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Voice To The Voiceless



P:12 **Arshdeep sets Indian record with 38 T20I wickets in 2026**

Kulgam Police Solve Hit-and-Run Case Within Two Hours, Driver Arrested

HT NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM, OCT 26: Police have solved a hit-and-run case in Jammu and Kashmir's Kulgam district by arresting the alleged offending driver within two hours of the incident, officials said on Monday.

An unidentified vehicle, allegedly being driven at high speed, hit a load carrier on October 25, leaving its occupants seriously injured, they said. The injured were initially taken to a nearby hospital and later referred to Government Medical College (GMC), Anantnag, due to the severity of their injuries.

Police registered an FIR under relevant sections of law at Kulgam police station and launched an investigation.

A police team examined CCTV footage and technical evidence to identify the vehicle involved in the accident. The suspected vehicle was traced and the accused driver, identified as Mohammad Asif Lone, a resident

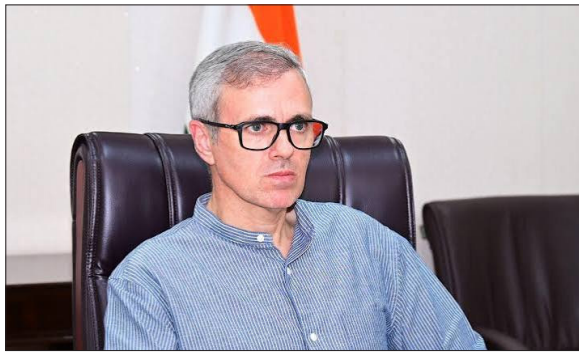
>>> **MORE ON P 02**

Omar Abdullah Set to Expand Cabinet, Reshuffle Likely Today

Five Ministers Submit Resignations; Oath-Taking at 10:30 AM as Three Berths Remain Vacant

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 26: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah is set to expand his Council of Ministers on Tuesday, with a possible reshuffle of the existing team after five ministers submitted their resignations on Monday. The oath-taking ceremony is scheduled for 10:30 AM at Lok Bhavan, where Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha will administer the oath. With three ministerial berths vacant in the nine-member maximum-strength Council, the Chief Minister is expected to decide on fresh inductions and the continuation of existing ministers. Senior



National Conference leaders held an informal meeting in Srinagar on Monday, but Minister Javed Dar said the Chief Minister alone would decide the composition of the cabinet. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah is set to expand his Council of Ministers on

Tuesday, with a reshuffle of the existing cabinet also on the cards after all five ministers submitted their resignations to him on Monday, highly placed sources told Kashmir News Service (KNS).

The oath-taking ceremony is scheduled for 10:30 am at

Lok Bhavan, formerly Raj Bhavan, in Srinagar, where Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha will administer the oath of office and secrecy to the new ministers.

Sources said the resignations of all five ministers have been placed before the Chief Minister, who is likely to decide which ministers will continue and who will make way for new faces.

A close associate of the Chief Minister told KNS that the submission of resignations was a routine exercise ahead of the cabinet expansion. The Omar Abdullah-led Council of Ministers

>>> **MORE ON P 02**

ADMM-Plus Meeting in Philippines to Focus on Regional Security and Strategic Cooperation

Rajnath Singh to Lead Indian Delegation at ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meet

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Defence

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 26: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will lead the Indian delegation at the 13th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) in Cebu, Philippines, from October 28 to 29. He will address the forum on regional and international security issues and hold bilateral meetings with counterparts to review defence ties and explore avenues for stronger strategic partnerships. India's participation reflects its continued commitment to regional peace, security and defence cooperation under the Act East policy.

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh will lead the Indian delegation at the 13th



Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) - Plus at Cebu, Philippines from October 28 to 29, 2026. He will address the forum on 'Exchange of Views on Regional and International Security Issues'. On the sidelines of ADMM-Plus, Raksha Mantri

>>> **MORE ON P 02**

PCCF Reviews Forest Protection, Eco-Tourism Projects Across North Kashmir

Sarvesh Rai inaugurates key infrastructure, reviews fire preparedness and livelihood initiatives; stresses timely completion of developmental works



HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

KUPWARA, OCT 26: Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) and Head of Forest Force, Jammu and Kashmir, Sarvesh Rai, concluded a two-day tour of North Kashmir on October 25-26, reviewing developmental works, forest protection measures, eco-tourism projects and field infrastructure across the North Forest Circle. During the visit, he inaugurated several facilities, assessed forest fire preparedness, promoted community-based livelihood

initiatives and stressed sustainable tourism alongside conservation of the region's rich ecological and cultural heritage.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) and Head of Forest Force (HoFF), Jammu and Kashmir, Sarvesh Rai, undertook a two-day tour of North Kashmir on October 25 and 26 to review developmental works, forest protection measures, eco-tourism initiatives and infrastructure development across forest divisions of the North Forest Circle.

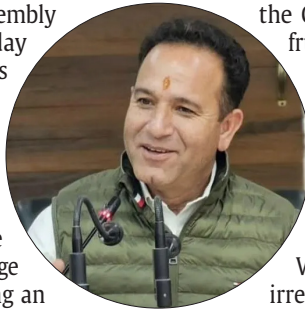
>>> **MORE ON P 02**

Sunil Sharma Slams Kharge Over Remark on PM Modi

BJP Leader Accuses Congress of Political Frustration Following Patna Controversy

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 26: Leader of Opposition in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Sunil Sharma on Monday condemned Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's controversial remark concerning Prime Minister Narendra Modi, alleging that it reflected frustration within the Congress leadership. Kharge made the remark during an event in Patna while criticising alleged irregularities in the revision of electoral rolls. His comments have triggered sharp reactions from BJP leaders, who have accused him of lowering the standards of political discourse. Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Leader of Opposition and BJP



leader Sunil Sharma on Monday condemned Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's remark about Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing the Congress leadership of frustration and desperation.

Kharge triggered a political row during an event in Patna on Sunday marking the 139th birth anniversary of Bihar's first Chief Minister, Krishna Singh. While criticizing alleged irregularities in the Special

Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and accusing the BJP of undermining democratic processes, Kharge said the Congress would send those responsible for alleged irregularities to jail. When an audience member interjected that Modi would

>>> **MORE ON P 02**

Sat Sharma Demands Apology from Kharge Over Remark on PM Modi

J&K BJP Chief Says Congress President Must Retract Statement

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

an apology to the people of the country and should withdraw his words.

Reacting to Kharge's statement, Sharma

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 26: Jammu and Kashmir BJP president Sat Sharma on Monday demanded an apology from Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge over his controversial remark concerning Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Sharma said leaders holding senior political positions must maintain dignity and responsibility in public discourse, adding that Kharge should withdraw his words. The BJP leader argued that the remarks warranted an apology to the people of the country, intensifying the political confrontation between the two parties. Jammu and Kashmir BJP president Sat Sharma on Monday condemned Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's remarks concerning Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying the Congress chief owed



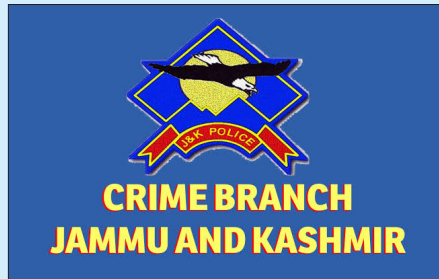
said elected representatives who had taken an oath under the Constitution and held senior positions in political parties were expected to uphold the dignity of their offices and exercise responsibility in public discourse.

>>> **MORE ON P 02**

Crime Branch J&K observes Vigilance Awareness Week in Srinagar

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, OCT 26: Crime Branch Jammu and Kashmir on Monday observed Vigilance Awareness Week



2026 by organising an integrity pledge-taking ceremony at its headquarters in Srinagar.

IGP Crime J&K Sarah Rizvi, IPS, administered the pledge to officers and officials, calling for honesty, integrity and ethical conduct in the discharge of official duties.

The ceremony was held as

part of the nationwide observance of Vigilance Awareness Week, aimed at promoting transparency, accountability and awareness against corruption.

Officers and officials reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining integrity in public service and working towards a corruption-free society. (KNS)

HT BOTTOM NEWS

Seven Alleged Drug Peddlers Arrested in Anantnag, Contraband Seized

Police Recover Charas and Over Seven Kilograms of Ganja-Like Substance in Multiple Operations

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

ANANTNAG, OCTOBER 26: Police arrested seven alleged drug peddlers during a series of anti-narcotics operations across Anantnag district, recovering charas and ganja-like substances from their possession. The recoveries included approximately 230 grams and 153 grams of charas powder-like substance in separate operations, along with smaller quantities of charas and around 7.17 kilograms of a ganja-like substance recovered during a raid at a residential house in Baliyar Marhama. Cases have been registered under relevant legal

provisions, and further investigations are underway. Police have urged the public to share credible information to help combat drug trafficking and



substance abuse. Continuing its sustained crackdown against drug trafficking and substance abuse, Police in Anantnag intensified its efforts to curb the drug menace

>>> **MORE ON P 02**

Farooq Abdullah Should Not Have Made Such a Statement : Ghulam Hassan Mir

Apni Party Leader Calls for Centre-J&K Dialogue to Bridge Trust Deficit

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 26: Apni Party senior vice president Ghulam Hassan Mir on Monday criticised National Conference president Farooq Abdullah's reported remark that Pakistan was helping protect Kashmiris, describing it as unnecessary and inconsistent with his earlier statements. Mir said contradictory political messaging was leaving young people confused and stressed the need for meaningful engagement between the Centre and the people of Jammu and Kashmir. He urged the Government of India to initiate dialogue to address public concerns, bridge the trust deficit and rebuild confidence.

Terming Farooq Abdullah's recent controversial statement as unnecessary, former Cabinet



Minister and Apni Party Senior Vice President Ghulam Hassan Mir said Abdullah should not have made such a statement. He made this remark while speaking to reporters today, when asked

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Kulgam Police Solve

of Chimmer village in the DH Pora area, was arrested within two hours of the incident, officials said.

Further investigation is underway to establish the circumstances of the accident and complete the legal formalities, they added. (KNS)

Omar Abdullah

currently comprises six members, including the Chief Minister, leaving three ministerial berths vacant.

Sources said the expansion could also involve changes in the existing ministerial team, with the final decision resting with Omar Abdullah.

Meanwhile, senior National Conference leaders, including Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary, Rajya Sabha MP Shami Oberoi, Satish Sharma and Javed Rana, met at Minister Javed Dar's Church Lane residence in Srinagar on Monday.

Speaking exclusively to KNS after the meeting, Javed Dar dismissed speculation surrounding the gathering, saying it was not a secret meeting but an informal interaction among colleagues over tea.

"We had already decided to sit together for tea. We discussed party matters, and there was no secret meeting," Dar told KNS.

Asked about the proposed cabinet expansion and the possibility of ministers being dropped, Dar said the decision rested entirely with the Chief Minister.

"It is the Chief Minister's prerogative who is keeping whom and who is dropping whom. We have no knowledge about it," he said.

Under Section 53 of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, the Council of Ministers, including the Chief Minister, cannot exceed 10 percent of the total membership of the Legislative Assembly. With 90 elected seats, Jammu and Kashmir can have a maximum of nine ministers, including the Chief Minister.

The proposed expansion will be the first since the National Conference-led government assumed office in October 2024.

While three vacant berths are available, the number of new inductions could change if the Chief Minister decides to replace any sitting minister.

The names of legislators likely to be inducted and ministers expected to be dropped have not been officially announced so far. (KNS)

ADMM-Plus Meeting

will hold bilateral meetings with his counterparts of participating countries. He will review the ongoing defence ties with the nations, and explore ways to further strengthen strategic partnerships.

The ADMM is the highest defence consultative and cooperative mechanism in ASEAN. ADMM-Plus is a platform for ASEAN member states (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste and Vietnam) and its eight Dialogue Partners (India, US, China, Russia, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand) to strengthen security and defence cooperation.

India became the dialogue partner of ASEAN in 1992 and the inaugural ADMM-Plus was convened in Hanoi, Vietnam on October 12, 2010. Since 2017, ADMM-Plus Ministers have been meeting annually to bolster defence cooperation amongst ASEAN and the Plus countries.

The Philippines is the chair of ADMM-Plus for 2026. Under the construct of ADMM-Plus, India is co-chairing the Experts Working Group on Counter-Terrorism with Malaysia for the cycle 2024-2027. India's active participation in the ADMM-Plus mechanisms underscores the deepening defence diplomacy in Southeast Asia under the Act East policy, aimed at ensuring peace, stability and collective growth in the region.

Sat Sharma Demands

Sharma said Kharge, having served as president of what he described as once the country's largest political party, should have been more careful in his choice of words. He accused the Congress leader of using derogatory language concerning the Prime Minister's father and said such remarks were unacceptable from a person holding a senior constitutional and political position.

"I am not suggesting that they need to apologise to the Prime Minister or the Bharatiya Janata Party. Rather, they owe an apology to the 140 crore people of this country," Sharma said, demanding that Kharge retract his remarks.

He further questioned what such language meant for ordinary citizens, arguing that if the

Wallet Lost

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Mohammad Rafiq Najar

father of the Prime Minister could be dragged into political exchanges, the public could reasonably question the standards of discourse directed at common people.

Kharge's remarks in Patna have drawn criticism from BJP leaders, with the controversy escalating into protests and demands for an apology from the Congress president. [KNT]

Sunil Sharma

not leave office, Kharge retorted, "Modi ka baap bhi jayega," a remark that drew sharp criticism from BJP leaders.

Reacting to the statement, Sharma said Kharge had used abusive and unconstitutional language against the Prime Minister and described the remarks as condemnable. He alleged that the statement reflected the frustration of the Congress party and the desperation of Rahul Gandhi.

Sharma said such language was not expected from a leader of Kharge's seniority and accused the Congress president of exposing what he described as the party's true nature through his remarks.

The exchange has drawn criticism from BJP leaders, while the controversy centres on Kharge's response to the audience member during his address in Patna. [KNT]

PCCF Reviews

On the first day of the tour, the PCCF visited JV Forest Division, Baramulla, where he inaugurated the Trumgund Forest Check Post and inspected the ongoing construction work of the DFO office at Baramulla. He subsequently visited Langate Forest Division, where he laid the foundation stone for the second storey of the DFO office at Langate and inspected the Reshwari Eco-Tourism site.

During the visit, the PCCF emphasised the importance of developing eco-tourism in a planned and sustainable manner, with a focus on responsible visitor management, conservation of natural landscapes and creation of livelihood opportunities for local communities.

The tour further covered eco-tourism works in Bangus Valley, where the PCCF took stock of ongoing eco-development initiatives in the Dringyari-Bungus area and reviewed the progress of works being undertaken to promote responsible eco-tourism and enhance visitor amenities.

Emphasising effective implementation, he directed the concerned officers to ensure the timely and quality completion of all ongoing projects. He also stressed the need to strengthen forest protection measures, enhance field-level preparedness and intensify preventive interventions in view of the forthcoming forest fire season.

At Lakut Bangus, the PCCF inspected the Forest Staff Quarters and Jungle Training Centre and released "Mountain Trails of Kehmil," a publication highlighting trekking routes and nature-based tourism opportunities in Kehmil Forest Division. He also inaugurated the Range Office at Ramhall. The office will strengthen field-level administration and coordination, enabling more effective monitoring of forest resources and implementation of protection and developmental activities in the range.

Later in the evening, the PCCF visited the Army Headquarters at Zangli, Kupwara, where he held an interactive session with the General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the Army's 28

Infantry Division and other Army officers. Discussions included forest diversion proposals associated with Army requirements and their progress.

On the second day, the PCCF visited Kamraj Forest Division, Kupwara, to review field-level infrastructure, forest protection preparedness, livelihood initiatives and conservation-related activities. The visit commenced at Batpora Block, where he inaugurated the Block Officers' Hut, a facility catering to three forest beats comprising 16 compartments. The infrastructure is expected to strengthen field coordination, monitoring and protection of forest resources.

The PCCF subsequently visited Nagriwari Eco-Park at Hatmulla, where he inaugurated the Van Posh Mela, showcasing the linkages between forest conservation, traditional skills, local livelihoods and eco-tourism. A 1.5-kilometre student trekking route was also inaugurated, and students were flagged off for the trek to promote environmental awareness and appreciation of the region's natural heritage.

During the programme, the PCCF initiated Resham Vann, a mulberry plantation initiative within an existing plantation closure, aimed at promoting location-specific livelihoods through mulberry cultivation and potential linkages with Bamboo and Mulberry Clusters (BMCs). He also inspected thematic stalls showcasing traditional crafts and products made from locally sourced raw materials, including Indigofera-based crafts, wood carving and pottery. Craftspersons demonstrated the use of tools provided under the livelihood initiative of the Green India Mission (GIM), highlighting opportunities for traditional skill development, value addition and income generation.

Poplar saplings were also distributed among beneficiaries under the Social Forestry Department's agroforestry programme to encourage tree cultivation on private and agricultural lands.

Students from local schools presented an environmental debate and skit highlighting the importance of forest conservation and biodiversity protection. Appreciating their awareness and understanding of environmental issues, the PCCF felicitated the participating students and encouraged them to continue promoting conservation awareness in their communities.

A tribal heritage presentation showcased the traditional lifestyle, culture and indigenous practices of local tribal communities. Traditional beverages and a customary tribal dwelling, locally known as a Dhoka, were demonstrated, highlighting their potential to enrich eco-tourism experiences. Such structures could also serve as guidance points, rain shelters and camping facilities along trekking routes, creating livelihood opportunities while preserving tribal heritage, subject to appropriate planning and environmental safeguards.

The PCCF also attended a forest fire mock drill organised by Kamraj Forest Division to assess preparedness for the ensuing fire season. The forest fire control team demonstrated firefighting equipment, response procedures and first-aid techniques for injured personnel. The exercise highlighted the importance of timely response, field coordination, equipment readiness and staff training in mitigating forest fires.

Later, the PCCF released the Forest Protection Plan of Kamraj Forest Division for 2026-27, outlining the division's priorities and planned

interventions for strengthening forest surveillance, preventing forest offences and safeguarding forest resources. He also released the booklet "A Portrait of Paradise - The Enchanting Forests of Lolab Valley," documenting the valley's ecological richness and the Forest Department's interventions in forest conservation, restoration, plantation development and eco-tourism promotion.

The two-day tour highlighted the Forest Department's focus on strengthening field infrastructure, improving forest protection and fire preparedness, promoting sustainable livelihoods and developing responsible eco-tourism opportunities while conserving the rich ecological and cultural heritage of North Kashmir.

The PCCF was accompanied during the tour by Irfan Rasool Wani, Chief Conservator of Forests, Kashmir; Dr. M. K. Kumar, Chief Conservator of Forests, Central; Irfan Ali Shah, Conservator of Forests, North Circle; Rafi Ahmed Bhat, Joint Director, Forest Protection Force; Zahid Mughal, Divisional Forest Officer, JV Forest Division; Owais Mir, Divisional Forest Officer, Kamraj Forest Division; Ahzah Pajwari, Divisional Forest Officer, Langate Forest Division; Faisal Farooq, Divisional Forest Officer, Kehmil Forest Division; Noorul Amin, Divisional Manager, Forest Development Corporation; Bilal Mir, Divisional Forest Officer, Social Forestry; Jan Mohd, Deputy Director, Forest Protection Force, Kehmil; and Javed Sheikh, Deputy Director, Forest Protection Force, besides Range Officers of the Forest Department and Assistant Directors of the Forest Protection Force. (KNS)

Farooq Abdullah

to comment on National Conference (NC) leader Farooq Abdullah's recent statement that Pakistan was helping protect Kashmiris.

Ghulam Hassan Mir said, "Farooq Sahib should not have made this statement. However, we also need to look at the sequence of his statements. On several occasions, he has described Pakistan as an enemy, but today he is calling it a friend. It is difficult to understand which of his statements he actually believes."

He further said, "This is the problem with politics in Kashmir. Our politicians are failing to provide clear direction to the people, leaving them confused by their contradictory statements and shifting positions."

Speaking about the apprehensions of the youth, Mir said, "A party colleague's 16-year-old son, who is in Class 10, told me yesterday that Farooq Sahib has the privilege of making such statements, whereas an ordinary Kashmiri making a similar statement could be booked under the PSA. This reflects how many of our young people perceive the situation. It is obligatory upon the Government of India to take meaningful initiatives to address the apprehensions and concerns of the youth in Jammu & Kashmir and rebuild their trust."

Reiterating Apni Party's demand for the talks between centre and people of Jammu and Kashmir, Ghulam Hassan Mir said, "Apni Party's stand is that the people of Jammu and Kashmir and the Centre must engage in dialogue to bridge the prevailing distance and trust deficit. It is the Government of India that must take the initiative to start these talks. Such a dialogue would help address genuine issues, bridge the

trust deficit, and restore credibility in the relationship between Jammu and Kashmir and the rest of the country."

"The trust deficit needs to be bridged. Apni Party will never make any statement that could further widen the trust deficit between the Centre and Jammu & Kashmir. Our aim is to rebuild trust, strengthen mutual understanding, and restore the credibility of the relationship between Jammu and Kashmir and the centre," Mir added. (KNS)

Seven Alleged

across the district. During a series of operations, police teams apprehended seven peddlers and recovered large quantities of contraband substances from their possession.

A police party from Police Station Anantnag apprehended Sareer Ahmad Bhat son of Khazir Mohammad Bhat resident of Chirhama Mirbazar, at Nawvathoo Danter and recovered approximately 230 grams of charas powder-like substance from his possession. In another operation, police intercepted a Hyundai i10 bearing registration number JK05B-3181, driven by Mohd Altaf Bhat son of Abdul Majeed Bhat, resident of Mirdanter. Approximately 153 grams of charas powder-like substance was recovered during the search from his possession. Besides, vehicles used in the commission of crime have also been seized.

In separate operations at Wazirbagh and behind Police Station Anantnag, police apprehended Bittu Dantani son of Raju Dantani resident of Chapur Mehdi Kuwa, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, presently residing at Achabal Adda, Anantnag, and Ajay Kumar son of Kishan Kumar, resident of Verrugam Kadi, Gujarat. Approximately 17 grams and 22 grams of charas, respectively, were recovered from their possession.

Meanwhile, acting on reliable information, Police Post Sangam conducted a raid at the residential house of Bilal Ahmad Bhat son of Abdul Wahab Bhat, resident of Balyar Marhama, and recovered approximately 7.170 kilograms of ganja-like substance. Similarly, a naka party of Police Post Shairbagh apprehended Danish Manzoor Shaikh son of Manzoor Ahmad Shaikh, resident of Janglat Mandi, Anantnag, at High Ground and recovered approximately 205 grams of charas-like substance from his possession.

Moreover, a naka party of Police Station Mattan apprehended Javid Mukhtiyar Pashoo son of Mukhtiyar Ahmad Pashoo, resident of Gopalpora, Mattan, and recovered approximately 52.6 grams of charas-like substance from his possession.

In a separate action, a police party of Police Post DK Pora apprehended Bashir Ahmad Bhat son of Mohd Abdullah Bhat, resident of Brinty, and recovered approximately 15 grams of charas from his possession.

Accordingly, cases under relevant sections of law have been registered at respective police stations and further investigation has been initiated.

Police reiterates its firm commitment to eradicating the drug menace and appeals to the general public to cooperate with police by sharing credible information regarding drug trafficking and peddling. Public participation remains vital in the collective effort to build a drug-free society. (KINS)

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DC Kupwara visits Border Village Kumkadi, reviews Winter Preparedness

Directs for organising specialised Health and Service Delivery Camps

■ HT News Network

KUPWARA, OCTOBER 26: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Abhishek Sharma, today conducted an extensive tour of the border village of Kumkadi to assess winter preparedness, review essential service delivery, developmental requirements, and address public grievances.

The DC, accompanied by the Assistant Commissioner Revenue (ACR) Kupwara, concerned Tehsildar, Naib Tehsildar, former PRI representatives and other field functionaries, interacted with local residents and presided over a public grievance redressal session. He listened to issues raised by residents and delegations and assured them that genuine developmental, healthcare and administrative concerns would be addressed on priority.

To strengthen healthcare access in remote border areas ahead of snowfall, the DC directed the Health Department to organise specialised health camps across border villages during November, providing free medical consultations, essential screenings and medicines. He also directed the Revenue Department to organise



a dedicated service delivery camp at Kumkadi, with a special focus on expediting the issuance of Scheduled Tribe (ST) certificates and other revenue documents. The Deputy Commissioner also reviewed the tourism infrastructure being developed in the village. During the visit, he interacted with officers and personnel of the Indian Army deployed in the area and appreciated their vigilance, dedicated service and coordination with the civil administration and local residents in maintaining peace and facilitating grassroots development. The DC, accompanied by the Assistant Commissioner Revenue (ACR) Kupwara, concerned Tehsildar, Naib Tehsildar, former PRI representatives and other field functionaries, interacted with local residents and presided over a public grievance redressal session. He listened to issues raised by residents and delegations and assured them that genuine developmental, healthcare and administrative concerns would be addressed on priority. To strengthen healthcare access in remote border areas ahead of snowfall, the DC directed the Health Department to organise specialised health camps across border villages during November,

Hakeem Muhammad Yaseen Demands SRO-43 Benefits for Daily Wagers, Calls Denial of Social Security Inhuman

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, Oct 26: Hakeem Muhammad Yaseen, President of the Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Democratic Front (PDF) and former minister, on Tuesday strongly demanded social security, job protection and SRO-43-related benefits for eligible daily wagers, ad hoc employees and casual labourers, terming their continued neglect by the government inhuman and unjust.

Yaseen said thousands of daily wagers have been serving government departments for years without regularisation, adequate job security or social protection, leaving their families in prolonged uncertainty. He urged the government to formulate a comprehensive policy to safeguard their



livelihoods and provide them with the security they deserve.

"Daily wagers are also human beings. They have families to feed, children to educate and responsibilities to fulfil. Keeping them without job security and adequate social protection despite years of service is inhuman and unjust. The government must ensure that eligible workers receive SRO-43-related benefits under applicable rules," Yaseen said.

Questioning the disparity in social security provisions, he said government employees had been covered under a health

insurance scheme involving 1 crore in coverage, while thousands of daily wagers continued to work without comparable financial security or adequate protection against unforeseen circumstances.

"These workers also deserve dignity, health protection and a secure future for their families. The government cannot continue to ignore their hardships while they struggle to make ends meet despite years of service," he said.

Yaseen demanded that the government examine the applicability of SRO-43 provisions to eligible workers and introduce appropriate social security measures for other categories of daily wagers. He stressed that regularisation, health insurance and employment security must be addressed through a clear and time-bound policy.

GR Choudhary Thanks Employees for Convention Participation, Says Chairman Asad Naumani's Remarks Taken Out of Context

■ Reyaz Badana

The Gujjar-Bakarwal Employees Association (GBEA) has expressed gratitude to all employees who participated in its convention held in Srinagar on Sunday, reaffirming its commitment to addressing the issues faced by the Gujjar-Bakarwal community in Jammu and Kashmir and safeguarding its legitimate rights. Addressing a press conference, GBEA Chief Spokesperson GR Choudhary alleged that certain elements were taking the remarks of the association's Chairman, Asad Naumani, out of context and attempting to mislead the public by circulating a short video clip of his statement. Clarifying the chairman's position, Choudhary said Naumani had sought to highlight that the Gujjar-Bakarwal community in Kashmir had not been able to achieve the level of progress it deserved due to unfavourable circumstances. He said the demand to retain inter-district restrictions had been raised in this context, with the objective of protecting the interests of the local population and ensuring that members of the community receive adequate opportunities to progress in education, employment and other fields. Choudhary maintained that circulating a brief clip without



considering the complete context of the statement could create a misleading impression. He urged people to understand the full context and intent of the chairman's remarks before drawing conclusions. Reiterating the association's commitment to the welfare of the community, Choudhary said the GBEA would continue to highlight issues affecting Gujjar-Bakarwals across Jammu and Kashmir, advocate for their legitimate rights and work towards ensuring better opportunities and inclusive development for the tribal population. He also thanked all employees who participated in the convention, describing their participation as an important contribution to the collective efforts aimed at addressing the community's concerns and strengthening the association's role in representing their interests.

Vigilance Awareness Week begins across Shopian to promote Integrity, Probity



SHOPIAN, OCTOBER 26: Vigilance Awareness Week 2026 commenced across Shopian today with a series of awareness activities aimed at promoting integrity, transparency, accountability and ethical conduct among officials, stakeholders and the general public.

The Vigilance Awareness Week is being observed from October 26 to November 1, 2026, under the theme "Probity for Prosperity." As part of the opening-day activities, an Integrity Pledge was administered at Town Hall Shopian.

The event was presided by Additional Deputy Commissioner Shopian, Dr. Zakir Hussain Faaz.

CEO MC and other officers were also present on the occasion. The participants reaffirmed their commitment to upholding honesty, integrity, transparency and accountability in the discharge of their responsibilities and contributing towards a corruption-free society.

Similar activities were also organised at various locations across Shopian, with officials, employees and members of the community participating in initiatives aimed at creating greater awareness about ethical governance, prevention of corruption and the importance of probity in public life.

The week-long observance will feature various awareness programmes, outreach activities, sensitisation sessions and other initiatives to engage employees, stakeholders, students and citizens on issues relating to integrity, transparency and accountability.

GMC Srinagar observes Vigilance Awareness Week

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, OCTOBER 26: Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar today observed Vigilance Awareness Week by organizing an Integrity Pledge ceremony on the college premises.

The pledge was administered by Masarat Hashim, Administrator Associated Hospitals Government Medical College Srinagar in the presence of officers and officials of the institution. Nausheen Mushtaq, Chief Accounts Officer was also present on the occasion.

The programme was organised to promote awareness about the importance of integrity transparency and accountability in public service. During the ceremony the officers and officials took the Integrity Pledge and reaffirmed their commitment to honesty ethical conduct and zero tolerance towards corruption in the discharge of their official duties.

Speaking on the occasion, the Administrator said that integrity and transparency are essential for efficient public service and for strengthening public confidence in government institutions. He called upon all employees to perform their duties with sincerity dedication and professionalism while maintaining the highest standards of ethics and accountability.

'Arc of the Verses' painting exhibition concludes in Srinagar Six-day exhibition showcases artist Arshad Sualeh's works, brings together Kashmir's art and literary community

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, Oct 26 (KNS): A six-day painting exhibition titled 'Arc of the Verses', featuring the works of artist Arshad Sualeh, concluded in Srinagar on Sunday, drawing art enthusiasts, writers and members of the cultural community.

Organised by Art Harbour Srinagar, the exhibition opened on October 20 and remained accessible to visitors until October 25, offering a glimpse into Sualeh's artistic journey and creative expression.

The exhibition was inaugurated by Zaidal MLA Tanveer Sadiq, with senior journalist Imdad Saqi attending as the guest of honour. The inaugural event brought together personalities from the fields of art, literature, journalism, medicine and public life.

The occasion also saw the presentation of the M. Sualeh Award 2026 in recognition of contributions to art and related fields.

Noted physician Dr Syed Amin Tabish presented the award to Tanveer Sadiq, while the MLA felicitated Imdad Saqi, Dr Manzoor Nazar, artist and curator Yousof



Naqashbandi and exhibiting artist Arshad Sualeh.

Speaking on the occasion, Imdad Saqi highlighted Sualeh's dedication to painting and his artistic journey, stressing the importance of providing platforms for artists to exhibit their work and engage with audiences.

Writer and broadcaster Abid Cowhar praised Sualeh's artistic abilities, describing painting as part of his family's creative legacy. He also appreciated his skills as an orator.

Classical singer Kifayat Faheem and J&K Bank Manager Saleem Kalloo were among those who attended the event.

Throughout the exhibition, visitors viewed the paintings and interacted with the artistic themes reflected in Sualeh's work.

The organisers said the exhibition was intended to encourage artistic expression and provide a space for Kashmir's creative community to connect with audiences while recognising contributions to art and literature. (KNS)

SSP Awantipora Stresses Transparency, Timely Information Sharing With Media

■ HT News Network

Awantipora, Oct 26th (CNS):

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Awantipora, Irshad H. Rather (JKPS), on Monday held an interaction with media representatives at the District Police Office (DPO). Awantipora, emphasising the imperative of stronger institutional coordination and transparent communication. The meeting deliberated on streamlining police-media engagement, ensuring the prompt dissemination of authentic information and reinforcing cooperation in the larger public interest.

SSP Rather assured journalists of timely access to information and highlighted the media's



indispensable role in promoting public awareness, safeguarding democratic principles and enhancing confidence between law enforcement agencies and the public. Describing the media as a vital pillar of democracy, he stressed that professional reporting, transparency

and sustained engagement were essential for dispelling communication gaps and strengthening public trust.

The media fraternity reciprocated by assuring Awantipora Police of continued cooperation in upholding peace, communal harmony and public order across the district.

HT EDITORIAL

Stranded Umrah Pilgrims:
A Test of Compassion and
Consular Responsibility

The plight of Kashmiri Umrah pilgrims stranded in Saudi Arabia is a matter of urgent humanitarian concern that demands swift and coordinated intervention by the Government of India. What should have been a spiritually fulfilling journey has become a source of anxiety for pilgrims and their families, with mounting expenses, medical difficulties and uncertainty over their return adding to their distress.

Member of Parliament Chowdry Mohammad Ramzan has taken up the matter with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Fahad Ahmed Khan Suri, Consul General of India in Jeddah, seeking immediate arrangements for the safe return of the stranded pilgrims. His intervention has brought the issue into focus, but the real test lies in how quickly the concerned authorities translate these representations into practical relief.

The situation warrants particular attention because elderly pilgrims and those requiring medical care are among the most vulnerable. Prolonged stays abroad can expose such individuals to physical discomfort, health complications and financial hardship. The additional costs of accommodation, food, medicines and alternative travel arrangements may also prove overwhelming for families with limited means.

In such circumstances, administrative procedures must not become an obstacle to timely assistance. The Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian Consulate in Jeddah should work in close coordination with airlines and other relevant agencies to identify the quickest feasible arrangements for bringing the pilgrims home. Special flights should be explored wherever necessary and practicable, while adequate accommodation, meals and medical assistance must be ensured until their departure.

The government must also consider financial assistance for those unable to meet the unexpected expenses. Humanitarian support should be based on need, with elderly pilgrims, patients and other vulnerable individuals receiving priority. Equally important is transparent communication with the affected pilgrims and their families so that they are not left struggling with uncertainty about their immediate needs or the timeline for their return.

This episode also highlights the broader importance of responsive consular services. Indian citizens travelling abroad must have access to effective assistance when unforeseen circumstances disrupt their plans. Diplomatic missions are not merely institutions for maintaining official relations; they also serve as a vital link between citizens in distress and the government that represents them. Their effectiveness is measured not only by their formal interventions but also by their ability to provide timely, practical and compassionate support. The circumstances surrounding the pilgrims' predicament should be assessed carefully, and the precise nature of the travel difficulties must be established. However, whatever the underlying cause, the immediate priority remains unchanged: ensuring the safety, dignity and well-being of those affected. Prolonged uncertainty can only deepen the hardship faced by pilgrims and intensify the anxiety of families waiting for their return.

Chowdry Mohammad Ramzan's initiative is a welcome step in drawing the attention of the authorities to this pressing issue. Yet, the matter must rise above political considerations. The affected pilgrims need concrete assistance, not merely assurances. The government and the Indian Consulate must demonstrate urgency, coordination and accountability in addressing their difficulties.

For the families in Kashmir, every passing day brings fresh concern about the well-being of their loved ones. Their anxiety deserves a response that is both prompt and reassuring. No citizen should feel abandoned in a foreign country when timely intervention can ease suffering and facilitate a safe return.

The safe repatriation of the stranded pilgrims must, therefore, be pursued as an immediate humanitarian responsibility.

Our Transport Means in Kashmir: Then & Now
Old Was Gold, Present is Sand



By Dr. Rafeeq Masoodi

There are two kinds of journeys. One that takes you from one place to another, and one that teaches you how to live between the two places. Kashmir's old transport was of the second kind. Today's transport is only of the first kind. That is why I say: old was gold, present is sand. Gold stays, sand slips through fingers.

I have lived long enough to have heard both the Troh Troh (Paksaa Paksaa baya) of the Tonga at Amira Kadal and the angry honk of a traffic jam at Jehangir Chowk, Sonwar bazar, Shalteng chowk at 5 pm. I have traveled both — in a Doonga from Ali Kadal to Safa Kadal and in an Indigo flight from Srinagar to Delhi. And I can say with a full heart: we have gained speed, but we have lost soul.

THEN — WHEN TRANSPORT WAS CULTURE
1. Jhelum Was Our Highway
Kashmir did not need a road, because God had given us a river. The Jhelum was our National Highway No. 1.

Before 1890, there was no motorable road into Kashmir. Everything moved on water. Paddy from Anantnag, timber from Baramulla, apples from Sopore, the bride from Downtown — all in Doongas and Bahats. Srinagar was the Venice of the East not for tourists, but for daily life.

The boatman (fishermen) was our transport department. A Shikara was not a joyride; it was a school bus, an ambulance, a ration carrier. A Doonga was a house, a shop, a home. When you traveled on Jhelum, you did not pollute it. You prayed to it. The boatman knew the river's mood. He knew where it was shallow, where



it was angry. There was no horn, no smoke, only the soft splash of the chappu. The journey was slow, but it was human. You talked to your fellow passenger. You shared noon-chai. You saw the chinar reflection in the water.

Today Jhelum is choked. We have turned our highway into a drain. Doongas are gone, Haanz is jobless, and we call Shikara only a tourist prop. We killed our most golden transport.
2. The Horse, The Pony and The Tonga....
Transport with a Heartbeat

On land, Kashmir moved on four legs. The horse for the rich, the pon (Gurr) for the common man, and the bullock for goods.

And then, the king of Srinagar city: the Tonga.

Who can forget the Tonga? Black body, golden bell, two strong horses, and a driver who knew every family in the mohalla. From 1950 to 1990, Tonga was Srinagar. Amira Kadal to Habba Kadal — eight annas. Batamalo to Rainawari — one rupee. The Tonga-wala did not ask for GPS. He knew every route every mohalla.

A Tonga never caused pollution. Its dung was manure for our fields. Its bell was music, not noise. It never killed a child in a rash accident. It stopped when an old woman raised her hand. It waited if you were late. It was transport with akhlaq, with manners.

Khachchar caravans were our trucks. They brought salt from Punjab, tea from Ladakh, shawls to Amritsar. Slow, patient, eco-friendly. The road was shared by man and animal. It was gold, because it respected life.

3. Pade'l safar — The Foot Journey
Kashmiris walked. Our entire Valley was connected by footpaths — Paer-brath. The pilgrim walked to Amarnath, the trader walked to Poonch over Pir Ki Gali, the student walked to school three miles daily. Walking kept us healthy, humble and close to nature. There was no back pain, no diabetes, no road rage. The journey itself was a prayer.

NOW — WHEN TRANSPORT IS SAND
Now see the present.

1. The Road is Full, But The Soul is Empty
Today, we have everything. We have NH44

four-lane highway, we have the 9.2 km Chenani-Nashri Tunnel, we have the 8.5 km Banihal-Qazigund Tunnel, we have E-buses, we have Olas, we have 20 lakh vehicles for a Valley of 80 lakh people.

But what have we got?

Srinagar is one of the most congested, polluted cities in India today. At Jehangir Chowk at 5 pm, you will find 200 cars, each with one person honking, abusing, burning petrol worth Rs. 106 per litre, and going nowhere for one hour. We have built flyovers, but traffic has doubled. We have widened roads by cutting down chinar trees the same chinar under which Nund Rishi rested.

Old transport taught us patience. Present transport teaches us anger. The Tonga-wala used to say "Baitho, aaram se challenge." The Sumo driver today says "Jaldi baitho, time nahi hai."

We used to travel with neighbours. Now we travel alone with our ego locked in a car.

2. The Airport That Killed the Conversation
Yes, I am proud that Srinagar International Airport has 50 flights a day.

But earlier, when you went to Jammu, you went by Banihal. You stopped at Qazigund for tea, at Ramban or pira for Rajmash, at Udhampur for a night. You met people, you saw seasons change. The journey was 12 hours, but it was a story.

Today, you reach Delhi in 80 minutes. You see nothing. You talk to no one. You look at your mobile. The journey has no story. We have reached fast, but we have arrived empty. That is sand.

3. The Train... A Dream That Came, But Came Late

The Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link, with its Chenab Bridge the world's highest railway bridge, 359 meters above the river, taller than Eiffel Tower is an engineering marvel. The Vande Bharat whistling into Srinagar in 2025 made old men weep. I wept too.

Chrysanthemum: An Autumn Flower



Sahil Manzoor

The Kashmir Valley is blessed with extraordinary natural beauty, and every season brings a new charm to its landscapes. From the colourful tulips of spring to the lush green meadows of summer, the golden leaves of autumn, and the snow-covered mountains of winter, Kashmir offers a beautiful display of nature throughout the year. Among the many flowers that enhance the beauty of the valley, the chrysanthemum holds a special place. Known for its attractive colours, different shapes, and seasonal charm, this flower adds freshness and elegance to gardens, parks, and household surroundings during autumn.

Although chrysanthemums are widely admired for their beauty, their importance extends beyond decoration. They encourage people to develop an interest in gardening, promote environmental awareness, and offer opportunities for employment through floriculture. By nurturing a love for flowers, we can make our surroundings more beautiful while contributing to environmental protection and economic development.

Chrysanthemum: A Symbol of Autumn Beauty
Chrysanthemums are among the most popular ornamental flowers cultivated during the autumn season. They are available in a wide range of colours, including white, yellow, pink, red, purple,



and orange. Their attractive petals and different flower forms make them suitable for pots, flower beds, parks, and decorative arrangements.

In Kashmir, the arrival of autumn provides an excellent opportunity to appreciate the beauty of these flowers. As the weather becomes cooler and the landscape begins to change, chrysanthemums bring colour and freshness to gardens. Their presence reminds us that nature continues to offer beauty even as the seasons change.

Every household should try to maintain a small garden with chrysanthemums and other seasonal flowers. Even a limited space can be transformed into a beautiful corner of nature with a few pots, suitable soil, and regular care. Such a practice can encourage families, particularly children, to develop an appreciation for plants and understand the importance of protecting the environment.

Home Gardens: A Natural Source of Freshness

A home garden is more than a collection of plants; it is a source of peace, freshness, and happiness. In today's busy lifestyle, people often spend much of their time indoors or in front of electronic devices. A garden provides an opportunity to reconnect with nature and enjoy a refreshing environment.

Plants absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen through photosynthesis, helping maintain the balance of gases in the atmosphere. Trees and shrubs also provide shade, support biodiversity, and improve the appearance of our surroundings. Flowers add colour and fragrance, making gardens pleasant places for relaxation.

Kashmir is naturally rich in vegetation, including herbs, shrubs, trees, and grasses. Its mountains, meadows, plateaus, and riverbanks reflect the extraordinary diversity of the natural world. By developing home gardens, we can bring a small part of this natural beauty into our daily lives.

The Indian Army has a rich legacy
of producing world-class sportspersons



By M S Nazki

Every strike brings me closer to the next home run. The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team. The miracle isn't that I finished. The miracle is that I had the courage to start

-The score never interested me, only the game.

-Never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game. Since it is all about sports I will enter this one

-Sports are essential for the Indian Army because they build physical combat readiness, foster teamwork and leadership, and maintain mental resilience under high-pressure conditions

-Key Reasons Sports Matter in the Indian Army

• Physical Fitness and Stamina: Military service requires high levels of endurance, agility, and strength. Regular games and physical regimes help soldiers handle harsh terrain, heavy gear, and long deployments.

• Teamwork and Camaraderie: Team sports like football, volleyball, basketball, and hockey build trust, coordination, and shared resilience



among personnel — traits that are vital during joint tactical operations.

• Leadership and Decision-Making: Sports test a soldier's ability to strategize, communicate, and stay calm under pressure, directly shaping effective officers and unit commanders.

• Mental Resilience and Stress Relief: Constant deployments in remote or border areas can be mentally taxing. Sports and adventure activities (such as mountaineering, skiing, and rafting) provide a healthy outlet to de-stress and boost morale.

• Operational Skills Integration: Adventure sports like rock climbing, white-water rafting, kayaking, and parachuting directly translate into tactical utility for specialized terrain navigation and combat roles.

• National Sporting Excellence: Through initiatives like the Mission Olympics Wing (established in 2001) and the Army Sports Institute (ASI) in Pune, the Army nurtures grass-roots athletic talent to represent and win medals for India at global stages like the

Asian Games and the Olympics.

-A woman who created history for services!

-Neeru Dhandha:

-Neeru Dhandha (born 25 May 2000) is an Indian sport shooter who competes in trap shooting. She won the women's trap individual and team gold medals at the 2025 Asian Shooting Championships.

-In 2026, she won the women's trap gold medal at the ISSF Shotgun World Cup in Lonato del Garda, becoming the first Indian woman to win a World Cup gold medal in the event. She also won two gold and a silver medal in 2026 Asian Games.

-Dhandha hails from Jind district, Haryana. Her family moved from Jind to Shipuri, Madhya Pradesh, when she later took up shooting.

-She developed an interest in shooting after watching her maternal cousin Lakshay Sheoran win the silver medal in the men's trap event at the 2018 Asian Games. She initially practiced by shooting at tin cans with a family-owned double-barrel gun and later trained

with Sheoran before joining the Madhya Pradesh State Shooting Academy after clearing its selection trials.

-Career

Dhandha competed at the 2022 ISSF World Championships in Osijek, Croatia, where she finished 29th in the women's trap event.

-In May 2025, Dhandha won the women's trap event at the Second Shotgun National Trials in New Delhi, defeating Aashima Ahlawat 40-39 in the final.

-She won the gold medal in the women's trap event at the 38th National Games. In August 2025, she won gold medals in the women's trap individual and team events at the 2025 Asian Shooting Championships in Shymkent, Kazakhstan.

-Dhandha and Vivaan Kapoor won the bronze medal in the mixed team trap event at the ISSF Shotgun World Cup in Almaty, Kazakhstan in 2026.

-Later in July 2026, she won the women's trap gold medal at the ISSF Shotgun World Cup in Lonato del Garda, Italy, becoming the first Indian woman to win a World Cup gold medal in the event.

-Military career
Dhandha joined the Corps of Military Police after the Indian Army opened rank-and-file recruitment to women. She later became a Naib Subedar and trains at the Army Marksmanship Unit in Mhow, Madhya Pradesh.

-The Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) felicitated the Indian Army sportspersons for their outstanding performances at the Asian Games 2026, recognising their achievements and contribution to India's growing stature in international sports.

Sahil Manzoor Bharti
sahilmanzoorbharti786@gmail.com



Govt amends motor vehicle rules to permit pure ethanol flex-fuel vehicles

■ HT News Network/UNI

NEW DELHI, Oct 26: The Road Transport Ministry on Monday notified changes to the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, allowing flex-fuel vehicles that can run on up to E100 (nearly pure ethanol).

E100 fuel allows vehicles to run on nearly pure ethanol.

A senior road transport ministry official said fuel beyond E20 (20 per cent ethanol-blended petrol) and up to E100 is intended only for vehicles designed and certified to use it and will not be applicable for other vehicles. Vehicles that use E20 or normal fuel can't use E85 or E100 fuel.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has changed certain vehicle classification



thresholds, fuel specifications, and technical references used in emission-related tables and testing provisions.

Additionally, the Government

has raised the vehicle weight limit to 3,500 kg from the previous threshold of 3,000 kg for light petrol and diesel vehicles affected by these changes. In June this year, Maruti

Suzuki India launched India's first flex-fuel passenger vehicle, introducing Wagon R Flex Fuel capable of running on ethanol-petrol blends from E20 to E100.

The Government has been promoting ethanol-blended petrol as part of its strategy to reduce dependence on imported crude oil, one of the biggest contributors to its current account deficit. The country has already rolled out E20 fuel, containing 20 per cent ethanol and 80 per cent petrol.

Flex-fuel vehicles are designed to run on higher ethanol blends such as E85 (85 per cent ethanol, 15 per cent petrol) and E100 (near 100 per cent ethanol), unlike conventional petrol vehicles currently approved for lower ethanol concentrations.

Major automakers, including Toyota Motor Corporation, Tata

Motors, and Hyundai Motor Company, are also developing flex-fuel vehicles for the Indian market as policymakers push to reduce the country's fossil fuel import bill.

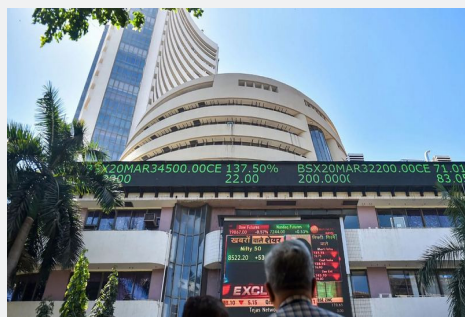
In the current scenario, when the West Asia conflict has left many countries, including India, vulnerable to the energy crisis, flex-fuel vehicles assume all the more importance.

Earlier, MoRTH proposed amendments to vehicle emission rules to widen the scope for higher ethanol blends and alternative fuels, paving the way for flex-fuel and pure biofuel vehicles across vehicle categories.

The draft changes to the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, were aimed at providing for wider use of fuels such as E85 and E100, as well as B100 biodiesel and hydrogen-CNG combinations.

Stock markets rebound after 4-day slump; Sensex jumps 483 points

■ HT News Network/UNI



MUMBAI, Oct 26: Snapping the four-day losing streak, benchmark stock index Sensex jumped nearly 483 points and Nifty closed above 22,750 on Monday on value buying and a rally in metal, telecommunication and healthcare shares.

Recovering from early losses, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 482.92 points, or 0.66 per cent, higher at 73,606.75. During the day, it hit a high of 73,606.75 and a low of 72,514.57, a range of 1,092.18 points.

The 50-share NSE Nifty rallied 153.20 points, or 0.68 per cent, to settle at 22,753.20.

From the 30 Sensex firms, Adani Ports, Eternal, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Trent, Tata Steel, Bharti Airtel, InterGlobe Aviation and ITC were the major winners.

Bajaj Finance, HDFC Bank, Maruti, HCL Tech and Power Grid were the laggards.

"Indian equities recovered from early losses, supported by value buying and strength in metal, power and healthcare. However, elevated crude prices, geopolitical uncertainty and caution ahead of the Fed, ECB (European Central Bank) and BoJ (Bank of Japan) policy decisions kept sentiment measured.

Gold futures rise to Rs 1.42 lakh/10 gm on firm spot demand

■ HT News Network



NEW DELHI, Oct 26: Gold prices on Monday rose by Rs 817 to Rs 1,42,841 per 10 grams in futures trade as speculators created fresh positions on firm spot demand.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange, the yellow metal contract for December delivery traded higher by Rs 817, or 0.58 per cent, at Rs 1,42,841 per 10 grams in a business turnover of 811 lots.

Fresh positions by market participants led to a rise in precious metal's prices, analysts said.

Gold futures rose 0.47 per cent to USD 4,014.81 per ounce in New York.

Tata Comm to invest USD 450 mn in high speed fibre network to connect AI data centres

■ HT News Network/UNI

NEW DELHI, Oct 26: Tata Communications on Monday said it is planning to invest about USD 450 million to set up a high-speed, long-haul fibre network in India to connect AI data centres.

The first phase of the program will focus on the Mumbai-Pune-Hyderabad-Chennai corridor, one of India's most important AI and hyperscale growth routes.

Subsequent phases will expand connectivity into emerging East Coast and Western India data centre ecosystems, including Vizag, Bhubaneswar, Jamnagar, GIFT City and other strategic locations, the company said.

"Tata Communications... announced strategic investments of close to USD 450 million to build an AI super highway in India - a high-



speed, low-latency network fabric connecting India's key AI data-centre corridors. The company will build around 10,000 kilometers of the new long-haul fibre across India, creating one of the country's largest AI-ready connectivity network," the company said in a statement.

Integrated with Tata Communications' global network backbone, the planned network aims to provide customers with a

seamless, end-to-end connectivity fabric, supporting the performance, resilience and scale required for next-generation AI workloads. Integrated with Tata Communications' global network backbone, the planned network aims to provide customers with a seamless, end-to-end connectivity fabric, supporting the performance, resilience and scale required for next-generation AI workloads.

ICICI Life Launches Guaranteed Indexed Pension Plan With Market-Linked Retirement Income

■ HT News Network

Mumbai, Oct 26, KNT: ICICI Life Insurance Limited has launched the ICICI Life Guaranteed Indexed Pension, a retirement income product combining lifelong guaranteed annuity payments with a variable income component linked to the NIFTY 50 Total Return Index. The product allows customers to allocate 60% to 100% of their purchase amount to the guaranteed annuity component, with the remaining portion linked to the index. The structure is designed to provide income stability while offering the potential for income growth linked to market performance. Vikas Gupta, Chief Product Officer at ICICI Life Insurance, said longer life expectancy, rising living costs and changing financial priorities had increased the need for retirement solutions that combine predictable income with the potential to address inflation. The product offers single-life and joint-life options, along with a return-of-purchase-price feature. According to the company, upon the death of the annuitant or the last surviving annuitant, the nominee will receive a death benefit equivalent to the total premiums paid, subject to the product's terms and conditions. It also includes an 'Annuity Advance' facility, allowing customers to receive up to 99% of



the next five years of guaranteed annuity payments in advance as a lump sum, providing liquidity for immediate financial needs. Customers can opt for monthly, quarterly, half-yearly or annual annuity payouts. The product also includes health management and wellness services to support customers during retirement.

The company said the plan is intended to give customers greater flexibility in balancing guaranteed retirement income with potential market-linked returns. [KNT]

Coriander futures decline on weak spot demand

■ HT News Network

NEW DELHI, Oct 26: Coriander prices on Monday fell by Rs 46 to Rs 17,046 per quintal in futures trade as participants trimmed positions amid weak demand in the spot market.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, coriander contracts for December delivery dropped Rs 46, or 0.27 per cent, to Rs 17,046 per quintal with an open interest of 18,905 lots. Market analysts said subdued spot demand and profit-taking by speculators weighed on coriander futures prices.



HDFC Bank Launches Flexi Electric Car Loan to Make EV Ownership More Affordable

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, Oct 26, KNT: HDFC Bank has launched a Flexi Electric Car Loan designed to make electric vehicle (EV) ownership more affordable by offering separate repayment structures for the vehicle body and its battery, allowing customers greater flexibility in managing their monthly instalments. The new loan product is available across the bank's more than 9,700 branches nationwide, according to the bank's announcement.

Under the facility, the vehicle body and battery can be financed through different loan tenures, with the battery component eligible for a longer repayment

period. The structure is intended to provide flexibility in monthly equated instalments (EMIs), addressing one of the major cost barriers to electric car ownership.



The bank said the product has been developed specifically for electric car purchases and will provide customers access to EV models offered by leading automobile manufacturers. The announcement also noted that the financing structure aligns with emerging battery subscription models aimed at making electric mobility more accessible. Commenting on the launch, Arvind Vohra, Group

Head - Retail Assets and Rural Banking at HDFC Bank, said India's electric mobility transition was gaining momentum with government incentives, technological improvements and supportive policies. He said the new loan product was intended to make EV ownership more cost-effective and convenient.

The bank cited projections indicating that electric vehicles could account for 15-20 per cent of passenger car sales in India by 2030, compared with a current share of around 7 per cent, as adoption expands alongside improvements in battery technology and a wider range of models from automobile manufacturers. [KNT]

India, Rotterdam port authorities engaged to digitalise cargo processes: Piyush Goyal

■ HT News Network/UNI

ROTTERDAM, Oct 25: Indian and Rotterdam port authorities are working to digitalise cargo processes in India to speed up cargo evacuation and reduce ship turnaround times, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Sunday.

He said India needs to significantly improve port capacity.

"The customs authorities in India and the authorities at the Port of Rotterdam are engaged to see how we can digitalise in India to bring in modern standards, faster evacuation of cargo, and speed up the turnaround time of ships,"



he told reporters here.

The minister visited the Port of Rotterdam and met Port of Rotterdam CEO Boudewijn Siemons.

"Despite doubling our port capacity over the past decade, India still needs more capacity. By 2047, we expect port capacity to double twice over the next two decades to support GDP growth and international trade,"

he said.

He added that the India-EU Free Trade Agreement will create huge potential for businesses on both sides. The non-institutional investor category was subscribed 13.83 times, while the retail portion received bids for 13.09 crore shares against 22.35 crore shares reserved, translating into a subscription of 2.63 times. The portions earmarked for employees and shareholders were subscribed 2.85 times and 7.47 times, respectively, reflecting demand across different investor categories.

The IPO is scheduled to close on October 23, with the company's shares expected to list on October 28.

FROM DUBAI'S SHAHRUKHZ TO PUNJAB'S SALMAN KHAN TOWERS HOW GB REALTY IS BRINGING A NEW ERA OF BRANDED LUXURY LIVING TO PUNJAB

■ MUSAIB RAFIQ

The real estate industry is evolving beyond bricks, mortar and conventional luxury. Today, a property's identity is increasingly shaped by branding, lifestyle and global recognition. The emergence of celebrity-associated residential developments in Dubai and Punjab highlights how this trend is opening new possibilities for premium real estate. In Dubai, Danube Group, led by founder Rizwan Sajan, has brought Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh

Khan's name to the property market through its Shahrulkh developments. Now, attention is turning towards Punjab, where GB Realty has announced a luxury residential project associated with Salman Khan. The development has generated interest in the region's ambitions to establish itself as a destination for premium housing. Beyond Bricks and Mortar Branded residences are becoming an increasingly visible segment of the global property market. These developments distinguish themselves through an

association with an established brand, personality or lifestyle identity. For buyers, the attraction can extend beyond the apartment itself to exclusivity, design, amenities and the experience associated with the brand. Celebrity-linked projects add another dimension by combining entertainment's reach with real estate's long-term value proposition. A recognised personality can attract attention from a wider audience, strengthen a project's identity and generate interest beyond its immediate



geographical market. However, a celebrity's name alone cannot guarantee construction quality, investment returns or future appreciation. Ultimately, the developer's credibility, location, execution and transparency

determine whether a project fulfils its promise. Punjab's Growing Luxury Ambitions For Punjab, the development represents an opportunity to strengthen its position in the premium housing segment. The

Chandigarh-Mohali region has attracted interest from affluent homebuyers, entrepreneurs, professionals and non-resident Indians seeking quality residential properties. Mohali's proximity to Chandigarh, expanding commercial activity and connectivity give it the potential to attract buyers who traditionally consider established luxury markets such as Gurugram and Dubai. A high-profile project associated with Salman Khan could bring additional national visibility to Punjab's property market. More

importantly, it could encourage developers to compete through distinctive design, improved amenities and a more sophisticated residential experience. The real opportunity lies in translating the excitement surrounding a launch into a development that delivers lasting value to residents. Dubai and Punjab: A Shared Trend. Different Opportunities. Dubai has established itself as an international destination for ambitious architecture and branded property developments. Punjab's market has different

characteristics, with buyers often placing particular importance on spacious homes, family-oriented amenities, privacy and long-term usability. Celebrity-associated projects could help connect these markets by appealing to Indian buyers and investors with interests across domestic and international property destinations. Nevertheless, every project must be evaluated independently, based on its location, approvals, developer commitments and commercial structure. For prospective buyers,





International hockey returns to Punjab as India set sights on sixth Asian Champions Trophy title

United News Of india

NEW DELHI, OCT 26 :International hockey returns to Punjab as red-hot India prepare to defend their title at the men's Asian Champions Trophy (ACT) 2026, which begins in Jalandhar on October 27.

India will be joined by Japan, China, Malaysia, South Korea and Bangladesh in the six-team continental tournament.

With the showpiece being held in Punjab, the Indian team will have the opportunity to play before supporters in a state that has contributed generations of players to Indian hockey.

The hosts enter the tournament after successfully defending their Asian Games gold medal in Japan. The Craig Fulton-coached team will look to carry that momentum into the continental tournament and add to their record haul of ACT titles.

The Indian team will be led by captain Harmanpreet Singh, who guided the side to consecutive Asian Games gold medals for the first time.

India have won the Asian Champions Trophy five times - in 2011, 2016, 2018 (joint winners with Pakistan), 2023 and 2024. Their most recent triumph came in Hulunbuir, China, where Jugraj Singh scored the decisive goal in a 1-0 win over the hosts in the final. India will now look to make it three



consecutive titles, having also won the competition in Chennai in 2023 - when the men's Asian Champions Trophy was held in India for the first time.

India suffered a setback before the start of the tournament when former captain and star playmaker Manpreet Singh was ruled out due to a calf injury. He has been replaced by fellow midfielder Vivek Sagar Prasad.

"Every team is here to compete and win the tournament. All the teams are strong, and we do not want to take any opponent lightly. Everyone has come here to give their best," said India captain Harmanpreet. "We have gained a lot of experience and matured as a team. We will approach every match with the same mindset and give every opponent the respect they deserve."

Malaysia have arrived in Punjab after finishing as runners-up to India at the Asian Games. The Malaysians will be among the teams looking to challenge the hosts, and their league-stage meeting with India is scheduled for November 1. South Korea, a regular contender in Asian hockey, will also look to make a strong impression after finishing fourth at the Asian Games.

Two-time runners-up Japan finished fifth at the Asian Games and will want to make a positive impression in this tournament. Bangladesh, meanwhile, will open their ACT campaign against India and hope to add to their learnings from their meeting at the Asian Games.

The 2026 event is the ninth edition of the Asian Champions Trophy. The six participating teams will compete

in a single round-robin format, with each team playing the other five sides once. The top four teams at the end of the league stage will qualify for the semi-finals.

All league-stage matches will be played at the Olympian Surjit Singh Hockey Stadium in Jalandhar from October 27 to November 2. The tournament will then move to the Olympian Balbir Singh Senior International Hockey Stadium in Mohali, which will host the semi-finals on November 4, followed by the bronze-medal and gold-medal matches on November 5. India will open their campaign against Bangladesh on October 27, before facing China on October 29, Japan on October 30, Malaysia on November 1 and South Korea on November 2.

Except for the opener against Bangladesh, all of India's league matches are scheduled to begin at 1900 IST. The match against Bangladesh will begin at 1920 IST, with a glittering opening ceremony scheduled before the game.

Traditional Punjab dance forms Bhangra and Gidha will be showcased during the opening ceremony that will also include performances by exponents of Gatka -- the Sikh martial art. One of the primary attractions will be a musical performance, including a laser show.

I tried a lot: Deepti Sharma on breaking her ODI century drought

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NEW DELHI, OCT 26 :Deepti Sharma's second ODI century came after a gap of nine years and five months, but the India all-rounder never lost faith in her ability to reach the milestone again.

The 29-year-old ended the long wait with an unbeaten 106 against Zimbabwe in Vadodara on Sunday, helping India secure a 121-run victory and clinch the three-match series.

Deepti's previous ODI hundred was the remarkable 188 she scored against Ireland in May 2017.

Since then, she had gone 3,450 days without reaching three figures in the format before finally achieving the feat at Kotambi Stadium in Baroda.

Reflecting on her innings, Deepti said she had continued to work towards another century and trusted that her efforts would eventually pay off.

"I tried a lot, but it took a lot of time to

reach. But I believed in my hard work that I would reach (another century) sooner or later,"



Deepti said after the match.

She added that her priority during the innings was to build a partnership and strengthen India's position rather than focus solely on reaching a hundred.

"I think more than 100 was in my mind. How can we build a partnership in that situation? That was the mindset."

Padikkal's 199 puts India A in command against New Zealand A

United News Of india

NEW DELHI, OCT 26 :Devdutt Padikkal fell one run short of a double-century but put India A firmly in control with a superb 199 on the third day of the first unofficial Test against New Zealand A in Lincoln on

Monday. His innings helped India A build a lead of 284 runs, putting them in a strong position to push for victory after a difficult start to the match. Padikkal resumed on 56 alongside Sai Sudharsan, who was unbeaten on 39, and the pair quickly took charge of the innings. Sudharsan reached his half-century while Padikkal continued to score at a brisk pace, capitalising on a New Zealand A attack that struggled to contain the scoring. Simon Keene, who took five wickets in the first innings, was unavailable after picking up an injury. Padikkal brought up his 12th first-class



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Simon Keene, who took five wickets in the first innings, was unavailable after picking up an injury.

Padikkal brought up his 12th first-class

after lunch.

Padikkal remained in control, finding support from Yash Rathod. The left-handers targeted Lennox before the second new ball became available, collecting boundaries and keeping the scoreboard moving. Rathod then took on Kristian Clarke

, striking two fours and a six on his way to a 54-ball half-century. Padikkal, meanwhile, moved past 150 as India A strengthened their position.

The day's biggest talking point came when Padikkal was given out caught behind down the leg side for 199. The batter appeared to question the decision, gesturing towards the umpire over the apparent gap between his bat and the ball.

IPL 2027 mini-auction in Goa on Dec 16

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MUMBAI, OCT 26 :The Indian Premier League (IPL) 2027 mini-auction will be held in Goa on December 16, with all 10 franchises required to submit their retained and released player lists by November 15.

The day-long auction will coincide with the second One-Day International between India and Sri Lanka in Bengaluru.

Following the retention deadline, the IPL will circulate the registered pool of players for franchises to shortlist. The final list of players, along with the order of sets, is expected to be released in the week leading up to the auction.

The auction will be the first to return to India after three consecutive editions were held overseas. The previous auctions took place in Dubai in 2023, Jeddah in 2024 and Abu Dhabi in 2025.

The event will be the last mini-auction in the IPL's current cycle, with a mega-auction scheduled ahead of the 2028 season. The mega-auction is expected to usher in the league's next media rights cycle. Several significant player transfers have already taken place since the conclusion of the 2026 season.

International hockey returns to Punjab as India set sights on sixth Asian Champions Trophy title

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CONTACT :
7889959854

ADDRESS :
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EMAIL :
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