or sometimes longer. Importantly,

Older adults, especially those aged 65 years and above, are among the groups most vulnerable to severe influenza. Age-related changes in immunity, combined with conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, chronic lung disease, kidney disease and other chronic illnesses, can reduce the body’s ability to cope with infection.

Influenza may not only cause pneumonia itself; it can also destabilise an existing medical condition. An elderly person with heart failure, COPD, asthma or diabetes may deteriorate considerably following an apparently ordinary influenza infection.

Young children, pregnant women, people with weakened immunity and individuals with chronic medical conditions are also at increased risk

Most healthy individuals recover without major complications. However, certain warning signs should never be ignored.

Breathlessness, rapid or difficult breathing, chest pain, bluish discoloration of the lips, persistent or worsening fever, low oxygen saturation, severe weakness, dehydration, confusion or excessive drowsiness require then one should promptly contact to nearby hospital.

improvement followed by deterioration”—for example, a patient who appears to recover after a few days but subsequently develops renewed fever, worsening cough or breathing difficulty. This can indicate a complication such as pneumonia.

As far treatment is concerned antibiotics are not for this flu .

Treatment depends on the severity of illness and the patient’s risk profile. A healthy adult with mild influenza generally requires rest, adequate fluids and appropriate medication for fever and other symptoms.

One common mistake is starting antibiotics as soon as fever and cough appear. Antibiotics do not treat influenza because influenza is caused by a virus. They should be prescribed only when a bacterial infection is suspected or confirmed.

The principal antiviral drug used for influenza is oseltamivir.

Antiviral treatment is particularly important for patients with severe or progressive disease and those at high risk of complications. It is most effective when started within the first 48 hours of illness, but treatment should not necessarily be withheld merely because the patient presents later—particularly when the illness is severe or the patient belongs to a high-risk group. WHO clinical guidance supports early antiviral treatment in patients at risk of severe influenza.

Vaccination: the most important preventive measure

Vaccination remains one of the most effective ways of reducing influenza illness and, importantly, severe disease and complications. Seasonal influenza vaccines are updated periodically because influenza viruses undergo continual antigenic changes. WHO has recommended a trivalent vaccine composition containing updated H1N1, H3N2 and influenza B components

Annual vaccination is particularly advisable for people at increased risk of severe influenza, including:

- * Adults aged 65 years and above
- * Young children
- * Pregnant women
- * People with chronic respiratory diseases such as asthma and COPD

- * Patients with diabetes, heart disease or chronic kidney disease
- * Immunocompromised individuals
- * Healthcare workers and others with substantial exposure to respiratory infections

For children, the vaccination schedule deserves special attention. Children from six months of age can receive influenza vaccination. According to Indian paediatric recommendations, a child receiving influenza vaccination for the first time generally requires two doses separated by at least four weeks; thereafter, annual vaccination is recommended.

Adults generally require one influenza vaccine dose every year. Vaccination should ideally be taken before or around the expected influenza season, but vaccination can still provide benefit while influenza viruses continue to circulate.

Prevention goes beyond vaccination

Vaccination is important, but it is not the only defence. People with fever and respiratory symptoms should stay home and avoid close contact with elderly family members, infants and other vulnerable individuals.

Wearing a mask in crowded indoor settings, improving ventilation, frequent handwashing and covering the mouth and nose while coughing or sneezing can reduce transmission. Children with fever should not be sent to school until they have recovered.

Families should also avoid self-prescribing antibiotics or antivirals. The decision to start oseltamivir should be based on the patient’s age, risk factors, severity, duration of symptoms and clinical assessment by doctor only

The current rise in H1N1 cases should be treated with preparedness rather than fear. Most people will recover, but severe influenza can be prevented

For elderly people and those with chronic diseases, influenza should never be dismissed as “just another viral fever”. A few days of fever and cough may be uncomplicated, but progressive breathlessness, low oxygen levels or deterioration after initial improvement warrants urgent medical attention.

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Influenza commonly begins suddenly. Fever, chills, dry cough, sore throat, headache, muscle and joint aches and pronounced fatigue are typical symptoms. Children may additionally develop vomiting, abdominal pain or diarrhoea calf muscle pain

In uncomplicated influenza, fever commonly improves over several days, while cough and fatigue may continue for one to two weeks or sometimes longer. Importantly,

Older adults, especially those aged 65 years and above, are among the groups most vulnerable to severe influenza. Age-related changes in immunity, combined with conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, chronic lung disease, kidney disease and other chronic illnesses, can reduce the body’s ability to cope with infection.

Influenza may not only cause pneumonia itself; it can also destabilise an existing medical condition. An elderly person with heart failure, COPD, asthma or diabetes may deteriorate considerably following an apparently ordinary influenza infection.

Young children, pregnant women, people with weakened immunity and individuals with chronic medical conditions are also at increased risk

Most healthy individuals recover without major complications. However, certain warning signs should never be ignored.

Breathlessness, rapid or difficult breathing, chest pain, bluish discoloration of the lips, persistent or worsening fever, low oxygen saturation, severe weakness, dehydration, confusion or excessive drowsiness require then one should promptly contact to

improvement followed by deterioration”—for example, a patient who appears to recover after a few days but subsequently develops renewed fever, worsening cough or breathing difficulty. This can indicate a complication such as pneumonia.

As far treatment is concerned antibiotics are not for this flu .

Treatment depends on the severity of illness and the patient’s risk profile. A healthy adult with mild influenza generally requires rest, adequate fluids and appropriate medication for fever and other symptoms.

One common mistake is starting antibiotics as soon as fever and cough appear. Antibiotics do not treat influenza because influenza is caused by a virus. They should be prescribed only when a bacterial infection is suspected or confirmed.

The principal antiviral drug used for influenza is oseltamivir.

Antiviral treatment is particularly important for patients with severe or progressive disease and those at high risk of complications. It is most effective when started within the first 48 hours of illness, but treatment should not necessarily be withheld merely because the patient presents later—particularly when the illness is severe or the patient belongs to a high-risk group. WHO clinical guidance supports early antiviral treatment in patients at risk of severe influenza.

Vaccination: the most important preventive measure

Vaccination remains one of the most effective ways of reducing influenza illness and, importantly, severe disease and complications.



Seasonal influenza vaccines are updated periodically because influenza viruses undergo continual antigenic changes. WHO has recommended a trivalent vaccine composition containing updated H1N1, H3N2 and influenza B components

Annual vaccination is particularly advisable for people at increased risk of severe influenza, including:

- * Adults aged 65 years and above
- * Young children
- * Pregnant women
- * People with chronic respiratory diseases such as asthma and COPD

- * Patients with diabetes, heart disease or chronic kidney disease
- * Immunocompromised individuals
- * Healthcare workers and others with substantial exposure to respiratory infections

For children, the vaccination schedule deserves special attention. Children from six months of age can receive influenza vaccination. According to Indian paediatric recommendations, a child receiving influenza vaccination for the first time generally requires two doses separated by at least four weeks; thereafter, annual vaccination is recommended. (Indian Pediatrics)

Adults generally require one influenza vaccine dose every year. Vaccination should ideally be taken before or around the expected influenza season, but vaccination can still provide benefit while influenza viruses continue to circulate.

Prevention goes beyond vaccination

Vaccination is important, but it is not the only defence. People with fever and respiratory symptoms should stay home and avoid close contact with elderly family members, infants and other vulnerable individuals.

Wearing a mask in crowded indoor settings, improving ventilation, frequent handwashing and covering the mouth and nose while coughing or sneezing can reduce transmission. Children with fever should not be sent to school until they have recovered.

Families should also avoid self-prescribing antibiotics or antivirals. The decision to start oseltamivir should be based on the patient’s age, risk factors, severity, duration of symptoms and clinical assessment by doctor only

The current rise in H1N1 cases should be treated with preparedness rather than fear. Most people will recover, but severe influenza can be prevented

For elderly people and those with chronic diseases, influenza should never be dismissed as “just another viral fever”. A few days of fever and cough may be uncomplicated, but progressive breathlessness, low oxygen levels or deterioration after initial improvement warrants urgent medical attention.

Delhi is witnessing a significant rise in influenza A(H1N1), popularly known as “swine flu”, during the current season. According to recent reports based on National Centre for Disease Control data, Delhi had recorded 1,449 H1N1 cases up to August 12, 2026—more than six times the number reported during the corresponding period last year. The

increase deserves attention, but it should not create unnecessary panic.

What exactly is “swine flu”?

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Hockey World Cup : Indian Women's semifinal berth hinges on luck and a must-win game against Australia

United News Of India

AMSTELVEEN, AUG 22: The Indian Women's hockey team faces a must-win battle against Australia in their decisive fixture in the Hockey World Cup on Sunday, with the second semi-final spot from Pool E still up for grabs.

Both teams are on one point, and a victory will put the winner in the strongest position to progress, although the final permutations will also depend on the result of the match between the Netherlands and China earlier on Sunday.

Hosts and defending champions Netherlands have already booked their place in the semi-finals after beating India 2-0 on Friday. The Dutch, who carried three points forward from the first stage, added another three with their win to move to six points. China, meanwhile, sit on two points after their draw against Australia, having



also carried one point forward from the opening stage.

The equation will become clearer after Netherlands take on China at 7:30pm IST on Sunday, with India's clash against Australia scheduled for 10:30pm IST.

For India, the immediate task is straightforward: produce a winning performance against the Hockeyroos

to give themselves the best chance. But if China upset the hosts to avenge their defeat in the 2024 Paris Olympics final, they will move to five points, ending the hopes for both India and Australia. However, if that match ends in a draw or a defeat for China, India will then need an outright win over Australia to progress and create history.

"We see it as a quarterfinal," said

India's Chief Coach Sjoerd Marijne. "It's always very close (against Australia), and that's how I think the match on Sunday will be. There will not be many secrets because we play many times against each other. It's a must-win game for both sides and that's something which makes it a big challenge for us."

The two sides had a good look at each other during the four-match series just before the FIH Nations Cup earlier this year, with the closely fought contests resulting in the series ending in a 2-2 draw. It highlights

how evenly matched the teams are in a face-off. Going into the big game against Australia, India will take confidence from their showing against the formidable Dutch side.

Despite conceding an early goal, the Indian defence remained composed and disciplined, frustrating the hosts for long periods and ensuring they did not concede a field goal.

India eye 2-0 sweep, WTC boost against Sri Lanka in Colombo

United News Of India

NEW DELHI, AUG 22: India will look to close out the Sri Lanka series with a 2-0 sweep and take another step forward in the ICC World Test Championship 2025-27 cycle when the two teams meet in the second and final Test at the Sinhalese Sports Club in Colombo on Sunday. The 165-run win in Galle gave Shubman Gill's side a much-needed boost after a difficult period in Test cricket, particularly overseas. India's last Test series win outside the country came against the West Indies in July 2023. Since then, they have lost series in Australia and shared the honours with South Africa and England, while home defeats against New Zealand and South Africa also raised questions over the team's ability to consistently perform. A second successive win in Sri Lanka would



go some way towards answering those questions. It would also strengthen India's position in the WTC standings. A 2-0 sweep could take them upto fourth place with 57.58 percentage points, depending on the result of Australia's second Test against Bangladesh in Mackay. While the result in Galle was comprehensive, India will want bigger contributions from some of their key batters, particularly Gill and Yashasvi Jaiswal.

Neeraj raises season-best to 88.05m in Lausanne, misses top spot by mere 9cm



United News Of India

NEW DELHI, AUG 22: Three weeks after hurling the javelin 85.83m to win silver at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games, Neeraj Chopra showed further signs of returning to his best form, producing a season-best 88.05m at the Lausanne Diamond League on Friday.

The two-time Olympic medallist finished a narrow second, separated by mere nine centimetres with Sri Lanka's Rumesh Tharanga Pathirage (88.14m). "I'm getting there gradually. I'm still trying to regain my rhythm through the upcoming competitions," Chopra had said after his silver-medal effort in Glasgow earlier this month.

The 28-year-old may still be waiting for his first victory since winning the Neeraj Chopra Classic in Bengaluru in July 2025,

but his performances since returning from a nearly 10-month injury lay-off have shown a steady upward trend.

Chopra opened his season with an 85.69m effort for fourth place at the Doha Diamond League last month before improving to 85.83m in Glasgow. In Lausanne, he raised the bar again, adding 2.22m to his previous season-best mark.

Reflecting on his latest performance, Chopra summed up his approach in a brief message. "Building momentum to get to my best again." Under overcast skies in Lausanne, Chopra opened with 83.54m, while Pathirage immediately took the lead with 85.99m.

The Sri Lankan then improved to 87.06m with his second attempt. Chopra responded with his second throw, sending the javelin 88.05m to take the lead and register his best mark of the season.

Bharucha joins Mumbai Indians as director of performance

United News Of India

NEW DELHI, AUG 22: Former Mumbai cricketer Zubin Bharucha, who has been associated with Rajasthan Royals since the IPL's inaugural season in various roles, has joined Mumbai Indians as their director of performance.

Bharucha has spent most of his career with the Royals, apart from a two-year stint with Delhi Capitals, then known as Delhi Daredevils, in 2016 and 2017.

"(Bharucha) will work closely with the existing multi-disciplinary leadership group across all performance disciplines within the MI ecosystem. (He) will join the current support staff within MI's highly integrated ecosystem and build on Mumbai Indians' established approach to delivering sustained excellence in player development," a franchise statement said.

Bharucha will have a specific focus on Indian players during the off-season. He will work alongside MI assistant coach Paras Mhambrey at the franchise's Mumbai hub throughout the year and coordinate with the wider coaching staff on individual player development and targets.

He has already begun work with the franchise and is currently in South Africa with Mhambrey and a group of young Mumbai Indians players.

Bharucha began his playing career with Mumbai, then Bombay, representing the state at age-group level before making his Ranji Trophy debut in the 1992-93 season. He played 17 first-class matches and 11 List A games before making his final appearance in the 1994-95 season.

'Don't care about views or likes; my job is to win trophies': Gambhir



United News Of India

NEW DELHI, AUG 22: Brushing aside the criticism and "outside noise" surrounding his tenure as India head coach, former India opener Gautam Gambhir today said his focus remains solely on winning trophies for the country.

Gambhir has endured a difficult run since taking charge, with India losing home Test series against New Zealand and South Africa and suffering a heavy defeat in Australia.

Their 2-2 series draw in England remains

the only major positive in an otherwise challenging period.

Asked about the criticism coming his way, Gambhir was characteristically direct.

"Criticism? My job is to win trophies. That's all I believe in and care for. That is the difference between me and everyone. I don't care about views or likes," Gambhir said during the pre-match press conference in Colombo.

He also spoke about his discussions with chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar, saying the conversations have remained focused on cricket and the team's future."

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