

Srinagar
Wednesday
September 16 | 2026
3 Rabi al-Thani 1448 AH
Issue No: 223
Volume: 16
Pages: 12
Price :Rs: 2/-

www.dailyheadlinestoday.com
16TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION
HEADLINES
TODAY
Voice To The Voiceless



P:12 Gosens sparks Schalke to first Bundesliga win since return

HT BRIEFLY

Rajouri Police bust LeT-linked terror module

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

RAJOURI, SEP 15 : Rajouri Police have busted an Over Ground Worker (OGW) network allegedly linked with terrorist outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) operating in the Pir Panjal region, resulting in the arrest of three accused persons, officials said.

The arrested individuals have been identified as Zakir Hussain, son of Ghulam Hussain, a resident of Kotcharwal Teryath in Rajouri; Mohd Azam, son of Ali Bahadur, a resident of Kotcharwal Teryath; and Mohd Mushtaq, son of Mohd Iqbal, a resident of Udhan in Rajouri.

According to police, the arrests were made during the investigation of a terror module allegedly operating in the Pir Panjal region. Preliminary investigation has revealed that the accused were

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20 Bags of Suspected Adulterated Paneer Seized in Jammu

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

JAMMU, SEP 15: Jammu Police intercepted a passenger bus at Greater Kailash Naka and seized 20 bags of paneer suspected to be adulterated, officials said.

The bus, bearing registration number JK02CE-4300, was intercepted during checking within the jurisdiction of Police Station Gangyal, following which the suspected dairy product was found being transported in the vehicle.

>>> **MORE ON P 02**

NHM Strike Forces Health Department to Rework Hospital Staffing

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, SEP 15: The continuing strike by National Health Mission (NHM) employees has prompted the Directorate of Health Services Kashmir to direct hospitals and other health institutions to reorganize their available manpower and duty rosters to keep essential patient-care services running.

The Directorate has asked Medical Superintendents, Block Medical Officers, and heads of institutions to ensure that all available regular staff are present and appropriately deployed.

The institutions have specifically been asked to maintain adequate manpower in critical

>>> **MORE ON P 02**

Northern Army Commander Reviews Operational Readiness in Akhnoor

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

JAMMU, SEP 15: Northern Army Commander Lieutenant General Pratik Sharma visited forward areas of the Akhnoor sector and reviewed the prevailing security situation and operational readiness of Army units deployed in the area, officials said.

During the visit, Lt Gen Sharma was briefed on the security dynamics and preparedness of formations and units operating in the forward areas.

>>> **MORE ON P 02**

Shopian Bank Fraud: EOW Kashmir Refunds ₹4.50 Crore to 13 HDFC Depositors

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, SEPT 15 : In a major relief to depositors hit by alleged financial irregularities at HDFC Bank's Shopian branch, the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) Kashmir has secured refunds amounting to nearly ₹4.50 crore for 13 affected depositors, officials said on Tuesday. The refund follows a swift, focused and time-bound investigation by the EOW Kashmir

>>> **MORE ON P 02**

“Make the right decision and serve the people of J&K” : Omar Abdullah

CM Distributes Appointment Orders to 55 Newly Selected JKAS and Accounts Service officers

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 15: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday distributed appointment orders to 55 newly selected candidates of the Combined Competitive Examination joining the Jammu and Kashmir Administrative Service and J&K Accounts (Gazetted) Service at a function held at SKICC here. The newly appointed officers include 28 Junior Scale JKAS officers and 27 Accounts Officers of the J&K Accounts (Gazetted) Service. Congratulating the officers and their families, Omar said the appointment marked the



beginning of a much larger journey in public service and urged them to build their careers on competence, honesty, integrity and hard work. He reminded them that public servants are

remembered not merely for the positions they hold but for the difference they make in people's lives. “Don't keep postings and promotions in mind. Just think that you have got a chance which

very few people get,” he said, asking the young officers to remain sensitive to people's grievances and committed to resolving their problems. He also called upon them to prepare for emerging challenges, including improving education, making cities more liveable, addressing climate change and adapting to technologies such as Artificial Intelligence. Ministers Javid Ahmed Dar and Satish Sharma, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, senior officers, newly appointed officers and their parents attended the function. Chief Minister

>>> **MORE ON P 02**

Rather Reviews Preparations For J&K Assembly Autumn Session

Speaker Stresses Meticulous Planning, Foolproof Security and Close Coordination Ahead of September 21 session



HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 15: Speaker of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Abdul Rahim Rather on Tuesday reviewed preparations for the forthcoming Autumn Session of the Legislative Assembly, scheduled to commence on September 21 in Srinagar. Chairing

a meeting with senior officers, Rather stressed the need for advance planning, close coordination and comprehensive administrative preparedness to ensure the smooth conduct of the session. He directed authorities to ensure foolproof security at the Assembly Secretariat and MLA Hostel, timely replies to Assembly questions, designation of nodal officers by departments and early submission of government bills. Arrangements for transportation, parking and traffic management were also reviewed with directions to minimise inconvenience to the public. The Speaker was informed about implementation of the National e-Vidhan Application on a hybrid model and

>>> **MORE ON P 02**

Sports opening new avenues for J&K youth: Dulloo

Chief Secretary says sporting platforms are helping youngsters develop talent, confidence and discipline

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

BARAMULLA, SEPTEMBER 15: Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo on Tuesday said growing participation of youth in sports reflects a positive change in Jammu and Kashmir, with sporting platforms increasingly providing youngsters opportunities to pursue their ambitions. Addressing the concluding ceremony of the CPL at General Bipin Rawat Stadium in Baramulla, Dulloo said sports were emerging as a launchpad for young people to realise their dreams, while playgrounds served as classrooms of life where they developed discipline, confidence and teamwork. He appreciated the Indian Army's Dagger Division for organising the league and providing young cricketers with a platform to showcase their talent. Around 1,600 players from more

than 10 districts participated in the tournament, while Dulloo also appreciated parents for supporting



their children and encouraging them to pursue sporting opportunities. He said the government would further upgrade infrastructure at General Bipin Rawat Stadium to provide better facilities to players and improve the experience of spectators, particularly

>>> **MORE ON P 02**

ACB books former Jammu Assistant Commissioner, four others over ‘Gair Mumkin Khad’ land

FIR alleges illegal transfer permissions for protected land at Chowadi and Deeli; further investigation underway

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 15: The Anti-Corruption Bureau of Jammu and Kashmir has registered a case against a former Assistant Commissioner (Revenue), Jammu, and four private beneficiaries for allegedly granting illegal permissions for transfer of land recorded as ‘Gair Mumkin Khad’. The FIR, registered as Case No. 12/2026 at Police Station ACB Central, Jammu, names Nisar Ahmad Shad, the then Assistant Commissioner (Revenue), Jammu, and four others. According to the ACB, a preliminary enquiry prima facie found that the accused public servant allegedly abused his



2018, by granting nine permissions for alienation or transfer of ‘Gair Mumkin Khad’ land at Chowadi

Corruption Act, Svt. 2006, and RPC, with further investigation in progress. The Anti-Corruption

Bureau (ACB) of Jammu and Kashmir has registered a case against a former Assistant Commissioner (Revenue), Jammu, and four private beneficiaries for allegedly granting illegal permissions for transfer of ‘Gair Mumkin Khad’ land, officials said on Tuesday.

The FIR (No. 12/2026) was lodged at Police Station ACB Central, Jammu, against Nisar Ahmad Shad, the then Assistant Commissioner (Revenue), Jammu, and four others, they said. The case was registered following the outcome of a preliminary enquiry (PE-JSK-17/2019), which prima facie disclosed that the accused

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HT BOTTOM NEWS

Rain, thundershowers likely across J&K over next two days

MeT forecasts generally dry weather from September 18; Srinagar records 26.8°C, Jammu 30°C



HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 15: Jammu and Kashmir is likely to witness generally cloudy weather with brief spells of rain, thundershowers and

gusty winds at many places on September 16 and 17, the Meteorological Centre Srinagar said on Tuesday. The department has forecast predominantly dry weather across the Union Territory from September 18 to 25, with brief

>>> **MORE ON P 02**

Dy CM announces Small Industrial Estate for Chatroo

Surinder Choudhary hears public grievances, assures timely action; urges youth to leverage Mission Yuva for self-employment

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

KISHTWAR, SEPTEMBER 15: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary, during the second day of his two-day visit to Kishtwar district, held a public outreach programme at the Tourist Reception Centre, Chatroo, where he listened to the grievances and demands of residents and assured them of timely and effective action. MLA Inderwal Pyare Lal Sharma was also present. The public raised several issues, including establishment of a Government ITI at Chatroo, upgradation of PHC Nali and HS Chingam to



Higher Secondary School, improvement of drainage along the NH14CL, Kishtwar-Sinthan road, establishment of a Government Women's College for Mughal

>>> **MORE ON P 02**

Javid Dar attends national launch of Swachh Seva Aankalan, discusses SHS 2026 preparations

Union Ministry lauds J&K Yatra sanitation model; framework to be replicated in other States

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 15: Minister for Agriculture Production & Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Departments, Javid Ahmad Dar, today participated virtually in a high-level meeting convened by the Union Ministry for Jal Shakti regarding the launch of Swachh Seva Aankalan (SSA) framework and the planning and preparatory arrangements for upcoming Swachhata Hi Seva (SHS) 2026 campaign in rural areas.

The meeting was chaired by Union Minister for Jal Shakti, C. R. Patil and attended by senior officers of the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Union Ministry for Jal Shakti. From the J&K government, Anoo Malhotra, Director General, Rural Sanitation, J&K, along with other senior officers of the Directorate of Rural Sanitation, participated in the meeting.

On the sidelines of the meeting, the Union Jal Shakti Minister formally

launched the Swachh Seva Aankalan (SSA) framework.

During the interaction, Javid Ahmad Dar briefed the Union Minister on the preparations being undertaken by Jammu and Kashmir for Swachhata Hi Seva 2026. These included planned activities aimed at strengthening the community participation, promoting behavioural change, improving cleanliness and waste management practices besides ensuring visible and sustainable sanitation outcomes across rural areas.

The Minister highlighted that J&K has already initiated preparations for the campaign and is working on a range of innovative, community-centric and convergence-based activities involving Panchayati Raj Institutions, rural communities, field functionaries and concerned departments. He also apprised the Union Minister of the preparations being undertaken at the grassroots level to make SHS 2026 impactful and inclusive across J&K.

The sanitation arrangements and



practices adopted by Jammu and Kashmir during the Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra were lauded by the Union Ministry during the meeting. The J&K Yatra sanitation model was appreciated as a good practice, with its framework being considered for replication in other States and Union Territories.

The meeting reviewed measures to strengthen rural sanitation services, improve monitoring mechanisms

and ensure sustained improvement in sanitation outcomes at the Gram Panchayat level.

Swachh Seva Aankalan (SSA) is an annual digital self-assessment framework for declared ODF Plus (Model) Gram Panchayats, covering key parameters including sustainability of ODF status, solid and liquid waste management, implementation of the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026, visual cleanliness, operation and

maintenance of sanitation assets and functionality of Community Sanitary Complexes. The assessment will be validated through Gram Sabha deliberations to ensure community participation, transparency and accountability.

Javid Dar stressed the need for sustained efforts to strengthen sanitation services at the grassroots level and ensure effective and timely delivery of government initiatives to rural communities. He called for coordinated efforts among concerned departments, Panchayati Raj Institutions and field functionaries, with greater community participation to achieve the objectives of SBM-G Phase II. The Minister also assured the Union Minister that Jammu and Kashmir is fully geared up for both Swachh Seva Aankalan and Swachhata Hi Seva 2026. The administration has initiated comprehensive planning and preparatory activities to ensure their effective implementation and make the campaigns a grand success across the Union Territory.

SWD Shopian organizes Free Geriatric Health & Screening Camp at Gatipora Keller

Farooq Rather



SHOPIAN, SEPTEMBER 15: Social Welfare Department (SWD), Shopian, in collaboration with the Department of Health, Shopian, organized a Free Geriatric Health and Screening Camp at Panchayat Ghar, Gatipora, Keller, aimed at providing accessible and specialized healthcare services to senior citizens at their doorstep. The camp was organized under the Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY) – National Action Plan for Senior Citizens, with a focus on promoting healthy ageing and improving the overall well-being and quality of life of elderly persons, particularly those residing in remote and rural areas. During the camp, senior citizens underwent comprehensive health screening, including assessment for Dementia and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) such as hypertension and diabetes. Medical teams from the Health Department provided expert consultations, conducted examinations and offered guidance on the management of age-related and chronic health conditions. Essential medicines and geriatric health supplements were also distributed free of cost among the beneficiaries.

Officials from the Social Welfare Department sensitized participants about healthy ageing practices and various welfare initiatives and entitlements available to senior citizens under AVYAY and other government programmes.

J&K's Shriya Gupta and Vishal Thapar to represent India at 20th Asian Games in Japan

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 15: In a landmark moment for sports in Jammu & Kashmir, fencers Shriya Gupta and Vishal Thapar have been selected to represent India at the 20th Asian Games, to be held in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, in 2026.

The duo become the first Sabre fencers from J&K to earn selection to the Asian Games. Shriya will compete in the Women's Sabre Individual and Team events, while Vishal will represent India in the Men's Sabre Team event.

Ahead of their departure, Tazayun Mukhtar Kawos, Secretary, J&K Sports Council, met with the two athletes to wish them well and see them off. Speaking after the meeting, Tazayun said, "Meeting Shriya and Vishal before they leave for Japan was a proud moment for all of us at the Sports Council. What they've achieved, becoming the first Sabre fencers from J&K to reach the Asian Games, is the result of years of discipline and hard work. The whole J&K is behind them, and we can't wait to see them compete on that stage and bring laurels to the country."

Javid Dar assures prompt redress of issues of Fruit Mandi Associations

Vows to strengthen mandi infrastructure, improve facilities for growers, traders, labourers

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 15: Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar, today interacted with the representatives of Fruit Mandi Associations from Kashmir Division at the Civil Secretariat here to discuss issues concerning the functioning of fruit mandis and strengthening of horticulture market infrastructure.

The meeting was attended by Director Horticulture Marketing and Planning, Ghulam Jeelani Zargar; Managing Director, JKHPMC, Mohammad Farooq Dar; Director Horticulture Kashmir, Vikas Anand; Presidents of Fruit Mandi Associations from Kashmir Division besides other



senior officers.

During the interaction, the representatives apprised the Minister of various issues concerning the functioning of fruit mandis. They highlighted the need for strengthening the basic infrastructure and improving essential facilities for traders, fruit growers and labourers associated with the horticulture sector.

Javid Ahmad Dar assured the representatives that their genuine concerns would be

examined and resolved on priority basis. He directed the concerned officers to maintain close coordination with the mandi associations and take necessary measures for addressing their issues in a time-bound manner.

The Minister emphasized that the government is committed to create a conducive and efficient working environment in fruit mandis, which play a vital role in facilitating horticulture trade and supporting the livelihoods of thousands of growers, traders and workers.

Javid Dar stressed the need for strengthening the basic infrastructure and improving essential facilities in fruit mandis to facilitate smooth trade operations and ensure better working conditions for all stakeholders.

Invasive 'foreign' weed spotted in Srinagar: SKUAST-K advises early caution

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 15: Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-K) is advising farmers and agricultural stakeholders to remain vigilant against the re-emergence of the highly invasive 'foreign' weed *Parthenium hysterophorus* L., which was recently spotted by university scientists in an agricultural field in Srinagar.

The advisory calls on farmers and agricultural stakeholders across the Valley to prioritise early detection and caution of the species to prevent it from establishing a firm foothold in Kashmir's agro-ecosystems.

Belonging to the Asteraceae family, *Parthenium hysterophorus* is an annual plant recognized globally as one of the most aggressive invasive weeds. Its notoriety



stems from rapid growth rates, prolific seed production, fierce competitiveness, and potent allelopathic effects, releasing biochemical compounds that suppress and inhibit the growth of surrounding crops and native flora. Beyond stunting agricultural productivity, it poses severe risks to local biodiversity and broader ecosystem health.

Scientists from SKUAST-K Prof. Purshotam Singh (Agronomist), Prof. Amal Sexana (Agronomist), and Prof. Raihana

Habib Kanth (Director Extension, SKUAST-K & Agronomist) noted that the Srinagar detection serves as an early warning signal rather than a reason for panic, underscoring the necessity for sustained field-level surveillance, particularly across agricultural landscapes and disturbed habitats.

The sighting carries added significance in light of recent research confirming that *P. hysterophorus* can successfully complete its entire life cycle within Kashmir's temperate climate. Studies show the weed's seeds can overwinter in the soil, germinate between late March and early May, and mature into flowering plants that set viable seeds well before the onset of severe autumn frosts. University experts warned that ongoing seasonal warming could create even more hospitable conditions for the weed's proliferation.

DDC Budgam reviews progress under District Capex 2026-27

HT News Network

BUDGAM, SEPTEMBER 15: District Development Commissioner (DDC), Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan, today chaired a meeting to review the physical and financial progress of works approved under the District Capex 2026-27.

The DDC directed all concerned departments to expedite the completion of estimates, 100 percent tendering and ensuring that projects are taken up for execution at the earliest.

At the outset, the District Development Commissioner conducted a detailed department-wise review of the physical and financial progress of works including Rural Development Department (RDD), Public Works Department (PWD), Minor Irrigation, Youth Services and Sports, Health, Jal Shakti, Ground Water, Power Development Department (PDD), JAKEDA and other departments.

The DDC directed the concerned officers to maintain close monitoring of ongoing works and ensure their timely and quality execution. He also stressed regular field inspections and effective supervision to identify and address any gaps or shortcomings promptly. "Effective supervision will ensure that there are no



gaps in execution and that any shortcomings are promptly addressed, while maintaining the required quality standards," he asserted.

Stressing on timely achievements of both physical and financial targets, the DDC further directed the officers to ensure proper coordination among departments, expedite pace work and adhere to prescribed timelines for completion of works.

The meeting was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner Vivek Agarwal, Joint Director Planning, Chief Medical Officer, Chief Education Officer, Assistant Commissioner Development, Assistant Commissioner Panchayat, Executive Engineers of R&B, PDD and other engineering wings, Block Development Officers, Assistant Executive Engineers and other concerned officers.

HT News Network

GANDERBAL, SEPTEMBER 15: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore, today chaired a meeting to review various issues pertaining to the ongoing Srinagar Ring Road Phase-II and Phase-III projects in the district, with focus on removal of bottlenecks, traffic management and timely execution of the projects.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed the issues concerning shifting of various structures falling within the Ring Road alignment.

The meeting also reviewed the traffic management plan proposed by NHAI during project construction. The Deputy Commissioner directed NHAI authorities to adopt a coordinated approach to minimize traffic



congestion and ensure smooth movement, particularly during emergencies. The Traffic Police, Police, Revenue authorities and NHAI were directed to undertake a joint ground assessment and formulate a comprehensive and

foolproof traffic management plan.

The Deputy Commissioner further directed all concerned agencies to maintain close coordination and ensure strict adherence to the timelines fixed during the meeting. He stressed

that all identified issues must be resolved expeditiously so that ongoing development works are not hampered and public inconvenience is minimized.

The DC emphasised that public safety, smooth traffic movement

and uninterrupted progress of the Ring Road projects must remain the priority and called upon all concerned departments and executing agencies to ensure prompt action on the decisions taken during the meeting.

The meeting was attended by Senior Superintendent of Traffic Police, Superintending Engineer R&B Department Circle Ganderbal, Project Director NHAI, Executive Engineer PW (R&B) Ganderbal, Executive Engineer KPDCL Ganderbal, Executive Engineer Projects Ganderbal, Executive Engineer Irrigation & Flood Control Ganderbal, Executive Engineer PHE Ganderbal, Executive Engineer TLMD Bemina (Ganderbal), Executive Engineer PDC (NGHEP) Ganderbal, Tehsildar Ganderbal, Sub Divisional Engineer BSNL Ganderbal, besides other concerned officers.



DC reviews implementation of Power Sector Schemes in Ramban

Stresses speedy execution of RDSS, Installation of Smart Meters & Rooftop Solars

■ HT News Network

RAMBAN, SEPTEMBER 15: Deputy Commissioner Ramban Mohammad Alyas Khan today chaired a meeting of stakeholder departments, execution agencies and vendors to review the progress of various power sector schemes in the district.

The meeting was attended by CPO Dr. Shakeeb Ahmed Rather, Executive Engineer, Jammu Power Distribution Corporation Limited (JPDC), S. Ajay Pal Singh, officers of concerned departments, representatives of executing agencies and vendors.

The Deputy Commissioner

reviewed the progress under the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS), installation of Smart Meters and implementation of rooftop solar projects across the district.

Reviewing the RDSS works, the DC directed the concerned agencies to expedite execution and ensure timely completion of projects aimed at strengthening power distribution infrastructure, enhancing operational efficiency and improving consumer satisfaction. He resolved the bottlenecks highlighted by executing agencies by issuing directions to the concerned officers and assured full administrative support.

The DC laid special emphasis



on the effective implementation and wide promotion of the PM Surya

Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, aimed at encouraging households to adopt rooftop solar systems for reducing electricity bills and promoting sustainable, reliable and eco-friendly power supply.

He directed the Executive Engineer to closely coordinate with the vendor responsible for solarization of government buildings to ensure timely progress. Specific

targets were fixed for AEEs, JE and other concerned officials and

agencies to accelerate installations while maintaining quality standards. Junior Engineers were directed to ensure maximum coverage under the scheme within the stipulated timelines.

Reviewing Smart Meter installation, the DC directed the executing agencies to expedite the process and ensure mandatory installation and activation of meters within the prescribed timelines. He further stressed immediate installation of Smart Meters for all electricity connections, particularly households and Government offices that have installed rooftop solar systems under the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana.

JKEDI Srinagar, Amar Singh College organize Startup Idea Challenge 2.0

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 15: The Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI), District Srinagar, in collaboration with Amar Singh College, Srinagar, organized Startup Idea Challenge 2.0 under the J&K Startup Policy 2024-27.

The programme witnessed participation of students and young entrepreneurs from Amar Singh College Srinagar, SKUAST-K, IUST, Central University of Kashmir and Kashmir University, Zakura Campus, who presented innovative business ideas before the expert panel.

Prof. (Dr.) Tehmina Yousuf, Principal, Amar Singh College, Srinagar, was the Chief Guest on the occasion. In her address, she appreciated the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of the participants and encouraged them to pursue innovation-driven ventures.



Dr Naila Khanday, Faculty JKEDI and Shabir Hussain Shah, District Officer JKEDI Srinagar, emphasized the role of innovation and creativity in nurturing startups at grassroot levels.

The expert panel was chaired by Dr Naila Khanday, Faculty JKEDI, Shabir Hussain Shah, District Officer, JKEDI Srinagar. Prof. Mohammad Altaf, HOD Commerce, Amar Singh College; Prof. Shahzad Ahmad Bhat, Assistant Professor, Commerce; Tabish Shah, Senior Executive Manager, J&K Bank; Nazia

Shafi, Communication Associate, JKEDI; along with team members from JKEDI District Centre Srinagar.

Shabir Hussain Shah briefed the participants about the key features of J&K Startup Policy 2024-27 and various support measures offered by JKEDI including mentorship, incubation, seed funding assistance and co-working facilities.

The initiative aims to provide a platform to budding innovators to transform their ideas into viable entrepreneurial ventures.

Amit Sharma reviews preparations for District Census Handbook 2027 in Rajouri

■ HT News Network

RAJOURI, SEPTEMBER 15: Chief Principal Census Officer (CPCO) and Director, Census Operations, J&K and Ladakh, Amit Sharma, during his visit to Rajouri district, convened a meeting to review the preparations for the District Census Handbook (DCHB) 2027.

During the meeting, District Statistical & Evaluation Officer (DSEO) Sandeep Sharma briefed the CPCO about the progress of self-enumeration and the ongoing training of field functionaries.

Amit Sharma complimented the District Administration and field functionaries for their commendable work during the first phase. He emphasized that the Census is an important national duty and called upon all concerned to undertake the exercise with utmost dedication, accuracy and total focus. He stressed that the second phase is equally important and directed the field functionaries to ensure quality and accurate data collection, proper data analysis and comprehensive coverage of the migratory population.

He underscored the need for meticulous verification and systematic compilation of data so that the Census reflects a reliable and comprehensive demographic profile of the district. He stressed the need to involve schools and colleges in the Census awareness campaign by organizing seminars and awareness



programmes. Amit Sharma said that the students can play an important role in disseminating information about the Census among their families and communities, thereby helping in generating greater awareness and participation in the Census exercise.

The meeting was attended by DC Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma; ADC Rajouri, Ravi Kumar Sihag, ADC Kalakote Mohammad Tanvir, ADC Nowshera Pritam Lal Thapa, ADC Koteranka Dil Mir, ACR Mohammad Jahangir Khan, SDM Thanamandi Abid Hussain Shah and other concerned officers.

DDC reviews progress of heritage conservation projects in Reasi district

■ HT News Network

REASI, SEPTEMBER 15: District Development Commissioner Reasi Kumar Abhishek today chaired a meeting of the District Level Co-ordination-cum-Implementation Committee to review the progress of ongoing heritage conservation projects undertaken by the Department of Archives, Archaeology and Museums in the district.

The Committee held a detailed review of the repair, renovation and restoration of key heritage sites, including Bhimgarh Fort and Dera Baba Shrine, besides other heritage conservation initiatives. The Committee also reviewed newly proposed projects, particularly the Conservation, Revival and Restoration of the Heritage Building at Chanena Devta in Salal. The District Development Commissioner directed the concerned officers to maintain close coordination with all stakeholders,

DC Udhampur reviews progress of District Plan development works, RDD schemes

■ HT News Network

UDHAMPUR, SEPTEMBER 15: Deputy Commissioner Udhampur Minga Sherpa today convened a review meeting with officers of the line departments to assess the progress of ongoing and new works being executed under the District Capex Budget 2026-27 and RDD schemes taken up in the district.

The meeting was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner Jugal Kishore; Chief Planning Officer Uttam Singh; Assistant Commissioner Development Om Parkash; all Block Development Officers and other officers.

During the meeting, the DC



undertook a detailed review of the sector-wise progress of ongoing and new works, tendering and allotment processes, besides assessing the financial progress achieved under the District Capex Budget and RDD schemes.

The DC directed the concerned officers to expedite the execution of ongoing works and ensure their completion

within the stipulated timelines. He called upon the officers and field functionaries to discharge their responsibilities with dedication and commitment to achieve the desired outcomes. He also stressed the importance of maintaining high standards of quality in all developmental works being undertaken under the Rural Development sector across the district.

Samba: DLTFC approves 24 Self-Employment projects under JKREGP

■ HT News Network

SAMBA, SEPTEMBER 15: With the objective of promoting entrepreneurship and generating sustainable self-employment opportunities for local youth, a meeting of the District Level Task Force Committee (DLTFC) under the Jammu and Kashmir Rural Employment Generation Programme (JKREGP) was convened today at the DC Office Complex, Samba. The meeting was held under the overall supervision of Deputy Commissioner Ayushi Sudan and presided over by Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Champa Devi. At the outset, District Officer KVIB Vinod Kumar



briefed the Committee regarding the targets under the scheme and the applications received. The meeting was attended by the Lead District Manager, SBI, Cluster Heads and Regional Head of J&K Bank and J&K Gramin Bank, besides other concerned officers. The Committee held direct interaction with the applicants and undertook a detailed appraisal of their proposed projects, assessing technical feasibility, financial viability and potential for sustainability in the local market. The Committee scrutinized

a total of 32 applications, out of which 24 cases were approved for financial assistance, while 08 applicants remained absent.

Speaking on the occasion, the ADC emphasized that timely financial assistance is crucial for the successful implementation of government-sponsored self-employment initiatives. She directed the representatives of the participating financial institutions to remove procedural bottlenecks and strictly adhere to the prescribed timelines for sanctioning.

JKEDI organises Startup Idea Challenge 2.0 at GCW Gandhi Nagar

10 Ideas shortlisted for next level

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 15: The Jammu & Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI), District Centre Jammu, in collaboration with Government College for Women (GCW), Gandhinagar, Jammu, today organised a Startup Idea Challenge 2.0 programme at the college to promote innovation and foster an entrepreneurial mindset among students.

More than 200 students from the host and other colleges

participated in the programme. During the Idea Pitching Session, 30 ideas were presented before the jury, of which 10 promising ideas were shortlisted for the next level of the Startup Idea Challenge 2.0.

The College Principal Dr. Kulwinder Kaur was the Chief Guest on the occasion. She appreciated the initiative of JKEDI and encouraged students to pursue innovative ideas and develop solutions to real-world challenges. The jury panel comprised Chief Manager J&K

Bank Raju Gupta; Associate Professor, Department of Chemistry Dr. Rabia Javed; Head, Department of Computer Applications Dr. Arjun Kotwal; and Founder, Lawgger Technologies Pvt. Ltd Abhinav Kohli. The jury evaluated the ideas on parameters including innovation, problem relevance, feasibility, scalability and potential impact, and provided constructive feedback to the participants. The participants were also sensitised to the J&K Startup Policy 2024-27 and the



support available to eligible startups through incubation, mentorship, training, seed funding and other interventions under the startup ecosystem. Founder, Lawgger Technologies Pvt. Ltd. Abhinav Kohli shared his entrepreneurial journey and practical experiences with the students, providing insights into the challenges and opportunities involved in building a startup.

The Startup Idea Challenge, an initiative of JKEDI, seeks to introduce students to innovation and entrepreneurship at an early

stage and provide them with a platform to develop and pitch their ideas. The second edition focuses on identifying and nurturing promising student-led ideas and facilitating their progression towards the next stages of the challenge.

The programme was coordinated by Prof. Rashmi Gupta, Dr. Asha Devi and Vishal Sharma whose efforts contributed to its successful conduct.

The 10 shortlisted ideas will now progress to the next level, where the participating

innovators will have an opportunity to further develop and refine their concepts with appropriate guidance and support. Founder, Lawgger Technologies Pvt. Ltd. Abhinav Kohli shared his entrepreneurial journey and practical experiences with the students, providing insights into the challenges and opportunities involved in building a startup.

The Startup Idea Challenge, an initiative of JKEDI, seeks to introduce students to innovation and entrepreneurship.





HT EDITORIAL

Kashmir's Next Big Export Could Be Its Stories

For years, Kashmir has given Indian cinema some of its most recognisable images. A snow-covered mountain, a shikara on a quiet lake, a garden in spring or a winding road through the Valley has often been enough to establish the idea of Kashmir on screen. The irony is that while the landscape became a familiar cinematic character, Kashmir's own people seldom became the principal storytellers. That must change.

The discussion around Kashmir's cinematic future has acquired fresh relevance following the participation of actors Pankaj Tripathi and Divyenndu at the International Film Festival of Jammu & Kashmir. Their appreciation of local talent and encouragement to young artists should not be treated merely as festival compliments. They point towards a much larger possibility: Kashmir can build a creative industry around its own stories.

The raw material is already here.

Kashmir does not need to invent a cultural identity for cinema. It has inherited one. Its literature is centuries old; its poetry carries extraordinary emotional depth; its folklore is filled with characters, conflicts and legends; its music has a distinctive character; and its contemporary society is undergoing changes that themselves provide compelling subjects for films.

From the traditional family to the modern workplace, from villages experiencing social transformation to young people navigating a rapidly changing world, there are countless stories that remain largely undocumented on screen.

The problem is not a lack of subjects. The problem is the absence of a sufficiently strong creative infrastructure to turn those subjects into cinema.

A young person may have the imagination to write a screenplay but no place to develop it. Another may have the ability to act but no professional training. A talented cinematographer may be compelled to leave Kashmir because there is insufficient local work. A promising producer may hesitate because the commercial ecosystem is still uncertain.

This is the gap that needs to be addressed.

Film festivals can create visibility, but visibility must lead to opportunity. Kashmir needs regular workshops, script laboratories, acting and technical courses, production support, editing and sound facilities, networking platforms and opportunities for local professionals to work on serious productions.

The emphasis should also move from attracting films to producing them.

There is considerable value in bringing major productions to Kashmir. They create employment, promote tourism and introduce the Valley's scenery to audiences. But a much more ambitious goal would be to ensure that the next generation of films about Kashmir increasingly emerge from Kashmir rather than simply being shot in Kashmir.

That distinction matters.

Being a shooting location is temporary. A creative industry creates continuity.

The digital age has made this transition possible. A well-written Kashmiri story no longer has to depend entirely on traditional metropolitan film networks to find an audience. Viewers are increasingly discovering regional cinema and stories from unfamiliar cultures. Technology has reduced some of the barriers that once separated local creators from national and international audiences.

But technology cannot replace talent, discipline and professional standards. Kashmiri filmmakers must be encouraged to tell stories honestly rather than produce material merely because it is considered commercially fashionable. There should be room for serious cinema, popular entertainment, documentaries, children's films, short films and experimental work. The objective should be diversity rather than a single definition of what Kashmiri cinema ought to look like. Equally important is the question of language. Kashmiri cinema should not be afraid of its own linguistic and cultural identity. A film does not become universal by becoming culturally anonymous. On the contrary, the most powerful regional cinema often succeeds because it remains rooted in its own soil while addressing emotions that audiences everywhere understand. This is where Kashmir possesses a rare advantage. It can offer the world something that cannot be replicated elsewhere.

The government and cultural institutions also have an important role to play. Policy support, incentives, training programmes and infrastructure can provide the foundation. But the private sector must eventually enter the field if a sustainable industry is to emerge. Producers and investors need confidence that filmmaking in Kashmir can become both a cultural enterprise and an economically viable one.

The real measure of today's enthusiasm will therefore come later.

Will the young people attending film festivals today remain spectators, or will they become writers, directors, actors, editors and producers? Will today's workshops result in tomorrow's productions? Will Kashmir's stories reach audiences outside the Valley? And will local talent find enough opportunities to build careers without having to leave home? These are the questions that matter.

The presence of celebrated actors and filmmakers can certainly inspire a generation. But inspiration is only the beginning. What Kashmir needs now is continuity, institutional commitment and the courage to think beyond the familiar postcard image.

For too long, others have decided how Kashmir should look on screen.

The next chapter should be different : Kashmir must decide what it wants to say.



Sahil Manzoor

The forests of Kashmir are among the Valley's greatest natural treasures. They enhance its breathtaking beauty, regulate the climate, protect water resources, prevent soil erosion, and provide habitat for countless endemic and endangered species. Forests are not merely collections of trees; they are living ecosystems that sustain biodiversity and human life by absorbing carbon dioxide, releasing oxygen, conserving water, and maintaining ecological balance. They are nature's lifeline, supporting every form of life that depends upon them.

Kashmir is blessed with magnificent forests dominated by majestic coniferous trees such as deodar, kail, fir, spruce, and pine. These forests shelter diverse wildlife, including the endangered Hangul, Himalayan black bear, leopard, musk deer, red fox, Himalayan monal, koklass pheasant, and numerous other birds, mammals, reptiles,

Save forests, stop sports activities

and insects. Every tree, stream, and meadow forms part of a delicate ecological network that has evolved over thousands of years. Disturbing this balance can have consequences far beyond what is immediately visible.

In recent years, a worrying trend has emerged across several forested areas of Kashmir. Many meadows and forest clearings have gradually been converted into informal cricket grounds, especially during weekends and holidays. While I wholeheartedly support cricket and all other sports, I strongly believe that forests are not the appropriate places for such activities. Sports are essential for a healthy society, but they should be played in designated playgrounds and sports complexes rather than in ecologically sensitive habitats.

Sports play a vital role in promoting physical fitness, mental well-being, teamwork, discipline, and protecting our youth from drug abuse and other social evils. The Government has invested significantly in developing sports infrastructure, and these efforts deserve appreciation. However, encouraging sports should never come at the cost of environmental degradation. Instead of allowing forests to become recreational playgrounds, authorities should continue establishing and improving sports facilities in towns, villages, and educational institutions

where such activities can be conducted safely and sustainably.

On 4 July, while visiting Haijian Branwar on a local picnic, I witnessed a large number of people playing cricket inside a forest area. The surroundings were littered with plastic bottles, disposable cups, snack wrappers, and other waste. Wooden stumps had been hammered into the ground, repeated trampling had damaged vegetation, and loud cheering echoed through the peaceful forest. What should have been a tranquil natural landscape had begun to resemble an open sports stadium. The sight raised serious concerns about the long-term impact of such activities on this fragile ecosystem.

The environmental damage caused by repeated sporting activities is often underestimated. Continuous foot traffic compacts the soil, reducing its ability to absorb rainwater and affecting the growth of grasses, herbs, and young plants. Delicate wildflowers are crushed before they can bloom, while seedlings fail to regenerate naturally. Over time, the vegetation cover becomes sparse, leaving the soil exposed to erosion during heavy rainfall and snowfall.

Wildlife suffers equally from such disturbances. Forest animals rely on peace and undisturbed habitats for feeding, breeding, and raising their young. Constant human

presence, shouting, whistles, and loud music force animals and birds to abandon their natural habitats in search of quieter places where food and shelter may be limited. Ground-nesting birds are particularly vulnerable because their nests and eggs can easily be destroyed by people walking or running across meadows. Many animals alter their movement patterns to avoid human activity, increasing stress and reducing their chances of survival.

Another serious concern is littering. Plastic bottles, food packaging, disposable plates, and other non-biodegradable waste remain in forests for years. Such waste pollutes streams, contaminates soil, harms wildlife that accidentally consumes it, and destroys the pristine beauty that attracts tourists in the first place. Responsible tourism means leaving no trace behind except footprints, yet many visitors leave behind piles of garbage that become a burden for nature.

Many of Kashmir's meadows also serve as traditional grazing grounds for shepherds and tribal communities, including the Gujjar and Bakarwal communities, whose livelihoods have depended on these landscapes for generations.

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Planting Trees in the Wrong Places Is Not a Climate Solution

depend on open habitats. Planting trees in such areas can reduce biodiversity and alter soil conditions. In some regions, trees can also consume significant amounts of groundwater,

This does not mean that trees are harmful; rather, it means that tree planting must be matched with local water availability and ecological conditions.



Dr. Vijay Garg

Planting trees is widely regarded as one of the simplest and most effective ways to fight climate change. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, release oxygen, provide shade, protect soil and support biodiversity. However, the idea that planting more trees everywhere is automatically good for the climate is too simplistic. Where trees are planted, which species are chosen and what ecosystem they replace matter greatly.

Forests are complex ecosystems, not simply collections of trees. Grasslands, savannas, wetlands, shrublands and natural open landscapes also play important roles in maintaining biodiversity, storing carbon and regulating water. Turning every open landscape into a plantation can damage the very ecological systems that climate action is supposed to protect.

One major concern is the replacement of naturally open ecosystems with dense tree plantations. Grasslands and savannas support many plants, insects, birds and animals that



particularly when fast-growing or water-demanding species are planted.

Another problem is the selection of inappropriate tree species. A plantation may look green and healthy, but a single-species plantation cannot provide the same ecological benefits as a diverse natural forest. Monocultures can be more vulnerable to pests, diseases, drought and fire. They may also provide limited habitat for wildlife.

Water is another critical factor. Trees need water to grow. In areas where water is already scarce, large-scale plantations may increase pressure on rivers, streams and groundwater.

There is also a difference between planting trees and restoring forests. A natural forest develops over many years through interactions among trees, shrubs, grasses, fungi, insects, birds and animals. A plantation, even when it contains thousands of trees, may not reproduce this complexity. Protecting existing natural forests is often more valuable than planting new trees where forests did not naturally occur.

Climate benefits also depend on permanence. Trees store carbon as they grow, but that carbon can return to the atmosphere if forests are destroyed by logging, fire, drought

or disease. Climate strategies therefore need long-term protection and management rather than focusing only on the number of saplings planted.

The solution is not to stop planting trees. Instead, we need smarter tree planting. Native species should generally be preferred, and planting should be based on ecological research. Degraded forests should be restored, existing forests should be protected, and natural grasslands, wetlands and other valuable ecosystems should not be converted simply because trees appear to offer an easy climate solution. Governments, communities and environmental organisations should therefore measure success not merely by the number of trees planted, but by their survival, ecological value, biodiversity benefits, water impact and long-term carbon storage.

Climate action requires more than counting saplings. It requires understanding landscapes.

The right tree in the right place can be a powerful climate solution. The wrong tree in the wrong place can create new environmental problems. The future of afforestation should therefore be guided not by the slogan "plant more trees everywhere," but by a more thoughtful principle: protect nature, restore degraded ecosystems and plant trees where trees truly belong.

Dr Vijay Garg Retired Principal
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AI becomes the first frontier for mental health

The challenge of privacy, misinformation, and human empathy, with the potential to increase accessibility



Dr. Priyanka Saurabh

AI-based chatbots are increasingly becoming people's first-line contact amid mental health concerns. In moments of loneliness, anxiety, stress, depression, relationship difficulties, or emotional distress, many people are choosing to interact with AI instead of first seeing a therapist. In a vast and diverse country like India, where access to mental health services remains unequal, AI technology offers a new possibility. However, it's important to understand that AI can be a means to expand mental health services, not a substitute for them.

The biggest challenges facing mental health services in India include the limited availability of trained specialists, the lack of services in rural and remote areas, the cost of treatment, and the social stigma associated with mental illness. In such an environment, the 24-hour availability of AI creates significant opportunities. Individuals can share their problems at any time and receive information, emotional support, and self-help tips at an early stage. AI-based digital mental health platforms can play a useful role in this direction.

Social taboos about mental health issues could also encourage the use of AI. Many people hesitate to express their feelings to family, friends, or therapists. Relatively anonymous digital conversations allow them to express their concerns, fears, and concerns. Chatbots can thus serve as a first step in mental health communication and encourage individuals to seek further professional help if needed.

An important benefit of AI is early screening. By analyzing a person's communication, behavior, and certain digital signals, AI can help identify potential anxiety, depression, or other mental health risks. However, such screening should not be considered a final medical diagnosis. Its purpose should only be to identify potential risks and help direct the person to the appropriate specialist.

Multilingual AI technology is also of particular importance given India's linguistic diversity. If mental health information

and initial support are limited to English or a limited number of languages, large populations will be excluded. Language technology and digital systems developed for Indian languages can bridge this gap. In the future, such services could be integrated with government mental health initiatives like Tele-Manas to provide initial support to remote areas.

Personal assistance can also be a useful feature of AI. Reminding people to take medication, motivating them to stay focused on sleep and routines, suggesting stress-reduction exercises, or guiding them through structured self-help activities based on cognitive behavioral therapy are just some of the areas



where AI can play a supportive role. For clinicians, AI can also help with regular patient monitoring, identifying and prioritizing high-risk cases. This can enable more effective use of limited human resources.

But along with the opportunities, there are also significant risks. A person in emotional distress is in a highly vulnerable state. If AI provides inaccurate, incomplete, or out-of-context information, it could exacerbate the person's distress. If a chatbot inadvertently reinforces a negative or delusional belief instead of challenging it, the consequences could be serious. This is why AI systems for mental health must clearly distinguish between chatbots that provide general information and tools proven to provide clinical assistance.

The greatest danger arises when a person begins to perceive AI as a substitute for a real doctor. Constant interaction can also lead to emotional dependence. The person may believe that the machine fully understands their feelings, while AI has limitations in understanding human experience, moral judgment, clinical discretion, and the actual social context.

This limitation becomes even more serious in critical situations like suicide or self-harm. Individuals don't always express their situation directly. Their signals may be indirect,

ambiguous, or hidden in cultural contexts. If AI fails to recognize such warnings or doesn't connect with human assistance in a timely manner, the potential for harm increases. Therefore, in high-risk cases, chatbots should be able to immediately guide the person to a trained person, helpline, or emergency service rather than continuing the conversation.

Privacy is also a major concern. Mental health conversations are extremely personal. Individuals may share their emotions, family circumstances, relationships, fears, and personal experiences with digital systems. The collection, storage, use, and sharing of such sensitive data should be subject to clear regulations and

robust data protection. Mental health data requires special care in the context of India's digital personal data protection regime.

Additionally, algorithmic bias in AI is also a concern. India's linguistic, cultural, gender, and social diversity is so vast that a single model cannot equally address the mental health needs of all communities. A system trained in one language, class, or cultural context may provide advice inappropriate for another community.

Therefore, the way forward is not to halt AI, but to develop it responsibly. Mental health AI systems should have independent clinical trials, regular safety audits, clear accountability, and mandatory protocols for accessing human experts in case of crisis. Human intervention should be mandatory, not optional, in high-risk cases. Furthermore, privacy, data minimization, and safe use should be prioritized at the design stage.

AI can expand the first threshold of mental health services in India. It can reach individuals who are unable to access a doctor due to distance, cost, language, or social stigma. But there is a difference between the first threshold and the final destination. Mental health is not just a matter of information or conversation, but of human empathy, clinical understanding, and ongoing care. Therefore, the right direction for the future should not be 'AI versus doctors', but 'doctors with AI'. Technology should expand access, identify early signs, and facilitate access to help; trained human experts should be at the center of final decisions and care. This balance can form the foundation of a safe, accessible, and humane mental health system in India.

(Dr. Priyanka Saurabh, PhD
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The Ecology of Dissent: Dr. Raja Muzaffar Bhat and the Politics of Public Conscience



Wani Arfat

Not every battle is fought in a courtroom. Not every revolution begins on a stage. Some begin on the banks of a river, in a forgotten village, inside a government office, or in the pages of a newspaper read over a morning cup of tea.

For years, whenever questions have been raised about environmental destruction, public accountability, transparency, or governance in Jammu and Kashmir, one name has repeatedly surfaced in public discussions: Dr. Raja Muzaffar Bhat.

For more than two decades, Dr. Raja Muzaffar Bhat has emerged as one of Jammu & Kashmir's most respected environmentalists, transparency advocates, researchers, intellectuals, and grassroots campaigners. Through research, hard work, integrity, and civic participation, Dr. Bhat has shown that social change is not based upon politics and power positions but on evidence, public service, and dedication to the common good.

The journey of Dr. Raja Muzaffar Bhat started in Wathora, a historical village located approximately twelve kilometres south of Srinagar. Known for its Bhand Pather folk theatre tradition and situated on the banks of the Doodhganga River, Wathora shaped his early understanding of the close relationship between society, culture, and nature. Growing up in this environment inspired his lifelong commitment to environmental conservation.

Way before environmental issues became a popular cause for concern, Dr. Bhat had warned about the imminent danger facing Himalayan ecology of Kashmir. He always emphasized that the degradation of rivers, wetlands, forests, biodiversity, and agriculture land was a matter not only an issue of environmental degradation but also an endangerment of public health, economy, cultural inheritance, economic stability, and future generations.

Currently, as Chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Climate Action Group, he continues to campaign for sustainable development, climate adaptation, environmental justice, and science-based policy-making, stressing that climate change is a present issue that affects the glaciers, forest cover, biodiversity, agriculture, water bodies, and economy of Kashmir.

Dr. Bhat's contributions transcend one profession. He has seamlessly combined the roles of environmental campaigner, Right to Information crusader, investigative journalist, academician, public policy analyst, grassroots organizer, and lawyer. His activism is driven not by sentiment but by science, not rhetoric but law, and not publicity but public good.

He was one of the first few people to sound the alarm on the issues of wetlands degradation, unauthorized mining of river beds, deforestation, pollution, reduction in biodiversity, encroachments, and environmental fallout of poorly conceived developmental projects. He had pointed out many years ago that the environmental crisis would inevitably lead to humanitarian disaster.

Dr. Bhat is very different from other environmental commentators, who confine themselves to writing in newspapers and attending various conferences. Having the conviction that knowledge of environmental affairs starts at the field level, he travels extensively all over the state of Jammu and Kashmir, covering villages, forests, rivers, wetlands, hill stations, mining sites, and other places affected by environmental degradation. He gathers solid facts about the violations through interaction with locals, investigation and documentation before meeting officials and going to the courts. Hence, field work is one of the major components of his credibility.

Before committing himself completely to activism, Dr. Bhat was practicing dentistry. Through his patients from the remote villages of Kashmir, he became acquainted with the unfamiliar territories of Kashmir.

On his Yamaha motorcycle, he made several trips starting from central Kashmir to reach the areas adjoining Pir Panjal range of mountains. Such trips allowed him to make a wide grassroots network throughout most of the districts, tehsils and administrative blocks.

The ability of investigation of cases has won him appreciation from the people belonging to the field of journalism, administration, law and activism. He studies the tenders, contracts, environment impact assessment, mining lease permits, pollution permits and official documents in order to find out clauses that are not paid attention to, procedural problems, unattended clearances and legal loopholes.

This legal acumen has helped Dr. Bhat transform the environmental issues into legal battles that can be fought.

By using constitutional remedies and through litigation, especially before the National Green Tribunal, he has become one of the most active environmental litigators in Jammu & Kashmir. The persistent battle against the illegal riverbed mining has led to many judicial interventions, where both the National Green Tribunal and the Supreme Court have intervened to restore environmental governance and the rule of law.

Illegal riverbed mining has been one of his topmost priorities. He has kept on saying that indiscriminate mining of sand and gravel not only affects the aquatic habitat and the ground water recharge but also damages infrastructure, agriculture, biological diversity, flood



control and the ecological balance of Kashmir.

However, despite obtaining positive court judgements, Dr. Bhat has continued to emphasize the fact that implementation continues to be the biggest challenge. Therefore, Dr. Bhat's work extends far beyond litigation to include monitoring implementation of judicial orders through interactions with government departments, communities, journalists, officials, and social media.

Dr. Bhat has always motivated citizens to actively participate in environment protection activities by organizing meetings, running awareness campaigns, writing in newspapers, and even using social media because he believes that democracy is best served by educated citizens joining hands with laws.

Much before environmental issues became the main concern of Dr. Bhat, he had already distinguished himself as one of the key personalities in the Right to Information movement in Jammu and Kashmir. Being aware of the importance of transparency in strengthening democratic processes, he was instrumental in making the Jammu and Kashmir Right to Information Act, 2009 effective. This law made it possible for citizens to access official information concerning governance, expenditure, administration and development programs.

Apart from advocating for transparency, his RTI activism went way beyond that. He filed around thirty-five to fifty RTI applications per month at the height of the campaign covering environmental clearances, welfare schemes, recruitment, spending, development projects, and institutions' accountability. His proficiency in official documentation gave him the tag of "information bank" by his peers and the media.

Post 2019 constitutional amendments, with the substitution of the Jammu & Kashmir RTI Act with the Central RTI Act, he found it increasingly challenging to get information, and the quick pace of infrastructure development heightened the environmental concerns. In response, he shifted more towards environmental litigations, climate activism, and evidence-based public campaigning along with his use of RTI as and when needed.

Right to Information remains the core of his activism. In one of his many pursuits, he sought official documents about felling of Chinars and other protected trees in Jammu & Kashmir considering them to be natural resources as well as part of Kashmir's cultural heritage. His efforts, which included taking cases to the National Green Tribunal, also underscored the significance of mature and native forests for wildlife such as the tawny owls and various other species.

Throughout his career, Dr. Raja Muzaffar Bhat has always stressed that there is no conflict between environmental conservation and well-being of humans. Rivers, forests, wetlands, biodiversity, wildlife and farming areas are interlinked systems providing for food security, access to water, livelihood options, public health and ecological balance. It means that each environmental problem is a social, economic and public health problem—a viewpoint that defines all of his writings, legal interventions

and public activism.

Dr. Raja Muzaffar Bhat's integrated approach to ecology and society is evident in the variety of public problems he consistently highlights. One such issue is drinking water problem in rural Kashmir, especially in those villages situated around the point of origin of the Doodhganga River, which used to be famous for its pristine and milky white water. As a result of numerous visits to these places, he has been highlighting an absurd situation when these villages, among them villages of the Chopan shepherd community situated in proximity to the source of the river, still have no safe drinking water.

He is not only concerned about environmental issues but also agriculture, water security, natural resources management, sustainability, and welfare of marginalised communities. His argument has always been that environmental degradation has a greater impact on farmers, pastoralists, and economically weaker sections of society because their survival depends on ecological sustainability. In his opinion, environmental justice and social justice go hand-in-hand, and preservation of nature is a preservation of dignity of common people.

Management of solid waste has been another area where he has made intervention. With sustained activism through litigation at the National Green Tribunal on the grounds of environmental and health risks associated with the landfill site in Srinagar, he managed to obtain judicial directives on scientific restoration of landfill site along with government funds for the same.

Climate change has also been integral to his work. Highlighting rising temperatures, unpredictable weather conditions, reduced snowfall, melting glaciers, biodiversity loss, increased pressure on forest areas, unplanned urbanization, uncontrolled expansion of infrastructure projects, irresponsible extraction of natural resources, and deforestation, he consistently emphasizes that there is an imminent danger of irreparable harm to the fragile Himalayan ecosystem of Kashmir. Working as Chairman of the Jammu & Kashmir Climate Action Group, he stresses the need for scientific and evidence-based policies towards the environment, climate-aware development, responsible planning and use of natural resources, and adherence to environmental laws, noting that the local problems of the environment should be seen in the larger perspective of climate change.

(Mohammad Arfat Wani is a writer, social activist, and medical student from Kuchmulla, Tral. He writes on social issues, culture, and public concerns with the aim of raising awareness and inspiring positive change. Email: wania6817@gmail.com)

BRICS in a Changing World

From Adaptation, Mitigation to Shaping?



By M S Nazki

For now it is clicking! But the future has plenty of landscape India has to walk through! Brazil, China and Russia have walked through this phenomenon! India has yet to!

-BRICS began as an economic investment acronym in 2001 and evolved into an intergovernmental organization representing major emerging economies

-Origin and the BRIC Acronym (2001) Coining the term: Economist Jim O'Neill of Goldman Sachs introduced the acronym BRIC in 2001. Original countries: Brazil, Russia, India, and China.

-Initial purpose: To describe fast-growing economies predicted to dominate global growth by 2050.

-Diplomatic Formalization (2006-2009) First meeting: Foreign ministers from the four nations met informally in September 2006 on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York

-Inaugural summit: The first formal BRIC Summit took place in Yekaterinburg, Russia, on June 16, 2009. Expansion to BRICS (2010-2011)

-Adding South Africa: Ministers agreed to invite South Africa in 2010. First expanded summit: South Africa joined the Official BRICS Portal at the 3rd Summit in Sanya, China, in 2011, changing the acronym to BRICS

-New members: Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates joined as full members in January 2024, followed by Indonesia in January 2025. Partner countries: Ten additional nations joined as partner countries in 2025. Current status: The bloc represents a major voice for the Global South, with India hosting summits in New Delhi.

-The 18th BRICS Summit hosted by India in New Delhi provides a vital platform for



Enhances trade opportunities, supply chain resilience, and access to alternative financial systems like the New Development Bank (NDB).

-Digital and Technological Leadership: Promotes India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and Unified Payments Interface (UPI) models globally.

-At the BRICS Summit in New Delhi, Russia and China joined other member nations to sign the New Delhi Declaration, agreeing on key geopolitical and economic stances.

-Maximum Restraint: Russia, China, and other members expressed deep concern over the escalating Middle East conflicts and urged maximum restraint.

-Peaceful Resolution: They called for resolving international disputes through diplomacy and dialogue rather than force.

-Trade Distortions: The nations raised concerns about unilateral tariff and non-tariff measures that distort global trade.

-Fairer World Order: Russia and China backed a commitment to a more inclusive, representative, and fair global order.

-UN Security Council: Both nations reiterated their support for India and Brazil to play a greater role in the United Nations, including aspirations for permanent seats on the UN Security Council. -Inclusive Growth: Leaders discussed pushing for inclusive global growth, strengthening supply chains, and enhancing trade cooperation among emerging economies.

-But no one talked about the economic crisis a common man is facing in India! -The price rise almost every day has torn apart India!

-India gained major diplomatic leverage, regional consensus through the New Delhi Declaration, and stronger leadership of the Global South by hosting the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi on September 12-13, 2026.

-Bilateral Dialogues: Prime Minister Narendra Modi held high-level meetings. He met Chinese President Xi Jinping to discuss border peace and trade normalization. He also met Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to secure energy supplies.

-The New Delhi Declaration Consensus Building: India bridged gaps between member

states like Iran and the UAE. This effort secured the adoption of the

-Global Stance: The bloc called for maximum restraint in conflicts and warned against the weaponisation of critical minerals and technology.

-Economic and Strategic Security Supply Chains: India pushed for secure supply chains for critical minerals and stable fertilizer and energy supplies. Alternative Payments: India advanced talks on interoperable, homegrown payment systems to lower cross-border transaction costs.

-No, India did not "lose" on the BRICS stage but we did not win also! In fact, at the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi (September 12-13, 2026), India pulled off what international analysts are widely calling a major diplomatic victory by achieving a unanimous consensus on the New Delhi Declaration. -Before the summit, geopolitical tension was high, and many experts predicted a deadlock or a "setback" for India. However, India successfully navigated the complex divides within the expanded 11-member bloc.

-Breaking the Iran-UAE Deadlock The Challenge: In May 2026, a BRICS foreign ministers' meeting failed to issue a joint declaration because of immense friction between Iran and the UAE over the ongoing military conflicts in West Asia.

India's Win: During intense overnight negotiations in New Delhi, Indian diplomats bridged the gap. Prime Minister Narendra Modi secured sign-offs from both Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and UAE representatives, leading to a fully adopted joint consensus text.

-The Currency Debate: While heavily sanctioned nations like Russia and Iran strongly advocated for a unified BRICS currency to replace the U.S. dollar, India successfully held its ground. India ruled out a joint currency and instead steered the bloc toward backing local currency trade settlements, preserving its financial autonomy and strategic alignment with Western markets.

-India-China Reset: Rather than being sidelined by China, the New Delhi summit provided a crucial stage for bilateral meeting between PM Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping to advance a gradual diplomatic thaw and handle lingering border disputes.

Teaching Cannot Tun On Sacrifice



BY-MOOL RAJ

A job where competence is regularly rewarded with greater labour is essentially flawed. The trustworthy instructor will soon be required to oversee challenging classes, fulfil deadlines, plan activities, offer student counselling, deal with parents and step in when necessary. What starts out as extraordinary effort soon turns into a regular expectation. We refer to educators as mentors and nation-builders, yet we keep increasing duties without considering what ought to be eliminated. In the same constrained working day, teaching now faces competition from assessment, documentation, coordination, counselling and continuous digital availability. No one's responsibility is the issue. It is a system that frequently increases rather than decreases the role of the teacher.

Since practically everything is significant in the schools we have created, teachers are eventually responsible for almost everything. Recently, our Honourable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, called on educators to engage with children's lives rather than just textbooks and curricula. The aspiration is unquestionably valuable. Education cannot be reduced to completing chapters. A teacher should notice the child whose marks are falling because something at home has changed, the adolescent hiding anxiety behind aggression or the student whose silence is asking for help. But noticing requires time. Listening requires mental space. A system cannot expect teachers to remain patient, attentive and emotionally present while keeping them buried in administrative work. Yet when exhaustion begins to show, the response is often to place the burden back on the teacher.

We speak of resilience, wellbeing and work-life balance, but these ideas can become substitutes for structural reform. A

mindfulness session cannot lighten an excessive workload, and a motivational workshop cannot create more hours in the day.

There is also an uncomfortable economic question at the heart of this debate. If teaching is truly one of society's most important professions, why is 'passion' so often used where other professions would speak of pay, working conditions, autonomy and career growth? These days, schools promise global standards, holistic development, technology-rich classrooms, individualised instruction and emotional well-being. It is reasonable for parents to anticipate that these commitments will be fulfilled. However, the instructor in front of the classroom is ultimately responsible for all such promises.

How the instructor was treated prior to that moment has a big impact on its quality. Thus, teacher well-being is not a sentimental issue. It is essential to the quality of education. Planning time is lost due to needless paperwork. Attention that could have been given to students is competing with avoidable tasks. When the classroom bell rings, exhaustion does not go away. The message that institutions deliver to their best instructors may be the most detrimental: if you can demonstrate your abilities, you will be expected to do more. Eventually, some depart. Others continue, but they no longer voluntarily put in the extra effort. Institutions then inquire as to the status of the commitment. What we did with that commitment while we still had it is a better question.

Appreciation needs to go beyond rituals and catchphrases if India wants teaching to become a career of desire. Salary, staffing, reasonable workloads, planning time, professional autonomy and growth possibilities must all demonstrate it. Excellent educators will always go above and beyond the call of duty.

However, there is a significant distinction between creating a system that requires continuous sacrifice and appreciating dedication. Sacrifice is no longer a virtue when instructors must make tremendous sacrifices for the school to function normally. It is now the operational model.

The Author Is A Regular Columnist And Freelance Writer



Rana lays foundation stone for Rs 3.35 cr Helipad, waiting lounge at Qasab, Mendhar

■ **HT News Network**

MENDHAR, SEPTEMBER 15: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, today laid the foundation stone for construction of a Helipad and Waiting Lounge at Qasab in Mendhar, Poonch district.

The project, approved by Omar Abdullah led government and taken up under the UT CAPEX, entails an estimated cost of Rs. 335.40 lakh and is aimed at strengthening connectivity and emergency response infrastructure in the remote border area.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister described the project as a long-pending demand of the people of Mendhar and emphasized its importance for a geographically remote and strategically significant

area. He said the initiative reflects the government's focus on development of backward, border and remote rural pockets. The proposed facility would provide a vital alternative mode of connectivity and prove particularly beneficial during medical emergencies, natural calamities and other situations requiring rapid movement of people and essential services, he added.

The Minister emphasized that improved connectivity is essential not only for facilitating access to healthcare and emergency services but also for promoting economic activity, tourism and the overall socio-economic development of the region. He added that sustained investment in infrastructure would help bridge developmental gaps and create better opportunities for the people living in these regions.



Highlighting the immense tourism potential of the area, the Minister announced the development of a State-of-the-Art Tribal Tourism Village at Bhera Qasab. He said the proposed tourism village, to be developed near the helipad site, would serve as an important platform for showcasing the rich tribal heritage, culture, traditions, handicrafts, cuisine and lifestyle of the region.

The project is also envisaged to promote tourism and create sustainable livelihood and employment opportunities for the local population.

The foundation stone-laying ceremony was attended by thousands of local residents, besides senior officers of the district administration and the Public Works (Roads & Buildings) Department.

DC Ramban reviews functioning of Revenue Department

■ **HT News Network**

RAMBAN, SEPTEMBER 15: Deputy Commissioner Ramban Mohammad Alyas Khan today chaired a meeting to review the functioning of the Revenue Department.

He assessed the progress achieved in land record digitization, Digital Crop Survey (DCS), besides execution of Departmental building projects. The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Varunjeet Singh Charak; SDM Banihal Mohammad Naseeb Bajraan; SDM Gool Imtiaz Ahmed; SDM Ramsoo Sayed Mazahir Hussain Shah; Executive Engineers of PWD Divisions Ramban and Banihal and all Tehsildars of the district. The Deputy Commissioner reviewed the progress of the new and ongoing construction works of Revenue Department buildings at Naibat, Tehsil and Sub-divisional levels taken up under the Capex Budget. The PWD department was asked to expedite the execution of all ongoing works. The DC also set deadlines for completion of various projects. The Tehsildars were directed to monitor the progress. Reviewing the progress of the Agristack Digitization initiative, the Deputy Commissioner directed the department to expedite the implementation and achieve the prescribed targets within the stipulated timeline. He also directed the Assistant Commissioner Revenue, all SDMs and Tehsildars to ensure completion of the Digital Crop Survey (DCS) across the district within the prescribed timeline.

JKAACL organises 2-day Painters' Camp on Life, Works and Times of Acharya Abhinav Gupta

■ **HT News Network**

JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 15: The Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages today organized a two-day Painters' Camp on the theme "Life, Works and Times of Acharya Abhinav Gupta" at the Academy premises, Jammu.

The camp was inaugurated by Secretary, JKAACL Harvinder Kour in presence of Special Secretary JKAACL Sonali Arun Gupta and Exhibition Officer JKAACL Irshad Tantray.

Renowned artists from Jammu and Kashmir are participating in the camp and are creating artworks inspired by the life, philosophy, literary contributions and enduring legacy of Acharya Abhinav Gupta, one of the most celebrated philosophers, aestheticians, spiritual thinkers and polymaths of Kashmir. The participating artists include Vijay Anand, Chetna Anand, Amit Anand, Subhash Lange and Rohit Verma. The artists are interpreting the life and intellectual legacy of Acharya Abhinav Gupta through their individual artistic expressions, bringing together diverse perspectives and contemporary visual representations. The Secretary JKAACL highlighted the profound contribution of Acharya Abhinav Gupta to Indian philosophy, aesthetics, literature, spirituality and the cultural thought of Kashmir. She said that his extensive body of work continues to hold relevance even today and represents one of the finest intellectual traditions of Kashmir. While interacting with the artists, the Special Secretary appreciated their creativity and artistic expression in portraying the life, works and contributions of Acharya Abhinav Gupta on canvas. She lauded the artists for their imagination.

ADC reviews enforcement of NGT guidelines in Bhandarwah

Stress laid on 100% door-to-door waste collection

■ **HT News Network**

BHANDARWAH, SEPTEMBER 15: Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Bhandarwah Sunil Kumar Bhutyal, today chaired a high-level review meeting to assess the implementation of National Green Tribunal (NGT) guidelines. He directed stakeholder departments to intensify measures for environmental protection, sanitation and scientific waste management across the subdivision.

The ADC stressed strict and effective implementation of environmental norms and called for daily monitoring of waste collection systems, along with the mandatory sharing of geo-tagged photographs on a daily basis to ensure transparency and accountability.

He directed the concerned authorities to ensure 100 percent door-to-door waste collection



in rural areas, including coverage of the BDO office areas, while similar arrangements are to be strengthened in the town and municipal areas. He also called for completion of waste collection sheds in the town, municipality and rural areas.

Special emphasis was laid on maintaining cleanliness in market places. The ADC directed the concerned agencies to deploy separate vehicles for collection of waste from fruit and vegetable

markets and chicken shops. He further ordered strict action against littering in markets, including the issuance of challans to persons found spreading or dumping litter.

The meeting was attended by CEO BDA, PWD (R&B), Jal Shakti, (I&FC), AO BDA, UEED, REW, BMO, BDO, AEE PHE, EO MCB and other officers and officials from various departments.

District admin Kishtwar organises Capacity-Building Workshop on PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan

■ **HT News Network**

KISHTWAR, SEPTEMBER 15: The district administration Kishtwar, in collaboration with the Directorate of Industries and Commerce Jammu, today organized a comprehensive capacity-building workshop on the implementation of the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan (PMGS-NMP) here in the Conference Hall of the DC Office Complex.

Deputy Commissioner Pankaj Kumar Sharma presided over the event, attended by ADC Pawan Kotwal, POICDS Rishi Kumar Sharma, CEO KDA Kaiser Bhawani, ACR Idrees Lone, GM DIC Mohsin Raza, ACD Manoj Kumar, ACP Neeraj Sharma, DSWO Tariq Parveez Qazi, CAO Kushal Chandel, DNO AYUSH Dr. Vikram Singh Jammu besides other District officers and staff from various other departments.

The workshop focused on fostering integrated infrastructure development, strengthening multi-modal connectivity and ensuring better synergy among line departments for speedy and result-oriented execution of projects in the district.

In the course of the session, the Technical Officer of PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan Santosh Kumar Rai gave a detailed demonstration of the PM Gati Shakti portal and apprised the participants about its key



components, functionalities and the mechanism for feeding and managing data on the platform.

The deliberations laid emphasis on orienting the officers with GIS-enabled spatial planning instruments, unified digital data ecosystems and geo-tagged mapping of infrastructure under the PM Gati Shakti architecture. The need for seamless sharing of departmental datasets, detection of infrastructural deficiencies, prevention of overlapping of works, augmentation of last-mile linkages and synchronized planning of roads, utilities and other public assets was discussed at length.

The participants were further sensitized to the significance of technology-led and data-backed planning for effective prioritization, supervision and accomplishment of developmental initiatives.

The session underlined that sincere adoption of the PM Gati Shakti paradigm would pave the way for whole-of-government convergence, optimal resource utilization.

Div Com pays rich tributes to Sir M. Visvesvaraya Emphasis role of engineers in building Viksit Bharat

■ **HT News Network**

JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 15: The 59th Engineers' Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm by the Institution of Engineers (India), Jammu Local Centre at its Institutional Complex. The day coincided with the commemoration of the 165th birth anniversary of India's greatest Engineer - Bharat Ratna Sir M. Visvesvaraya.

Divisional Commissioner Jammu Ramesh Kumar was the Chief Guest and Managing Director J&K State Power Development Corporation Ltd. Rahul Yadav was the Guest of Honour, FIE Chairman Er. Anil Verma; FIE Honorary Secretary



Er. Avneet Gupta and a large number of engineers from different departments and organizations attended the function.

In his address, the Divisional Commissioner paid rich tributes to Bharat Ratna Sir M. Visvesvaraya and honoured his legacy. He said that Engineers decide and shape the future of a nation. "They not only build infrastructure but also play a

role in every industrial and commercial activity," he added. He exhorted the engineers to lay focus on the planning aspect of engineering, make use of AI for the betterment of mankind and sustainable future keeping in view the moral and ethical drawbacks of the same. "A lot has changed since independence and engineers have to play a bigger role in Atmanirbhar Bharat and Viksit Bharat 2047,"

he stressed.

Rahul Yadav highlighted the contribution of Sir M. Visvesvaraya. He said that our engineers are becoming more of administrators than engineers. He further advised that Engineers should handhold the projects right from conception to completion. He also asked them to focus more on the design and engineering part rather than managerial roles.

Earlier, Er. Anil Verma presented the welcome address on the theme "Engineering Excellence for a Sustainable and Technologically Sovereign India." He cited many initiatives of engineers in the country

Rajouri admin discusses Rural-Urban Convergence for Waste Segregation, Processing

■ **HT NEWS DESK**

RAJOURI, SEPTEMBER 15: Deputy Commissioner Rajouri Abhishek Sharma today chaired a meeting to deliberate on rural-urban convergence for effective segregation, collection, processing and disposal of dry and wet waste in the district.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasized the need for segregation of dry and wet waste at source to ensure scientific and efficient waste management. He directed the Rural Development Department and Municipal bodies to chalk out a comprehensive



convergence plan for collection and disposal of wet and dry waste in peri-urban areas.

The Deputy Commissioner said that Municipal Council Rajouri and Municipal Committee

Sunderbani shall be accorded first priority under the convergence initiative. He stressed coordinated efforts between rural and urban local bodies to establish an efficient waste management mechanism

in areas adjoining municipal limits.

Assistant Commissioner Panchayat (ACP) Rajouri also made a detailed PowerPoint presentation outlining the proposed mechanism for collection, segregation and disposal of wet and dry waste in rural areas.

The DC called for close coordination among all concerned departments and directed that the proposed convergence plan be implemented in a systematic manner, with focus on source segregation, proper collection and scientific processing of waste.

Div Com Jammu reviews progress of National Clean Air Program Committee approves ITLS at identified locations of Jammu

■ **HT News Network**

JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 15: Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Ramesh Kumar, today chaired a meeting to review the progress in implementation of the approved Action Plan for improvement of air quality in Jammu District under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

The Divisional Commissioner is also the

Chairperson of the District Level Monitoring Committee for monitoring the approved action Plan under NCAP.

Commissioner Jammu Municipal Corporation, Devansh Yadav, Member Secretary of the Committee; Deputy Commissioner Jammu, Rakesh Minhas - the Member; Joint Commissioner JMC Abdul Sattar - the Nodal Officer; a representative from the J&K Pollution Control Committee,



besides other concerned officers were present in the

meeting. The Member Secretary briefed the Committee about

the NCAP Action Plan 2026-27, including the financial

allocation, expenditure, completed and ongoing works and proposed interventions aimed at improving air quality in Jammu city. He also listed other physical and financial achievements.

The Committee reviewed various measures under the Action Plan, including road and footpath improvement, development of green spaces and vertical gardens, park improvement, pothole repair,

traffic management, solid waste and construction & demolition waste management, besides the awareness activities.

After detailed deliberations, the Committee approved the Integrated Traffic Light System (ITLS) at identified locations in Jammu to strengthen traffic management through an integrated and coordinated system. The Committee also approved the supplementary plan and plantation proposal

for Kot Bhalwal and Bhagwati Nagar, aimed at strengthening green cover and improving the urban environment.

The Committee further decided to re-examine the projects proposed to be taken up under the NCAP Action Plan 2026-27, with a focus on prioritising interventions having greater impact on air quality and ensuring effective utilisation of available resources.



Nairobi awarded 2029 World Athletics Championships, Munich gets 2031



United News Of India

NEW DELHI, SEP 15 :Nairobi will make history in 2029 by becoming the first African city to host the World Athletics Championships, with Munich awarded the 2031 edition, World Athletics has announced.

The decision was taken at the 242nd World

Athletics Council Meeting in Budapest, with Nairobi beating Rome, Munich and London for the 2029 event. Munich will host the championships two years later at its Olympic Stadium.

"We were fortunate to have four outstanding bids for 2029 and 2031, and this was not an easy decision for the Council," said World Athletics President Sebastian Coe. "The quality, ambition and commitment

demonstrated by all four candidates underline the strength and global appeal of the World Athletics Championships.

"With this Council decision today, we continue to fulfil our mission of growing athletics worldwide with the hosting of four World Athletics Championships in Asia, Africa and Europe over its next three editions." Nairobi and Munich ultimately presented two compelling propositions. They offer very different but equally exciting opportunities for our sport, and I am delighted that we can now begin working with both cities to stage two world-class championships," Coe added. Africa has previously hosted several major athletics events, including the 2017 World Cross Country Championships in Kampala and the World U18 Championships in Nairobi. Botswana's Gaborone hosted the World Athletics Relays earlier this year, the first edition of the event in Africa. However, Nairobi 2029 will mark the continent's first hosting of athletics' biggest global championship outside the Olympics. "Nairobi presented a compelling and emotional bid, and taking the World Athletics Championships to Africa for the first time will be historic," Coe said. Kenya is the second-most successful nation in World Championships history, with its athletics legacy featuring stars such as Faith Kipyegon, Eliud Kipchoge and David Rudisha. Germany will host the championships for the third time in 2031 after Stuttgart in 1993 and Berlin in 2009.

Malaysia athletes train at SAI Thiruvananthapuram camp ahead of Asian Games

United News Of India

NEW DELHI, SEP 15 :India's growing reputation as a high-performance training destination has received a boost with Malaysian athletics choosing the Sports Authority of India's (SAI) Thiruvananthapuram centre for a month-long camp ahead of the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya.

The camp, which concluded on September 10, featured 800m runner Wan Muhammad Fazri and 400m/800m athlete Umar Osman. The duo trained under Malaysia Athletics head coach Mohamed Azarudeen as part of their preparations for the continental showpiece, beginning September 19.

The Thiruvananthapuram camp is among several initiatives through which international athletes have used SAI facilities ahead of the continental Games. Boxers from Nepal trained at the SAI Guwahati campus, while Iran's kabaddi

players used the SAI Sonepat centre as their preparation base. The Athletics Federation of India had approached SAI LNCP in July to facilitate boarding, lodging and training



arrangements for the Malaysian delegation at no cost to the athletes.

For Azarudeen, who previously worked with SAI Bengaluru before joining Malaysian Athletics, bringing his athletes to India was a natural choice.

Pant's ODI comeback, Pandya's fitness headline India's West Indies selection



United News Of India

NEW DELHI, SEP 15 :Rishabh Pant's potential ODI comeback and Hardik Pandya's fitness will be among the key talking points when the national selectors meet on Wednesday to finalise India's squads for the upcoming West Indies series.

India are scheduled to play three ODIs and five T20Is against the West Indies, with the 50-over series beginning in Thiruvananthapuram on September 27. The T20I squad is expected to largely mirror the team picked for the Asian Games, but the ODI selection has several loose ends to be addressed. The absence of key players because of the Asian Games, coupled with injuries to some of the available all-round options, has left the selectors with a few

difficult calls to make.

Pant could find his way back into India's white-ball plans after spending more than two years out of the ODI setup. With Ishan Kishan away at the Asian Games, Pant has a chance to make the 15-member squad despite KL Rahul remaining the first-choice wicketkeeper. Pant's indifferent IPL campaign had seen him lose his Test vice-captaincy as well as his place in India's white-ball teams. If the selectors decide against recalling him, Dhruv Jurel is likely to be the alternative. Jurel has enhanced his credentials with an unbeaten 115 in Sri Lanka, his second Test century. In case, Pant is left out of the ODI squad, he could be included in the Rest of India squad for the Irani Cup scheduled to face Ranji Trophy champions.

India chase elusive Asian Games singles squash gold, direct LA 2028 berths

United News Of India

NEW DELHI, SEP 15 :The elusive Asian Games singles gold will be the biggest prize on India's squash team's radar when an eight-member contingent leaves Chennai for Japan on Friday for the Aichi-Nagoya Games, with the players also chasing an improvement on the country's five-medal haul from the previous edition.

India has been a dominant force in Asian squash, winning 18 medals since the sport made its Games debut in 1998, but a singles gold has continued to elude the country. The stakes are even higher this time, with the men's and women's singles champions earning direct qualification for squash's Olympic debut at Los Angeles 2028. India won two gold medals at Hangzhou in 2022, held in 2023, through the mixed doubles pair of Dipika Pallikal Karthik and Harinder Pal Singh Sandhu and the men's team. Saurav Ghosal added a silver in singles, while Anahat Singh and Abhay Singh won a mixed doubles bronze and the women's team also finished third. Ghosal's silver medals in the men's singles event in 2014 and 2022 remain India's best individual finish in the discipline.

Smith keeps Ashes future uncertain as South Africa awaits

United News Of India

SYDNEY, SEP 15 :Steve Smith remains uncertain about whether he will be part of Australia's Ashes campaign in England next summer, with the 37-year-old continuing to take his Test career one series at a time.

Smith, who has played 125 Tests and scored 37 centuries at an average of 54, admitted that even the prospect of finally winning an Ashes series in England is not enough to make him commit to playing that far ahead.

"I don't even know if I'll be there yet," he said while speaking to The Telegraph.

"I'm kind of a series-by-series proposition, as I've been for a while, and that's still a fair way away for me right now. I'd love to win one there or to have won one there, but you wait and see if that comes to fruition." For now, Smith's immediate Test focus is on Australia's next ICC World Test Championship assignment, with a three-Test series against South Africa approaching. The series will see Smith return to South Africa in Test cricket for the first time since the infamous 2018 ball-tampering incident, and he is expecting

a challenging contest against a side with a formidable pace attack.

"For me, it's just another series," Smith insists.

"All that happened a long time ago, and we've played a lot of cricket and have been back



to South Africa since then for one-dayers.

"They're a good side at the moment, obviously beat us in the World Test Championship final.

They have a really good pace attack as well, so should be a cracker of a series." The assignment comes during an increasingly demanding period for Australia, who are at the beginning of a packed Test schedule that will see them play South Africa, New Zealand, and India.

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Here’s how to catch up on sleep, the right way

Just two hours of extra sleep can help reverse the damage from a bad night. But early nights and lie-ins should be wielded with caution. We’ve all been there: waking up, bleary-eyed after a bad night, feeling exhausted. "It's fine," we tell ourselves. "I'll catch up at the weekend."

For some of us, this experience is a one-off. For others, it's a way of life. One survey of nearly 8,000 US adults found that nearly half regularly slept in on the weekends. Perhaps unsurprisingly, teenagers seem to have the biggest weekend lie-ins of any age group.

A bit of extra sleep can be especially tempting for those of us who don't get enough during the week. Adults are generally advised to aim for around seven to nine hours, while it's thought that most adolescents need between eight and ten. But that's not always possible.

Which leads to the million-dollar question: if you aren't sleeping enough during the week, should you sleep in on the weekend? And if you do, can this blunt the effects of short sleep?

The risk of a lie-in

To understand why sleeping in might have downsides, it helps to look at the two main processes regulating sleep.

The first, the sleep homeostat, is like a "sleep tank". The longer we're awake, the more it fills with sleep pressure – and the more we feel like we need to lie down and snooze. The second, our circadian rhythm, gets adjusted every day by our exposure to light and dark, temperature changes, even when we eat or move. These work together to make us feel sleepy, ideally at an appropriate time each night. (Learn more about how regulating your rhythm can aid your sleep in my newsletter course, *How to Sleep Better*, launching on 21 September 2026.)

Catching up on sleep can knock both our sleep homeostat and our body clock off. This is true whether you go to bed earlier, or sleep in. Because extra morning sleep reduces our sleep pressure later in the day, we might not feel tired until later that evening. And because we're not just sleeping at a different time, but doing everything else at a different time – including getting light exposure – it can affect our circadian rhythm too.

get some extra rest.

The benefits of recovery sleep

How short sleep impacts our health and cognition is still being untangled. But in carefully controlled sleep restriction experiments, it's become clear that an especially rough night impacts our physiology. And at least some of these consequences can be blunted, if not reversed,

sleep persists over weeks or months. Vigilant attention (our ability to stay focused and respond quickly) and spatial orientation seem to be particularly vulnerable. In these cases, even weekend catch-up sleep can't fully reverse the effects of short weekday sleep.

Then there's also naps. These can also be beneficial for people running short. But

around one to two hours' extra sleep

Even when short sleep's health impacts aren't reversed by catch-up sleep, they're often ameliorated. One study of almost 2,800 Korean adults, for example, found that habitually short sleepers were about 73% more likely to have high blood pressure. But each hour of weekend catch-up sleep was linked to about 17% less risk.



with catch-up sleep.

In one study, for example, people who got only two hours' sleep for a single night showed higher counts of two types of white blood cells, potentially indicating a physiological stress response. Some participants were then granted an eight-hour sleep the following night. But even after this, their white blood cell counts hadn't fully bounced back. However, participants who were allowed to sleep for up to 10 hours on the second day had levels which had nearly returned back to the baseline.

Another experiment studied what happened when 11 men who normally slept for eight hours each night were limited to four. Six nights of short sleep were enough

they're usually studied separately from overnight catch-up sleep. (Read more from the BBC about why power naps might be good for our health.)

Catching up on sleep, saving lives

But these studies were conducted in artificial laboratory conditions. What happens when people catch up on sleep in the real world?

For one Swedish study, researchers followed more than 40,000 adults over 13 years. They found that adults under 65 years old who regularly slept for six to seven hours a night had the lowest risk of death. In comparison, those who slept five hours or less had a 65% greater mortality risk. For adults over 65, there was no association between short sleep and

Other studies have found that short weekday sleepers who sleep in on weekends have a lower risk of dementia. They also have decreased risk of metabolic syndrome, a cluster of symptoms that raise your risk of type 2 diabetes or cardiovascular disease.

More like this:

- The sleep habits that help you wake up without an alarm
- What jet lag does to your body – and how to cope
- Why modern parents feel more sleep deprived than our ancestors did

Not all studies have found a benefit of weekend catch-up sleep. One large UK-based study found no link between catch-up sleep and mortality or cardiovascular disease. But it didn't find a greater risk of sleeping in, either.



The result? We might sleep in Sunday morning and fall asleep later on Sunday night, so that when our alarm goes off at 06:00 on Monday, we haven't slept enough – starting the cycle all over again. "It's like shifting time zones every single week," says Melynda Casement, sleep psychologist and director of the University of Oregon Sleep Lab.

However, though catch-up sleep should be used cautiously, it's not always a bad idea. Here's when it might be helpful to

to impair their glucose clearance and insulin responses. If sustained long-term, these physiological changes can raise the risk of type two diabetes. But after six more nights of a 12-hour sleep opportunity, their measures had returned to baseline levels.

Other experiments have found that catch-up sleep following an all-nighter can restore our cognitive performance.

None of that means that a weekend lie-in (or early night) counteracts every effect of sleep debt, especially when short

mortality risk – a result, the researchers suggest, of our sleep needs decreasing as we age.

But there was a twist. A decent weekend sleep appeared to erase the additional risk for the five-hour-or-less sleepers. If the short sleepers caught up then, statistically they had no higher risk of death than the people who slept a healthy amount during the week.

There is growing evidence that, for most of us, there seems to be a "sweet spot" of

Studies in the US and Korea have found this amount is associated with the lowest risk of depression. It's also been linked to lower inflammation in adults who are habitual short sleepers. Researchers have found a similar pattern for younger people, including a lower risk of anxiety and depression.

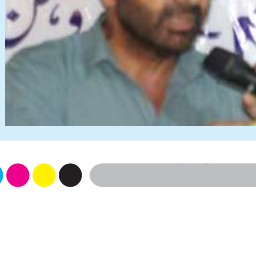
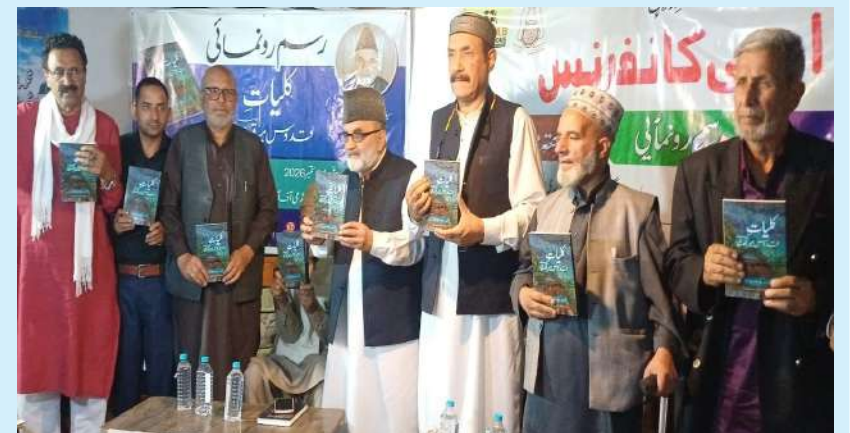
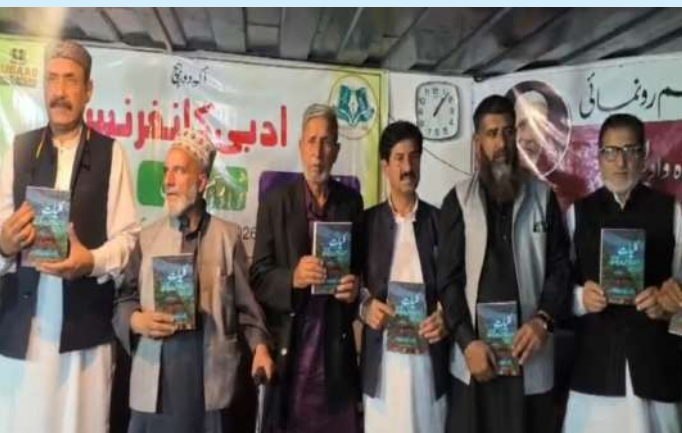
So, a little lie-in can sometimes be a good idea. But it probably won't justify waking up at lunchtime.

* Amanda Ruggeri is a journalist who explores the science, psychology and history of the ideas we take for granted. She writes the six-part *How to Sleep Better* newsletter course, and her upcoming book, *The Sleep Myth*, will be published in summer 2027.

BBC News)

Cultural Forum Kreeri Hosts Grand Literary Gathering, Celebrates Kashmiri Language and Devotional Poetry

Two Significant Books Released and a Grand Naatia Mushaira Brings Day-Long Cultural Programme to a Close at GHSS Kreeri



HT News Network

KREERI, Sept 14:

A day-long literary and cultural gathering bringing together prominent writers, poets, researchers, intellectuals, religious scholars and literature enthusiasts was organised at Government Higher Secondary School, Kreeri, on Sunday, with the promotion of Kashmiri language, literature and cultural heritage forming the central theme of the programme. The event was organised by the Krohen Cultural Forum, Kreeri, in collaboration with the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages and Lubaab Publications, under the patronage of Adbi Markaz Kamraz. The programme featured the release of two important books, felicitation of noted journalist, writer and editor Dr Syed Jahangir Bukhari on being conferred an honorary doctorate, detailed literary discussions and a Naatia Mushaira. The proceedings were moderated by Gen Secretary of Krohen Cultural Forum, Syed Sharief Hussain Qadri. The first session was presided over by renowned Islamic scholar Maulana Shoukat Hussain Keng. The presidium comprised noted broadcaster Syed Basharat Bukhari, prominent writer and researcher Syed Sad-ud-Din Saidi, noted Kashmiri poet Noor-ud-Din Hosh, Adbi Markaz Kamraz President Muhammad Amin Bhat, Krohen Cultural Forum President Syed Shamim Ahmad Shamim and Principal Government Higher Secondary School Kreeri Sheikh Abdul Rashid. The major highlight of the first session was the release of two Kashmiri publications—Seyaah Waawles Manz, a collection of poetry by noted poet Noor-ud-Din Hosh, and Kulyat-e-Qudoos Mir Qudsi, a literary and research work by prominent writer and researcher Syed Sad-ud-Din Saidi. Speakers on the occasion described the two publications as significant contributions to Kashmiri literature and said that such works not only enrich contemporary literary discourse but also preserve the intellectual, linguistic and cultural heritage of Kashmir for future generations. They stressed the need for sustained and collective efforts to promote the Kashmiri language and create greater opportunities

for writers, poets and researchers. The speakers observed that publication of quality books, regular literary gatherings, Mushairas, research-oriented programmes and encouragement of young literary talent were essential for ensuring the continued growth of Kashmiri language and literature. At the outset of the programme, Dr Syed Jahangir Bukhari was specially felicitated for being conferred an honorary doctorate in recognition of his contributions to journalism, literature and social service. The speakers appreciated his long association with journalism and his involvement in literary and cultural activities. They said that recognition of individuals working in the fields of journalism, literature and social service encourages others to contribute towards strengthening the intellectual and cultural environment of society. The second session was presided over by noted broadcaster Syed Basharat Bukhari. The presidium included Adbi Markaz Kamraz Secretary Shabnam Talghami, Syed Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Andrabi, Syed Sad-ud-Din Saidi and Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Wani. The session witnessed an extensive discussion on the present condition of Kashmiri language and literature, the responsibilities of literary and cultural institutions and the need to reconnect younger generations with their mother tongue, traditions and cultural heritage. Speakers said Kashmir had a rich literary tradition spanning centuries and maintained that this legacy could be protected only through continued literary activity, serious research, publication of books and active participation of the younger generation. They also emphasised the importance of creating an environment in which young writers and poets could receive encouragement and opportunities to showcase their talent. Literary institutions, they said, had an important role to play in taking Kashmiri literature beyond established circles and strengthening its presence at the grassroots level. The speakers appreciated the Krohen Cultural Forum for regularly organising literary and cultural programmes in the area, observing that such initiatives provide a platform for writers, poets, researchers

and cultural enthusiasts while contributing to the preservation and promotion of Kashmiri language and traditions. The day-long programme concluded with a Naatia Mushaira in which prominent poets from different parts of the Valley presented devotional poetry in praise of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The participating poets, through their soulful verses, highlighted themes of love and devotion towards the Prophet (PBUH), compassion, peace, morality and Islamic values. The audience listened to the poetry with deep respect and devotion and warmly applauded the poets for their presentations. The organisers expressed gratitude to all the distinguished guests, writers, poets, researchers, religious scholars and literature enthusiasts who participated in the programme and contributed to its success. They reaffirmed the Krohen Cultural Forum's commitment to continuing literary, cultural and intellectual activities aimed at promoting Kashmiri language and literature and preserving the region's rich cultural heritage. Among the well-known dignitaries and poets who graced the function were Noor-ud-Din Hosh, Syed Sad-ud-Din Saidi, Syed Basharat Bukhari, Syed Sharief Hussain Qadri, Abid Ashraf, Roshan Qamar, Syed Shamim Ahmad Shamim, Syed Sarwar Hashmi, Syed Bashir, Syed Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Andrabi, Haji Syed Ashiq Hussain Qadri, Syed Abdul Rashid Khamosh, Syed Asif Iqbal Qadri, Syed Altaf Hussain Bukhari, Abdul Majeed Shahbaz, Shaikat Talghami, Gulzar Ahmad Sofi, Rashid Roshan, Shahid Delnavi, Shabnum Talghami, Mumtaz Rashid, Pir Hilal Ahmad Muqami, Syed Tasaduk Hussain Danish, Mumtaz Hamdani, Dilbar Wanigami, Riyaz Parwana, Mohi-ud-Din Dilwar, Saleh Ibn Hab Lala, Syed Reyaz Ahmad Bukhari, Rafiq Talib, Ghulam Hassan Darvesh, Rafiq Tahir Kawchaki, Zahoor Haigami, Sagar Nazir, Abdul Hameed, Zameer Ansari, Jameel Ansari, Haji Alam, Javed Ahmad, Syed Bashir Ahmad, Syed Zahoore Hussain Bukhari, Syed Mushtaq Qadri, Farooq Ahmad Khan, Janaan Altaf, Syed Siddiq Ahmad, Sheikh Javed Ahmad and several other prominent literary and cultural personalities.

