

Srinagar
Tuesday
October 13 | 2026
1st Jamad ul Awal 1448 AH
Issue No: 245
Volume: 16
Pages: 12
Price :Rs: 2/-

16TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

HEADLINES

TODAY

Voice To The Voiceless



P:12
India Head Coach Gambhir calls for bowling solutions

High Court Sets Aside Order Directing FIR Against Police Personnel

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, OCT 12: The High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh has set aside a Magistrate's order directing registration of an FIR against police personnel in two complaints alleging an attempt to kill a man and his family by setting their premises ablaze, holding that the order failed to demonstrate the judicial application of mind required before directing a police investigation. Justice Moksha Khajuria Kazmi, while deciding two connected petitions filed by Rohit Sharma and others and Khalid Ashraf and others, observed that the Magistrate's order did not discuss the allegations, refer to any prima facie material or explain why a police investigation was necessary, particularly when the complaints were directed against police personnel. The judgment, pronounced, set aside the order passed by the Additional Special Mobile

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"Development Must Be Sustainable, Livelihoods Protected": Omar Abdullah

CM calls for practical mountain policy, climate-resilient infrastructure and planned tourism expansion to safeguard J&K's fragile Himalayan ecosystem



HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 12: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday called for a practical roadmap for sustainable mountain development, asserting that

Jammu and Kashmir must balance environmental conservation, economic growth and livelihoods amid mounting climate challenges. Inaugurating the 13th Sustainable Mountain Development Summit at SKUAST-Kashmir, Shalimar,

he advocated sustainable tourism, scientific road construction, disaster-resilient infrastructure and better waste management, while urging delegates to frame actionable recommendations for a dedicated mountain policy for Jammu and Kashmir.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today called for a practical and balanced approach to sustainable mountain development, stressing that environmental protection, economic growth and people's livelihoods must go hand in hand.

The Chief Minister was speaking after inaugurating the 13th Sustainable Mountain Development Summit, jointly organised by SKUAST-Kashmir and the Integrated Mountain Initiative, in collaboration with the Jammu and Kashmir Science, Technology and Innovation Council (JKSTIC). The summit, held under the J&K Agriculture Science Congress-2026, is themed around

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"Drug Menace Is a War for the Whole Society, Not Just Police": DGP

Police chief calls for collective responsibility and a whole-of-government approach to protect young people from the growing drug threat

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 12: Jammu and Kashmir Director General of Police Nalin Prabhat on Monday called for a united societal response to the drug menace, stressing that protecting children and young people from addiction was a shared responsibility. Speaking to Kashmir News Service, the police chief said the anti-drug campaign was being pursued through a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach under the leadership of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, while pointing to recent arrests in Srinagar as part of continuing enforcement efforts. He urged citizens to actively join the campaign and make the fight against drugs a collective priority.

Jammu and Kashmir Director General of Police Nalin Prabhat

on Monday said the campaign against drugs is a war being waged across the country with



a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach, and asserted that children are the nation's future, making it everyone's duty to say no to drugs. Speaking to news agency Kashmir News Service (KNS) the JK police chief said, as you have just seen, the children of our

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"J&K Harnesses Just 19.7% of Its Estimated Hydropower Potential"

18,000-MW resource base remains largely untapped as seasonal shortages, project delays and distribution losses undermine energy security



HT NEWS DESK / KNS

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 12: Jammu and Kashmir has harnessed only 3,540.15 MW of its estimated 18,000-MW hydropower potential, highlighting a significant gap between abundant natural resources and dependable electricity supply, according to a recent economic study. Citing the government's Economic Survey 2024-25, the assessment flags delays in major projects, seasonal declines in river flows and weaknesses in power distribution as persistent challenges, stressing that expanding generation capacity must go hand in hand with

improved billing, revenue recovery and distribution efficiency to ensure reliable electricity, particularly during winter.

Despite an estimated hydropower potential of 18,000 megawatts (MW), Jammu and Kashmir has harnessed only about one-fifth of its available resources, with a new economic study flagging delayed project execution, seasonal generation constraints and distribution losses as major obstacles to achieving energy security in the Union Territory. The study, published in the journal Social Science & Humanities

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"1987 Was the Biggest Electoral Theft": Sunil Sharma Targets Congress, Abdullahs

J&K LoP questions Omar Abdullah's stand on electoral transparency, backs UCC implementation in Kashmir and criticises opposition protests

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 12: Leader of Opposition in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Sunil Sharma on Monday accused the Congress and National Conference of benefiting from alleged rigging in the 1987 Assembly elections, reviving one of the most contentious episodes in the region's political history. Speaking to reporters at Dalgate, Sharma questioned Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's position on electoral transparency, criticised the INDIA bloc's protests over alleged electoral irregularities and asserted that the Uniform Civil Code would be implemented in Jammu and Kashmir along with the rest of the country. His remarks come amid renewed political debate over



electoral credibility and democratic accountability. Leader of Opposition in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Sunil Sharma on Monday accused the Congress of rigging the 1987 Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, alleging that the National Conference and the Abdullah family had benefited from the electoral malpractice.

Speaking to reporters at Dalgate in Srinagar, Sharma made the remarks while responding to the opposition INDIA bloc's campaign over alleged electoral irregularities and protests seeking greater transparency in the electoral process.

"If this allegation applies to anyone, then it applies

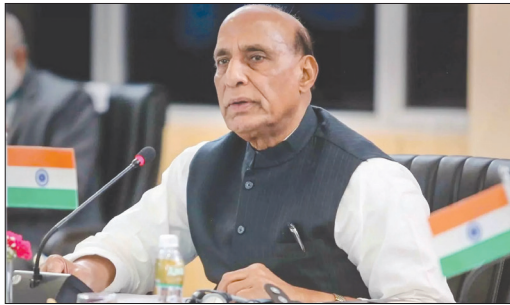
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"Set Higher Goals for Los Angeles 2028": Rajnath Singh to Services Athletes

Defence Forces sports persons clinch record 27 medals at Asian Games, contributing nearly one-third of India's overall medal tally

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 12: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday felicitated Services athletes for their record-breaking performance at the 2026 Asian Games in Japan, where they secured 27 medals, including six gold, 11 silver and 10 bronze. Praising their discipline, perseverance and commitment, Singh highlighted the contribution of the Defence Forces to India's fourth-place finish and urged athletes, coaches and support staff to prepare systematically for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. The Services contingent's standout achievements included Neeru Dhanda's historic women's trap gold, Gulveer Singh's three individual



medals and Sawan Barwal's national-record marathon performance.

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh, on October 12, 2026, felicitated the sports persons from the defence forces who bagged 27 medals - 06

Gold, 11 Silver and 10 Bronze - at the recently concluded Asian Games in Japan. Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution Shri Pralhad Joshi also graced the event organised

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Agriculture Dept official caught red-handed accepting Rs 40,000 bribe in Handwara

DR ABDUL QAYOOM
HT CORRESPONDENT

SRINAGAR, OCT 12 : A senior assistant posted at the Sub Division Agriculture Office in Handwara was caught red-handed by the Anti-

Corruption Bureau while allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 40,000 for releasing a pending subsidy bill, officials said on Monday.

The accused, Irshad Ahmad Peer, was arrested following a trap laid by the ACB's Baramulla unit, they

said.

Acting on a written complaint that a subsidy bill for a tractor — availed by the complainant's brother under the HADP scheme — was pending with

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Two Chinese Grenades Recovered in Anantnag Forest

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, OCT 11: Two Chinese grenades were recovered during a security operation in the Seer Hamdan forest area of Mattan in south Kashmir's Anantnag district and subsequently destroyed on the spot by a bomb disposal team, officials said.

Officials told KNT that police and Army personnel launched a Cordon and Search Operation (CASO) in the Seer Hamdan, also known as Sandoz, forest area falling under the jurisdiction of Mattan.

During the search, the security personnel recovered two Chinese grenades from the area. A Bomb Disposal Squad from District

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NIA Attaches Srinagar House Used to Shelter Pakistani LeT Terrorists

Hazratbal property linked to alleged cross-border terror conspiracy as investigation widens into local facilitators and logistical support network

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

JAMMU, OCTOBER 12: The National Investigation Agency on Monday attached a residential property in Danihama village of Srinagar's Hazratbal area, alleging



that it had been used to shelter Pakistani terrorists associated with the proscribed Lashkar-e-Taiba and conceal material linked to a cross-border terror conspiracy. The property, belonging to accused Ghulam Mohammad Mir alias Mama Gas, was attached under Section 25 of the Unlawful

Activities (Prevention) Act following the requisite approval. The agency said its investigation had uncovered alleged links between local overground workers and Pakistan-based handlers, adding that efforts were continuing to identify other facilitators and members of the network.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Monday attached a residential property in Srinagar used to harbour Pakistani terrorists belonging to the proscribed Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) outfit and conceal incriminating material linked to a cross-border terror conspiracy, officials said.

The property, located at Khasra No. 315 in Danihama village of Hazratbal, belongs to accused Ghulam Mohammad Mir, alias Mama Gas, and

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India-UK Deepen Science Ties, Launch Genomics Centre of Excellence

Jitendra Singh and UK Minister Jonathan Reynolds push industry-led research, emerging technologies and faster commercialisation of scientific breakthroughs

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 12: India and the United Kingdom on Monday reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral science and innovation cooperation, with Union Minister of State for Science and



Technology Dr Jitendra Singh and UK minister Jonathan Reynolds co-chairing the eighth India-UK Science and Innovation Council meeting in New Delhi. The two leaders also inaugurated the BRIC-CDFD-ONT

India Genomics Centre of Excellence, underscoring the growing focus on collaborative research and advanced biotechnology. Discussions covered artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, semiconductors, critical minerals, healthcare, climate science and net-zero technologies, with both sides emphasising industry partnerships and the translation of research into practical applications and commercial products.

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences, and Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh, participated in the 8th India-UK Science and Innovation Council (SIC) Meeting with the

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Three-Hour Rainfall Breaks 71-year October Record in Jammu

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

JAMMU, OCT 12: Record-breaking rainfall battered Jammu yesterday, leaving one person dead and a woman missing in separate flood-related incidents, while flash floods, waterlogging and landslides damaged vehicles, inundated homes and shops and disrupted traffic across several parts of the city.

Jammu recorded 185.6 mm of rainfall in three hours, surpassing the previous October record of 160 mm set in 1955, according to officials quoted in media reports. The downpour began around 8:30 am and brought the city to a standstill in several localities, with roads submerged and rainwater entering residential and commercial premises.

In Raipur Domana, a 27-year-old woman went missing after she was reportedly swept away by floodwaters while attempting to save her husband, who had gone to

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High Court Sets

Magistrate, Reasi, on May 5, 2022, directing the Station House Officer of Police Station Chasana to register an FIR under Section 156(3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

The complainant had filed two private complaints alleging that the police personnel attempted to kill him and his family members by trying to set their premises ablaze. The police personnel challenged the Magistrate's direction, contending, among other grounds, that the order had been passed without proper application of judicial mind.

The petitioners had earlier approached the Principal Sessions Judge, Reasi, whose order dated July 4, 2022, rejected their revision petition as not maintainable on the ground that the Magistrate's direction was interlocutory.

The High Court held that although a revision against an order directing investigation under Section 156(3) CrPC was barred, the petitioners could invoke the High Court's inherent jurisdiction under Section 482 CrPC where an order was alleged to have been passed without jurisdiction or in disregard of mandatory legal requirements.

Referring to Supreme Court judgments governing the exercise of powers under Section 156(3) CrPC, the High Court reiterated that directing an investigation is a judicial act requiring the Magistrate to consider whether the complaint discloses a cognizable offence and whether a police investigation is warranted. The reasons reflecting such consideration must be apparent from the order.

The Court observed that the impugned order merely recorded that the complainant had approached the concerned police station and the Senior Superintendent of Police before moving the court. It did not demonstrate the required consideration of the allegations or explain why an investigation was necessary.

The judge further observed that complaints against police personnel concerning acts allegedly committed in the course of their official duties called for particular care and caution. An examination of the matter by the trial court, the judgment noted, could have provided an opportunity to consider the competing version that the police personnel had visited the premises to execute an arrest.

However, the High Court made it clear that its decision was confined to the legality of the Magistrate's order and did not determine the truth or otherwise of the allegations made by either side.

The Court also declined to treat the complainant's alleged criminal antecedents as an independent ground for quashing the complaints, observing that a person's criminal record does not, by itself, bar the filing of a complaint or establish that no cognizable offence has been disclosed.

While disposing of the petitions, the High Court directed that the Magistrate's order dated May 5, 2022, be set aside and that any investigation or proceedings consequent upon it should not proceed on the strength of that order.

The complaints have been restored to the Magistrate's file for reconsideration in accordance with law, with a direction to pass fresh orders, preferably within 15 days of receipt of the High Court's order. The complainant was directed to appear before the Magistrate, either personally or through counsel, on October 23, 2026.

The judgment, therefore, leaves the complaints open for fresh consideration and does not amount to a finding on the merits of the allegations against the police personnel. [KNT]

“Development Must

sustainable Himalayan landscapes for inclusive Viksit Bharat and the formulation of a Sustainable Mountain Development Policy for Jammu and Kashmir.

Emphasising the urgent need to protect the region's fragile mountain ecology, the Chief Minister said climate change, erratic snowfall, water scarcity, extreme rainfall and landslides were increasingly affecting Jammu and Kashmir, making sustainable development essential for its long-term survival.

“We do not take care of our mountains, our environment as much as we should. We cannot stop global warming on our own, nor can we reverse it. The whole world will have to come together to address this challenge. But we can certainly take better care of our own environment,” he said.

Referring to changing weather patterns, the Chief Minister observed that snowfall had become increasingly erratic, with reduced snowfall and delayed winter precipitation contributing to water shortages during the spring months. He said prolonged dry spells were often followed by intense rainfall, cloudbursts and flooding, creating fresh challenges for communities and infrastructure.

Describing these developments as the new reality, Omar Abdullah said the challenge was to determine how Jammu and Kashmir could continue to develop while adapting to growing environmental risks.

“We have to ask ourselves: how do we sustain our livelihoods and how do we develop? Development is essential, but it must be sustainable,” he said.

The Chief Minister cautioned against viewing tourism as the sole cause of environmental degradation, while acknowledging the pressure that growing tourist numbers placed on popular destinations. He stressed that environmental responsibility had to be shared by the government, residents, businesses and visitors alike.

“Tourism does put pressure on our environment, but to assume that the situation is bad only because of tourism or tourists would also be wrong. We will have to take some responsibility,” he said, urging people to avoid littering, reduce the use

of single-use plastic and conserve water and energy.

He called for a change in everyday practices, observing that people often discarded plastic wrappers and bottles in public places while expecting the government to clean up after them. While acknowledging the government's primary responsibility for environmental management, he underlined that individual actions were equally important in protecting the natural surroundings.

On tourism development, the Chief Minister said the answer was not to abruptly restrict visitors to established destinations such as Gulmarg, Pahalgam and Sonamarg, where livelihoods depended substantially on tourism. Instead, he advocated developing new destinations through a planned and sustainable approach, with adequate arrangements for sewage treatment, wastewater management and solid waste disposal in place from the outset.

“Some of our destinations do not have enough carrying capacity. We have to widen tourism, not to stop people from going to Gulmarg, Pahalgam or Sonamarg, but to develop new and sustainable destinations where the systems for waste disposal and sewage disposal are already ready,” he said.

Highlighting the need for environmentally sound infrastructure, Omar Abdullah said unscientific hill cutting during road construction had contributed to landslides and repeated damage to roads, particularly in far-flung areas of Jammu and Kashmir.

He said road construction agencies often resorted to indiscriminate cutting of mountain slopes without adequate consideration for slope stabilisation and appropriate cutting angles. While such practices might reduce initial construction costs, the resulting damage during rainfall frequently necessitated reconstruction, diverting resources that could otherwise be used to build new roads.

The Chief Minister said he had asked the Forest and Environment Department and the Public Works Department to work together to ensure that development projects incorporated sustainable engineering practices and reduced the risk of landslides.

“When you cut a mountain, cut it in a way in which the possibility of landslides may not be eradicated, but at least be reduced,” he said, emphasising that long-term sustainability must take precedence over short-term savings.

On urban development and housing, the Chief Minister called for greater emphasis on energy-efficient and earthquake-resilient buildings, along with more efficient land use. With land becoming increasingly scarce in the Valley, he said, planners needed to explore vertical development wherever appropriate rather than continued horizontal expansion, while ensuring compliance with seismic safety requirements.

Recalling the devastation caused by past natural disasters, including the 2014 floods and the earthquake that affected the region in 2005, he stressed the need to incorporate disaster resilience into future construction and examine cost-effective ways to retrofit existing buildings.

The Chief Minister also highlighted the visible retreat of glaciers in the region, recalling how the glacier near Sonamarg once extended close to the meadows. Today, he said, younger generations have to trek considerably farther to reach the receded glacier.

He said the changes underscored the responsibility of the present generation to protect the region's natural heritage and preserve it for those who would inherit it.

“That is what we owe the future generations. Protect what we have, retrieve what we can, and ensure that we do not do any further damage, while also ensuring that livelihoods are protected,” he said.

Underlining the importance of agriculture and horticulture to Jammu and Kashmir's economy, Omar Abdullah said the region's economic foundations were often misunderstood by those who viewed tourism as its principal source of income. Agriculture and horticulture, he pointed out, contributed substantially more to the economy than tourism.

He said protecting the environment and promoting sustainable mountain development were therefore not merely conservation objectives but fundamental to the region's economic security, livelihoods and long-term prosperity.

The Chief Minister expressed hope that the three-day summit would move beyond academic discussions and produce concrete recommendations that could be translated into effective policies and practical action.

He said Jammu and Kashmir aspired to become the first Himalayan territory to have its own mountain policy and that his government was keen to take the initiative forward. However, he stressed that the policy must emerge from wider consultation and reflect the realities of the region rather than being based on idealistic assumptions.

“Those recommendations need to be grounded in reality. We need to balance the need for sustainability with the need for existence and livelihoods,” he said.

The Chief Minister expressed gratitude to delegates and participants who had travelled from different parts of the country to attend the summit and said he would look forward to its recommendations.

“I cannot emphasise this point strongly enough. Sustainable development through actionable inputs and practical steps is what I hope this summit will deliver,” he said, wishing the participants success in their deliberations.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister also released several publications brought out for the summit.

Minister for Agriculture Production Javid Ahmed Dar, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, Commissioner Secretary, Housing and Urban Development Department Mandeep Kaur, Vice-Chancellor SKUAST-Kashmir Prof Nazir Ahmed Ganai, President, Integrated Mountain Initiative, STS Lepcha, former president IMIPD Rai, Councillor, Integrated Mountain Initiative, Rajan Kotru, delegates from 11 mountain states, representatives of NGOs, faculty members, scholars, students and other concerned persons were present.

“Drug Menace

school are the future of our country. For this future, this war has been waged all over India by the Marcos. Here too, under the leadership of our esteemed L.G. Sinha this campaign has been going on very fast.

Referring to recent enforcement action in the summer capital, he said, Recently, in Srinagar, there has been a major upheaval. Many have been arrested. So, this is a war that is being waged by the whole of society, whole of government approach.

And as I said, these children are our future. It is our duty to participate in this war and say no to drugs, he added. (KNS)

“Set Higher

to celebrate the Services' best-ever performance at the prestigious international sporting event. A total of 92 athletes from the three Services competed in 19 disciplines, and made a significant contribution to India's fourth-place finish. The overall Indian contingent won 85 medals - 21 Gold, 27 Silver and 37 Bronze.

Interacting with the sportspersons at an event in New Delhi, Raksha Mantri attributed their success to discipline, hard work, team spirit and sporting excellence. He said the journey to winning a medal involves immense dedication, early-morning training, gym sessions, injuries, recovery and consistent efforts while balancing unit duties with sports preparations and staying away from families.

Addressing the athletes who participated but could not win, Shri Rajnath Singh stressed that true defeat lies in giving up. He stated that every participant contributed to bringing honour to the country and the Defence Forces in one way or the other. Expressing confidence in the potential of Services athletes, he said that their achievements would continue to inspire future generations.

Raksha Mantri highlighted the pivotal role played by the Mission Olympic Wing in identifying talented athletes, nurturing their potential, providing scientific training and world-class sports facilities, and preparing them for international competitions. He also acknowledged the contribution of coaches, support staff, physiotherapists, nutritionists and the families of athletes, emphasising that a champion is never made in isolation.

Shri Rajnath Singh reiterated Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi-led Government's commitment to strengthening India's sporting ecosystem, with sustained focus on infrastructure, modern training facilities and better opportunities for athletes. He underlined that the objective is not merely to increase participation but establish India as a leading power in the global sporting arena.

On the significant contribution of the Services to Indian sports, Raksha Mantri asserted that the Defence Forces have consistently produced athletes distinguished not only by their physical prowess but also by discipline, patience, leadership and an unwavering commitment to their goals in challenging circumstances.

Shri Rajnath Singh called for a focused and systematic approach towards the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, urging trainers and support staff to continue guiding athletes with dedication and professionalism. He urged them to set higher goals and deliver an even better performance at the Los Angeles Olympics 2028.

Chief of the Army Staff General Dhiraj Seth and other senior officials were present on the occasion.

Services Athletes at 2026 Asian Games The Services athletes contributed 32 per cent of India's total medal tally and 28.57 per cent of its Gold medals. The standout performers include Naib Subedar Neeru Dhanda who won two Gold and 01 Silver. She became the first Indian woman to win Gold in the individual Women's Trap event at the Games. Naib Subedar Gulveer Singh secured 02 Silver and 01 Bronze, becoming the first Indian male track-and-field athlete to win three individual medals at a single edition of the Asian Games. Havildar Sawan Barwal won a Silver in the Men's Marathon with a National Record timing of 2:11:37, ending India's 44-year wait for an Asian Games marathon medal. Naib Subedar Sarvesh Kushare also secured a historic medal in Men's High Jump after a gap of 56 years for India.

“1987 Was

to the rigging of 1987. The biggest allegation in the country is the rigging of 1987. It is the theft of 1987,” Sharma said.

He alleged that the Congress had stolen votes in Jammu and Kashmir and questioned

the National Conference leadership over its position on electoral transparency.

“Congress has stolen votes here. 1987 is an example in the whole world,” he said, adding that the Abdullah family needed to answer questions about the allegations surrounding the elections.

Sharma also targeted Chief Minister Omar Abdullah over his participation in the opposition's campaign, questioning his position on the conduct of elections after his earlier remarks praising the electoral process in Jammu and Kashmir.

Referring to Omar Abdullah's previous comments on the Assembly elections, Sharma said the Chief Minister had described the polls as exceptionally good but was now questioning electoral transparency.

“Two years ago, he said that such a beautiful election had happened for the first time in history. This came out of Omar Abdullah Sahib's mouth,” Sharma said.

He also referred to Omar Abdullah's reported remarks on the use of electronic voting machines and asked why the Chief Minister was now raising questions about the electoral process.

“If it went wrong, then your election was also bad. You resign on moral grounds,” Sharma said.

Criticising the INDIA bloc's street protests, the BJP leader said political parties should seek public support through democratic processes rather than demonstrations that disrupt daily life.

“If you want to show your strength, gather two lakh or five lakh people. Gather in a stadium or at Ramlila Maidan if you do not have a place at Jantar Mantar. Raise your slogans, and when people accept you, they will bring you to power,” he said.

Sharma said protests should not obstruct essential services or inconvenience the public, including students, patients and businesses.

“People have to go to school, people have to go to hospitals, people have to open businesses. If you close all the roads, no one will allow you anywhere,” he said.

“J&K Harnesses

International, copy of which lies with Kashmir News Service (KNS), has highlighted the contradiction between Jammu and Kashmir's substantial hydropower resources and its continued dependence on electricity purchases to meet demand, particularly during winter.

According to the Jammu and Kashmir government's Economic Survey 2024-25, of the estimated 18,000 MW hydropower potential, 14,867 MW has been identified for development, while only 3,540.15 MW has been harnessed.

This represents approximately 19.7 per cent of the total estimated potential and 23.81 per cent of the identified potential, leaving a substantial portion of the Union Territory's hydropower resources undeveloped.

The figures show that 11,283 MW of the identified potential lies in the Chenab basin, followed by 3,084 MW in the Jhelum basin and 500 MW in the Ravi basin.

Of the capacity harnessed, 2,250 MW is in the central sector, 1,197.4 MW in the Union Territory sector and approximately 92.75 MW under independent power producers, according to the official data.

The research study, titled “Jammu & Kashmir Economic & Development Outlook: Growth Momentum, Fiscal Consolidation, and Seasonal Tourism Performance (June–August 2026)”, identifies slow development of hydropower capacity as a significant constraint on the region's economic potential.

It points out that a large proportion of the existing hydropower generation system is based on run-of-river projects, whose electricity output is sensitive to seasonal variations in water discharge. Consequently, generation can decline during winter, when electricity demand increases because of heating requirements, leaving Jammu and Kashmir dependent on power purchases despite its considerable hydropower resources.

The study argues that installed generation capacity cannot be treated as equivalent to dependable year-round electricity supply, particularly in a Himalayan region where river flows vary considerably across seasons.

The findings also draw attention to delays in the development of major hydropower projects, including Pakal Dul, Kiru and Ratle, which together have a planned capacity of approximately 2,474 MW.

The report notes that these projects could substantially expand installed capacity once commissioned, but cautions that planned capacity cannot be counted as available generation before projects become operational.

It also identifies construction delays, cost escalation and project ownership arrangements as important factors in determining how much economic benefit Jammu and Kashmir ultimately receives from hydropower development.

According to the study, the benefits accruing to the Union Territory from centrally owned or jointly developed projects depend not merely on installed capacity but also on arrangements concerning free power, royalties and revenue sharing.

The report further identifies financial weaknesses in electricity distribution as a major challenge, pointing to losses and inadequate revenue recovery that can undermine the benefits of additional generation capacity.

Two Chinese

Police Lines (DPL) Anantnag was

subsequently called in to deal with the explosive material.

The bomb disposal team destroyed both grenades on the spot as a precautionary measure, officials said.

The CASO was called off following the recovery and destruction of the grenades. No loss of life or injuries were reported during the operation. [KNT]

NIA Attaches

has been attached in connection with case RC-02/2026/NIA/JMU, the agency said in a statement.

The attachment was carried out under Section 25 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, after obtaining the requisite prior approval of the NIA Director General.

According to the agency, its investigation established a direct link between the property and the terrorist conspiracy, with the premises reportedly used to shelter Pakistani terrorists and conceal incriminating material connected to the terror network.

The case was initially registered as FIR No. 24/2026 on March 31 at Zakoora Police Station in Srinagar before being taken over and re-registered by the NIA.

The agency said its investigation had uncovered a network of local underground workers (OGWs) operating in coordination with Pakistan-based Left handlers to facilitate the infiltration, movement, shelter and logistical support of Pakistani terrorists.

The network was allegedly involved in facilitating terrorist activities targeting government establishments, security forces and civilians, it said.

During a search conducted at Mir's residential premises in Danihama on April 6, investigators detected two suspected Pakistani terrorists, identified as Abu Huraifa and Khubaib, who were allegedly associated with Left.

An explosive-like substance, digital devices and other incriminating material were also recovered and seized from the premises during the operation, the agency said.

The NIA said that Mir had knowingly provided his residential property as a safe haven for the terrorists and permitted its use for facilitating their activities.

India–UK

Rt Hon Jonathan Reynolds, UK Secretary of State for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade, at New Delhi.

The meeting reviewed progress in bilateral science and innovation cooperation and explored opportunities to strengthen research partnerships, emerging technology collaboration and the translation of scientific research into practical applications.

The Indian delegation included Prof. Ajay Sood, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India; Prof. Umesh Waghmare, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology (DST); Dr. Rajesh Gokhale, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology (DBT); Dr. Srinivasa Kumar Tummala, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences; Dr. Shivkumar Kalyanaraman, Chief Executive Officer, Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF); and Dr. Rajesh Pathak, Secretary, Technology Development Board (TDB), along with other senior officials from the concerned departments and institutions.

Three-Hour

move their parked car. The man managed to save himself, while police, local residents and State Disaster Response Force teams joined the search for the woman.

In a separate incident, the body of a man suspected to have drowned in a flooded stream was recovered from the Domana area on Sunday evening. His identity and the exact circumstances of his death were yet to be established in the reports available.

The heavy rain also triggered landslides along the Panjirthi-Sidrah and Sidrah-Nagrota stretches, affecting traffic on key routes. Personnel and machinery were deployed to clear debris and restore movement. Waterlogging was reported in several localities, including Panjirthi, Nagrota, Roop Nagar, Janipur, Dogra Chowk, Durga Nagar, Shakti Nagar and Raipur Domana.

The intensity of the rainfall also raised concerns over the city's drainage and flood-management arrangements, as several neighbourhoods experienced inundation. The latest spell has once again exposed the disruption that extreme rainfall can cause to urban transport, homes and essential movement. [KNT]

Agriculture Dept

Peer, who had demanded Rs 40,000 for its release, the ACB conducted a discreet verification in which the bribery allegations were found to be true, officials said.

A case (FIR No. 06/2026) under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (as amended in 2018) was registered at ACB Police Station Baramulla and investigation was set in motion.

“A trap-laying team was constituted, associated with independent witnesses as per the prevailing norms, and a successful trap was laid against the accused public servant, who was caught red-handed while demanding and accepting the bribe money of Rs 40,000, which was recovered from his conscious possession, confirmed and authenticated by other surrounding evidences,” the ACB said in a statement.



Sakeena Itoo chairs 31st JKWDC Board meeting; calls for efficiency, transparency to empower women entrepreneurs

HT News Network

SRINAGAR: Minister for Social Welfare, Education, Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, chaired the 31st meeting of Board of Directors of the Jammu & Kashmir Women's Development Corporation (JKWDC) Limited at SKICC, today.

The meeting was attended by Secretary, Social Welfare Dr. Doifode Sagar Dattatray; Managing Director JKWDC, Purnima Mittal representatives of Planning & Finance Departments, J&K and Apex Corporations from New Delhi.

During the meeting, the Board deliberated upon various important administrative, financial and policy matters concerning the functioning of the Corporation and took several key decisions.

Speaking during the meeting, the Minister emphasised the need



for the Corporation to function with greater efficiency, transparency and responsiveness. She advocated a focused approach towards ensuring that the intended benefits of welfare and development schemes reach the eligible Women beneficiaries in a timely manner.

Sakeena Itoo called for

strengthening the institutional mechanisms, streamlining procedures and improving coordination among the concerned stakeholders to facilitate easier access to financial assistance, self-employment opportunities and other support measures for the Women entrepreneurs.

"Welfare interventions should

translate into tangible improvements in the socio-economic conditions of beneficiaries, particularly through initiatives that encourage entrepreneurship, sustainable livelihoods and economic self-reliance", maintained the Minister.

The Minister directed the Corporation to maintain close engagement with the beneficiaries and community representatives, identify emerging requirements and take necessary measures to address genuine concerns within the prescribed framework.

Sakeena Itoo appreciated the efforts of the Corporation and stressed upon all concerned officers to ensure transparency, accountability,

efficiency and timely implementation of the decisions taken by the Board in the larger public interest.

During the meeting, the Board directed the Corporation to intensify and expedite the recovery

of outstanding loans, particularly long-pending dues and adopt all permissible measures for effective follow-up and timely recovery. She enquired about the establishment of online system for recovery and disbursement of various schemes.

The Board further approved the Budget Estimates for the financial year 2026-27, covering the revenue and capital requirements of the Corporation and providing for effective implementation of its developmental and welfare-oriented programmes. Also, financial statements for the year 2024-25 were approved by the Board which shall be sent for Audit.

The Board emphasized the need for greater financial discipline, improved recovery of outstanding loans, timely implementation of approved programmes and effective delivery of benefits to eligible Women entrepreneurs.

SWD Kulgam observes International Girl Child Day

DC stresses education, safety and equal opportunities for girls



HT News Network

KULGAM: Social Welfare Department (SWD), Kulgam, today organised a programme at the Conference Hall, Kulgam, to mark the International Day of the Girl Child, highlighting the importance of girls' education, safety, welfare and empowerment.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, attended the programme as the chief guest. District Social Welfare Officer Kulgam, Raja Rameez, officers from line departments, students, lactating mothers, ASHA workers and other participants were present on the occasion. Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Commissioner stressed the need to ensure equal

opportunities for girls in education and other spheres of life. He called for collective efforts by families, educational institutions and society to eliminate gender-based discrimination and ensure the safety, dignity and well-being of every girl child.

He also highlighted various government initiatives aimed at protecting the rights of girls and promoting women's empowerment, urging people to create an environment where girls can pursue their aspirations and contribute equally to society. District Social Welfare Officer Kulgam, highlighted the department's role in implementing welfare schemes and awareness programmes for women and children.

DLC reviews implementation of Forest Rights Act 2006 in Anantnag

DC directs expeditious Processing of Genuine Cases

HT News Network

ANANTNAG: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Anantnag, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat, today chaired a meeting of the District Level Committee (DLC) under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, at the VC Hall of the DC Office Complex,



Anantnag, to review the progress and status of implementation of the Act in the district.

During the meeting, the committee undertook a detailed examination of six cases submitted for consideration under the Act. While scrutinising the

cases, certain deficiencies were identified, and the concerned officers were directed to address the shortcomings and ensure that the requisite documents and formalities are completed at the earliest.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned officers and members of the committee to expedite the process of scrutinising and processing cases of genuine beneficiaries so that eligible cases are placed before the committee for consideration and approval without unnecessary delay.

Emphasising the need for transparency, due diligence and fairness in the implementation of the Act, the DC stressed that all cases must be thoroughly examined at the ground level

before being forwarded to the District Level Committee. He directed the field functionaries and committee members to ensure that no incomplete or ineligible case is placed before the committee and, at the same time, no eligible and genuine beneficiary is left out.

Mamta Yadav assumes charge as Director Information

Calls for transparent, timely, people-centric communication; stresses on upgrading communication strategies, optimal use of digital platforms

HT News Network



SRINAGAR: Mamta Yadav, IAS today assumed the charge as Director Information, Jammu and Kashmir, and held an introductory interaction with officers and officials of the Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR).

During the interaction, the Director underscored the pivotal role of the Information Department in ensuring effective communication between the Government and the public, emphasizing the need for transparency, accuracy,

timeliness and wider outreach in the dissemination of information relating to

government policies, developmental initiatives and public welfare programmes.

Emphasising the importance of adapting to the evolving media landscape, the Director called for greater utilization of digital platforms and modern communication tools to strengthen the Department's outreach and enhance public engagement.

Joint Director Information (Headquarters), Dr. Zahoor Ahmad Raina; Deputy Director Information (PR&AV), Javid Ahmad Rather; besides other senior officers and officials of DIPR, were present on the occasion.

Later, the Director also inspected various sections of the department and took detailed assessment of their functioning.

AHD Kashmir Flags off Farmers' Delegation for Inter-State Training at LUVAS Hisar under ATMA Scheme

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 12: The Animal Husbandry Department (AHD), Kashmir today flagged off a delegation of progressive farmers for a specialized five-day Inter-State Exposure and Capacity Building Training Programme at Lala Lajpat Rai University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (LUVAS), Hisar, Haryana. The initiative has been organized under the Agriculture Extension - Support to State Extension Programs for Extension Reforms (ATMA) Scheme. The flag-off ceremony was conducted by Deputy Director Central, Dr. Reyaz Nazir, in the presence of senior officers and officials of the department from the Directorate Premises at Gaw Kadal, Srinagar. The training program aims to acquaint local farmers and livestock rearers with advanced scientific management practices, modern breeding techniques, innovative disease management protocols, and high-yielding dairy and livestock production

technologies.

During their five-day exposure training, the delegation will participate in interactive technical sessions, practical field demonstrations, and institutional visits to state-of-the-art livestock research and production facilities. Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Director Central highlighted that exposure and training programs under the ATMA scheme play a vital role in broadening the horizons of local farmers by exposing them to progressive farming models practiced in other states. He emphasized that such capacity-building initiatives are designed to encourage the adoption of scientific livestock management at the grassroots level, ultimately leading to enhanced productivity, better income generation, and rural self-sustainability across Kashmir. The participating farmers expressed deep gratitude to the Department of Animal Husbandry, Kashmir for providing them with this platform to learn and adopt modern scientific practices.

DC Srinagar inspects progress in construction of District Circuit House Bemina, Additional Accommodation Block of Sainik Bhawan

Emphasizes expeditious execution, strict adherence to prescribed quality standards and timely completion of projects

HT News Network

SRINAGAR: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, on Monday conducted an on-site inspection of the construction work of District Circuit House, Srinagar at Bemina.

He also inspected the progress of ongoing works on the Additional Accommodation Block of the Zila Sainik Welfare Bhawan at Batamaloo.

During the visit, the DC was accompanied by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir, Imtiyaz Ul Aziz, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Aadil Fareed, Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, IAS Probationer, Sai Kiran, Superintending Engineer R&B North, Shabir Ahmad, Superintending Engineer R&B, South, Tatheer Manzoor, SDM West, Seerat Baji, SDM East, Zubair Ahmad, ACR, Umar Gulzar, Executive Engineer R&B, Fareed Khan, Executive Engineer R&B, Abdul Qayoom, Executive Engineer, KPDCI 3rd, Abrar Hussain, Executive Engineer, Water Works, Aijaz Rafiq, Tehsildar South, Sajad Rasool, Tehsildar North, Syed Shahid and other concerned Officers.

At the construction site of the District Circuit House at Bemina, the Deputy



Commissioner took stock of the progress of ongoing works and reviewed various components of the project, aimed at augmenting cost effective accommodation & reasonable facilitation amenities in the District.

On the occasion, the DC underscored the significance of the facility in strengthening cost effective accommodation and facilitation

infrastructure in Srinagar and improving the availability of suitable accommodation for public, official and other designated purposes.

The DC directed the concerned executing agency to expedite the pace of work while ensuring strict adherence to prescribed quality standards and stipulated timelines, stressing that all components of the project must be

completed in a time-bound manner without compromising on quality.

Later, the Deputy Commissioner also reviewed the progress on the construction of the Additional Accommodation Block at Zila Sainik Welfare Bhawan, Batamaloo aimed to enhance the accommodation capacity of the

facility and strengthen the delivery of welfare services to eligible beneficiaries, particularly the wards of ex-servicemen and martyrs who visit or temporarily reside in Srinagar for educational purposes.

During an interaction with Officers and Officials of Zila Sainik Welfare Bhawan, the DC was informed that more than 40 percent of the civil works had been completed, with the ground floor completed and work underway on the first floor.

The DC stressed the need for expeditious execution of the remaining works, directing the concerned Officers to ensure timely completion of the project so that the facility can be made functional at the earliest. He emphasized that the timely completion of the Accommodation Block would enhance facilities for beneficiaries and contribute to the more effective delivery of welfare services to the wards of ex-servicemen

Kuldeep Krishan Sidha assumes charge as Deputy Commissioner Pulwama

HT News Network

PULWAMA: Kuldeep Krishan Sidha, today assumed charge as the new Deputy Commissioner, Pulwama.

Upon assuming charge, the Deputy Commissioner was warmly received by the outgoing Deputy Commissioner, Dr. Basharat Qayoom, along with other senior officers and officials of the district administration.

Soon after taking over, the Deputy Commissioner held an introductory-cum-review meeting with senior district and sectoral officers at the Circuit House, Pulwama, to take stock of the overall developmental and administrative scenario of the district.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner interacted with the officers and sought a comprehensive overview of the functioning of various departments, ongoing developmental works, implementation of government schemes and delivery of public services in the district.

He emphasized the need for close coordination among departments, timely execution of developmental projects and efficient delivery of public services to the people.

The Deputy Commissioner directed officers to maintain a

proactive and people-centric approach, ensure effective implementation of government programmes and address



public grievances promptly.

He also called for focused efforts towards achieving developmental targets and strengthening inter-departmental coordination for effective and result-oriented administration in the district.

The meeting was attended by ADDC Pulwama, Gulzar Ahmad Bhat; ADCs Pulwama, Tral and Awantipora; GMDIC Pulwama; District Programme Officer, Poshan Pulwama; Chief Planning Officer, Pulwama; Superintending Engineers

HT EDITORIAL

Dialysis For The Poor Is a Right, Not a Privilege

PM National Dialysis Programme Must Reach Every Needy Patient Through Accountable Hospitals and Seamless ABHA Integration

Access to healthcare is a fundamental measure of a society's commitment to human dignity and social justice. For patients suffering from chronic kidney disease, particularly those whose lives depend on regular dialysis, timely access to treatment is not merely a medical necessity but a matter of survival. The high cost of treatment, frequent hospital visits and the prolonged nature of the illness can push economically weaker families into severe financial distress. In this context, the Pradhan Mantri National Dialysis Programme (PMNDP), implemented under the National Health Mission (NHM), represents a significant public health intervention that deserves wider recognition, stronger implementation and sustained institutional support.

For poor and vulnerable patients, dialysis can mean the difference between receiving life-sustaining treatment and being forced to endure avoidable suffering because of financial constraints. The programme seeks to provide free dialysis services to eligible patients, thereby reducing the economic burden on families already struggling with the challenges of chronic illness. Its importance extends beyond the hospital ward, offering patients and their families a measure of security, dignity and hope in circumstances that are often physically, emotionally and financially exhausting.

The value of such a scheme becomes even more evident when one considers the frequency with which dialysis is required. Unlike a one-time medical procedure, dialysis often demands repeated sessions every week over an extended period. Travel expenses, loss of daily wages, the cost of medicines and the financial dependence of patients on their families further compound the hardship. For a daily-wage worker or a family living below the poverty line, even seemingly modest medical expenses can become unbearable when they recur week after week. A publicly supported dialysis programme therefore serves not only as a healthcare initiative but also as an instrument of social protection.

The government deserves credit for recognising this need and extending institutional support to dialysis services through the National Health Mission. However, the true success of the programme cannot be measured merely by its announcement, budgetary allocation or the number of facilities established. Its success must ultimately be judged by whether an eligible patient can obtain treatment when needed, without unnecessary delays, financial exploitation or avoidable administrative hurdles.

Government hospitals remain central to this responsibility. They must continue to strengthen dialysis infrastructure, ensure the availability of trained personnel and maintain adequate supplies of equipment and essential consumables. Equally important is the need to improve patient guidance, simplify registration procedures and establish effective grievance-redressal mechanisms. Healthcare authorities must regularly assess whether the intended beneficiaries are receiving the services promised under the scheme.

At the same time, the contribution of private hospitals and dialysis centres cannot be overlooked. In many areas, cooperation between public authorities and private healthcare institutions is essential to expand treatment capacity,

reduce waiting times and bring specialised services closer to patients. A constructive partnership between the government and the private sector can substantially improve access, particularly where public facilities face limitations in infrastructure or patient-handling capacity. Many private hospitals and healthcare providers are already cooperating in extending treatment to eligible benefi...

Road Safety Is Everyone's Responsibility Stop the Tragedy Before It Begins



By Javaid Bhat

Road accidents have emerged as a grave public concern, claiming precious lives, leaving countless people injured and shattering families beyond repair. Almost every day, reports of fatal road mishaps remind us of the heavy price we continue to pay for negligence, reckless driving and disregard for traffic regulations. Behind every accident is a human story—a family's loss, a child's uncertain future or a dream left unfulfilled. Yet, many of these tragedies can be prevented through responsible behaviour, effective enforcement and a collective commitment to road safety.

The growing frequency of road accidents demands serious attention from the government, traffic authorities and society. Over-speeding, rash driving, dangerous overtaking, distracted driving and the violation of basic traffic rules remain major causes of road mishaps. In a mountainous region like Jammu and Kashmir, the risks are further compounded by narrow roads, sharp bends, steep slopes, landslides and unpredictable weather conditions. Under such circumstances, even a moment of carelessness can prove fatal.

However, road safety cannot be ensured through enforcement alone. It requires a fundamental change in public attitude. Traffic rules are not unnecessary restrictions imposed on motorists; they are essential safeguards



designed to protect human life. Unfortunately, some drivers continue to treat speed as a symbol of confidence and reckless overtaking as a display of skill. Such behaviour endangers not only the driver but also passengers, pedestrians and other road users who have every right to travel safely.

Young people deserve particular attention in this regard. Sensitising students about road safety must become an important component of education. Schools and colleges should organise awareness programmes, seminars, debates and rallies to promote responsible driving and respect for traffic regulations. Youngsters must understand that possessing a driving licence is not merely a legal formality; it also entails a responsibility towards fellow citizens. Road safety education should extend beyond classrooms and become an enduring part of everyday life.

Parents, too, have a significant role to play. Allowing underage children to drive or overlooking their reckless behaviour can have devastating consequences. Families

must encourage discipline, patience and respect for the law. Wearing helmets, fastening seat belts, maintaining safe speeds, avoiding mobile phone use while driving and never driving under the influence of alcohol or intoxicating substances are simple but essential precautions. These measures may appear routine, yet they can make the difference between life and death.

At the institutional level, the traffic department and civil administration must adopt a more proactive approach. Accident-prone stretches should be identified and improved through better road engineering, proper signage, crash barriers and adequate lighting wherever required. Traffic rules must be enforced consistently, without favour or exception, and habitual violators must face appropriate legal action. Equally important is the need to improve emergency response systems so that accident victims receive timely medical assistance. Effective coordination among traffic police, health services and disaster-response agencies can

significantly improve the chances of survival in serious accidents.

Road safety also demands greater accountability in road construction and maintenance. Damaged roads, inadequate protective barriers, poorly marked curves and unsafe driving conditions can increase the risk of mishaps. Authorities must ensure that roads are regularly inspected and that identified safety deficiencies are addressed promptly. Public awareness campaigns should also encourage pedestrians and cyclists to follow safety guidelines, recognising that road safety is a shared responsibility.

Most importantly, society must move beyond treating every fatal accident as an isolated incident. Each tragedy should prompt an honest examination of its causes and the measures needed to prevent a recurrence. Sensational headlines and expressions of grief cannot bring back lost lives. What matters is whether lessons are learnt, corrective action is taken and negligence is prevented from claiming another victim.

The loss of life on our roads is not inevitable. While every accident may not be preventable, a large number of road mishaps can be avoided through caution, discipline, safer infrastructure and timely intervention. The responsibility rests with every individual who uses the road, as well as every institution entrusted with ensuring public safety.

A few minutes saved through speeding can never compensate for a lifetime of grief. No destination is so urgent that it justifies putting human lives at risk. Every driver must remember that someone is waiting at home for the safe return of a loved one.

The time has come to turn road safety from a slogan into a social commitment. Let us drive responsibly, respect traffic rules and protect the lives of others as carefully as we protect our own. Every life matters, every precaution counts, and every responsible decision can help prevent a tragedy.

Impact Of Pilgrimage On Himalaya



BY-MOOL RAJ

The Himalayas are not merely a range of mountains; they are the foundation of India's cultural consciousness, spiritual faith and natural life. Their lofty peaks bear the memories of ancient penance and meditation, their rivers sustain the lives of millions, and their valleys have been home to countless sacred shrines that have drawn devotees for centuries. Himachal Pradesh, along with the wider Himalayan region, is blessed with numerous important Hindu pilgrimage sites. Visiting these sacred places is an expression of faith for millions. Unfortunately, in recent years, the distinction between pilgrimage and tourism has increasingly blurred.

Entertainment, recreation and consumer-driven lifestyles are gradually overshadowing spiritual contemplation, placing an ever-growing burden on the fragile Himalayan environment. The Himalayas possess a unique natural beauty, but their ecological sensitivity is also their greatest vulnerability. The soil in high-altitude regions is thin, vegetation regenerates slowly, and waste decomposes far more slowly than it does in the plains. Yet, thousands and even millions of people converge on these environmentally delicate areas. Long queues

of vehicles, mounting pressure on parking facilities, unplanned expansion of hotels and roadside eateries, plastic bottles, food wrappers, polythene bags and disposable products are steadily damaging the natural beauty and ecological balance of the mountains.

Reports indicating that more than 800 tonnes of waste had been collected during the Char Dham Yatra by mid-September this year bring the gravity of the crisis into sharp focus. The accumulation of 50.30 tonnes of waste in the highly sensitive Kedarnath region between April and August is particularly alarming. These figures deserve serious attention because a plastic bottle discarded at a high altitude is not simply a piece of litter. It can remain in the environment for years, threatening the soil, water sources and wildlife. The irony is profound: people visit these sacred places seeking inner purification, restraint and renunciation, yet leave behind a trail of waste. Can such a journey truly be called a pilgrimage? A pilgrimage is not merely about reaching a temple; it is also an inward journey that transforms the human being. If we bow our heads before a deity and then throw plastic into the very mountains whose sanctity brought us there, our faith remains incomplete.

In this context, the 'Carry Me Back' campaign offers an encouraging ray of hope. Nearly 5,000 pilgrims reportedly carried back more than 12 tonnes of compressed plastic waste from an approximately 18-kilometre stretch. This demonstrates that when pilgrims are made active participants in environmental protection, they can make a substantial difference. The initiative is not merely about collecting rubbish;

it seeks to transform the very mindset with which people undertake pilgrimages. Such campaigns should be expanded and implemented across Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and other Himalayan pilgrimage destinations. The experience of the Amarnath Yatra also offers valuable lessons. The expansion of reusable utensils and water-refilling facilities reportedly



helped reduce waste per pilgrim by 15 per cent, even as the number of pilgrims increased by 17 per cent. This demonstrates that environmental pressure can be reduced when convenient, practical and scientifically designed alternatives are made available. Appeals to pilgrims alone are not enough. Administrations must establish systems in which environmentally responsible behaviour becomes the easiest and most natural response. The uncontrolled increase in crowds at religious and tourist destinations in Himachal Pradesh is part of this larger crisis. During peak seasons, Shimla, Manali, Dharamshala, Chamunda, Jwalamukhi, Chintpurni, Naina Devi and other destinations face mounting

pressure on transportation, water supply, sewage systems, solid-waste management and local resources. Mountain regions cannot withstand the same level of human pressure as cities in the plains. Therefore, the popularity of a pilgrimage or tourist destination should not be measured merely by how many people it attracts. The time has come to replace the assumption that 'more tourists mean more development' with a more responsible principle: the more ecologically sensitive a destination is, the more carefully tourism must be managed. Every pilgrimage and tourist destination should undergo a scientific assessment of its carrying capacity, and the number of daily visitors should be regulated accordingly, taking seasonal conditions into account. Single-use plastics must be effectively restricted, water-refilling stations expanded, and deposit-and-return systems introduced for bottles and packaging. Waste should be segregated at source, while shopkeepers, hotel operators and vendors must be held accountable for the waste they generate.

Most importantly, the mindset of pilgrims must change. The mountains are not playgrounds for our amusement; they are a priceless natural heritage that belongs to future generations. The river beside which we offer our prayers sustains millions of people living downstream. The forests we capture in our photographs maintain the ecological balance of the mountains. And when we revere a mountain as Devbhoomi, the land of the gods, throwing plastic on its slopes is an insult to the very faith we profess.

The Author Is A Regular Columnist And Freelance Writer

IAS-HCS Success

A Test of Talent or Resourcefulness?



Dr. Satyawan Saurabh

In Indian society, selection into administrative services like the IAS and HCS is considered a major achievement of talent, hard work, discipline, and ingenuity. Millions of young people dream of joining these services, but only a few succeed. Amidst this intense competition, a question repeatedly arises: are talent and hard work the sole deciding factors in these examinations, or do a candidate's family background, economic status, and social resources also play a significant role in their success? Serious consideration of this question reveals several aspects of the inequality of opportunities that exist in preparing for administrative services.

When the success story of an HCS or IAS topper comes to light, discussions often revolve around their marks, rank, hard work, and struggle. Sometimes, it's also revealed that the candidate had been preparing for years or had qualified for the UPSC Mains exam multiple times. For example, if a candidate persists after appearing for the IAS Mains exam six times and ultimately succeeds in the state administrative service, their hard work is

certainly noteworthy. But this raises another question: does every talented young person have the opportunity to continue preparing for such a long period?

It's not appropriate to seek the answer to this question solely in personal willpower. Preparation requires time, financial security, and the opportunity to bounce back after setbacks. If a candidate's family has sufficient wealth, parents hold good jobs, or the family's regular income is sufficient to cover the cost of studying for several years, that candidate may find relatively favorable conditions for preparation. In contrast, a young person from an economically disadvantaged family is unable to free themselves from household responsibilities even while preparing for a competitive exam. They must arrange for books, coaching, and exam expenses, as well as consider the family's livelihood.

This is where the question of inequality of opportunities arises.

Suppose two young men are equally talented. Both have roughly the same academic potential. The first young man's family has sufficient wealth. They can afford his living, food, studies, and exam preparation. He can focus on his preparation for five or six years. On the other hand, the second young man's father is a farmer, laborer, or small-time employee. The family's income is limited, and he has many other responsibilities at home. He prepares for competitive exams, but after a while, he has to take a job or find another way to support his family. The difference between the two lies not only in talent, but also in the circumstances

in which their talents develop.

Merely studying the syllabus is not enough to succeed in competitive exams. Regular study, awareness of current events, answer writing practice, optional subject preparation, understanding interview preparation, and continuous improvement of shortcomings are required. Many candidates benefit from expensive coaching, good libraries, guidance from experienced teachers, and connections with knowledgeable people. On the other hand, many young people prepare with the help of materials available on the internet, old books, and limited resources. Digital media has certainly made access to study materials easier, but the importance of a calm environment, proper guidance, and financial security remains unchanged.

It should be clear here that it would be wrong to say that every candidate from affluent families succeeds solely because of privilege. Many young people selected for administrative services achieve success despite overcoming difficult circumstances. On the other hand, many candidates from financially affluent families also fail. Success requires hard work, intellectual ability, persistence, understanding of the exam, and mental toughness. Therefore, the purpose of the debate should not be to undermine the achievements of any successful candidate, but to understand how equal opportunities for preparation are available to young people living in different social and economic circumstances.

Similarly, a candidate's parents holding high positions or having a family active in

politics is not, in itself, evidence of unfair advantage. Such families may possess an understanding of administrative systems, better educational guidance, and an environment of inspiration. However, it is also not appropriate to doubt someone's abilities based solely on family background. It is essential that this issue be discussed based on evidence rather than assumptions.

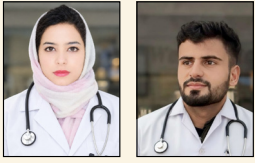
To determine the proportion of successful IAS and HCS candidates coming from affluent families requires systematic study. Factors such as the selected candidates' family income, their parents' occupation, rural or urban background, educational expenditure, years of preparation, and available guidance should be analyzed. Without reliable data, claiming that 99.99 percent of successful candidates come from affluent families would be factually unfounded. However, the question of inequality of opportunity underlying this claim should not be ignored. The government and relevant institutions should take concrete steps to make competitive exam preparation more inclusive. Quality, free guidance for economically disadvantaged candidates, modern libraries at the district level, digital study centers, answer-writing practice, guidance from experienced teachers, and transparent financial assistance for students in need can be useful. Youth living in rural areas should also have access to the same educational resources and information available to those preparing in larger cities.

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

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When We Listen, Real Change Can Begin

World Mental Health Day 2026



Dr Batula Rashid & Wani Arfat

Are you okay?

It is a simple question, but sometimes it can mean a lot. The real question is not only whether we ask it, but whether we are ready to listen when someone says, "No, I am not okay."

World Mental Health Day is celebrated on 10 October each year. The theme for this year is "Lived experiences heard: real voices, real change", which calls for us to go beyond raising awareness. People who have faced issues related to their mental wellbeing have much to teach us. It is not enough to just listen to these experiences, but to learn from them and improve our mental healthcare services.

The importance of this discussion in Jammu and Kashmir is greater than ever because there are various sources of stress that affect our youth today. Academic exams, job prospects, unemployment, family pressures, economic stresses and constant comparisons with their peers and relatives weigh heavily on our youth. The youth may be asked to become a doctor, an engineer or even a government servant, while their own interests are overlooked.

Another source of stress in today's age is social media. Our youth are always exposed to other people's success, lifestyles and accomplishments. This might give rise to feelings of jealousy and inferiority behind a seemingly normal social media account.

The feeling of loneliness is yet another issue that cannot be ignored. One may be seated amidst their friends, classmates or family members and feel absolutely lonely. At times, people don't necessarily require counselling before anything else. What they require at times is somebody who can sit and listen to them without passing any judgement on them.

It is essential to make students realise that one examination or one poor performance in an exam will not determine what will happen to their entire lives. It becomes even more difficult than taking the



exam itself because of the fear of letting down their parents or being compared with others. We must make the youth realise that seeking help is no sign of weakness.

Moreover, there is another problem of silence related to gender issues. Boys are constantly told that they should "be men" and should not express their feelings, while girls have different kinds of problems associated with education, family, marriage and society in general.

As a student in nursing, I have realised that taking care of a patient entails more than just giving medicines, administering treatments, doing tests and checking vital signs. A patient is more than just a diagnosis. Behind every patient's condition are fears, family

issues, hopes and experiences. Listening is another form of taking care of patients.

From a psychiatric perspective, mental health issues must be identified and prioritised early. No one should have to reach a point of crisis for their pain to be prioritised. Privacy, confidentiality, trust and respect are required in order to encourage people to seek treatment.

Here comes a very important question. What happens when the time comes that a person decides to seek help? In the absence of safe counselling, proper referral, follow-up and nearby facilities, saying "seek help" alone will not do.

This is where colleges in Jammu and Kashmir can play an important role. Students require confidential

counselling facilities, qualified personnel to detect any signs and links to professional services. Also, schools can include education regarding basic mental health so that from an early age, children are aware of their emotions and stress, and seeking help is seen as normal.

Even our rural areas require attention. Distance, lack of awareness and stigma regarding mental health issues might be among the hurdles facing people living far from big hospitals. Linking colleges, PHCs, DHs and psychiatric care facilities would be helpful in providing assistance to those in need. Tele-MANAS can be very useful for individuals facing difficulty in visiting mental healthcare facilities.

The role of the family cannot be overestimated.

Sometimes, a young person just does not require a lecture on grades and profession. Sometimes, they need only one question: "What's troubling you?" Listening does not mean agreeing with all ideas. It means that a person is able to talk without being judged at once.

We should avoid two extreme positions. Not every sadness requires a diagnosis of depression, and not every worry represents "overthinking". Mental illnesses are sometimes casually self-diagnosed through social media, while true mental disorders remain unnoticed due to stigma. There is a need for responsible awareness, but not for self-diagnosis.

We should also listen to the families of those people with mental health issues. The process of taking care of someone may result in their own exhaustion and stress. They also require information and support.

Most importantly, perhaps, individuals who have experienced something should not just be told to "tell their story". The personal experience of the individual must guide the formation of mental health services. When patients tell us they have been ignored, we need to know why. When students inform us that the counselling process is not a safe one for them, something needs to be done to address that. When families don't know how to obtain services, then the system needs to make sense to them.

World Mental Health Day should not end with a poster, speech or Facebook post. It should leave us with one tough, but essential, question: What are we changing as a result of hearing their voices?

On 10 October, let us not just ask, "Are you okay?" Let us create societies where it is possible for someone to answer.

Because a quiet student might have something to say. Because a patient's lived experience might teach us lessons. And because listening to those voices can lead us to better care.

When real voices are truly heard, real change can begin.

Dr Batula Rashid is the Head of the Psychiatric Department at Ramzaan College of Nursing and Paramedical Sciences, Galander, Pampore. Mohammad Arfat Wani is a writer, social activist and nursing student from Kuchmulla, Tral, Kashmir. He writes on social issues, culture and public concerns, aiming to raise awareness and inspire positive change. He can be reached at wania6817@gmail.com.

An MLA's mandate is larger than a ribbon-cutting ceremony



By Dr. Hidayat Bukhari

There is a curious contradiction in the functioning of representative politics in Jammu and Kashmir. Legislators elected to deliberate on laws, scrutinise public expenditure and hold the executive accountable are frequently visible at the inauguration of neighbourhood drains, repaired lanes, electricity infrastructure and, occasionally, private commercial establishments. A ribbon is cut, photographs are circulated, and what ought to be a routine administrative activity acquires the appearance of a political achievement.

The question is not whether such works are important. For residents confronting waterlogging, damaged roads or unreliable electricity, they are essential. Rather, it is whether the increasing prominence of these ceremonies reflects a narrowing of the public understanding of what an elected legislator is expected to accomplish.

An MLA is elected to represent people in the legislature, not merely to preside over the delivery of services that government institutions are already obliged to provide.

The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, provides the appropriate starting point. Section 32 defines the Legislative Assembly's lawmaking powers over applicable subjects in the State and Concurrent Lists, excluding public order and police. The Act also provides for legislative consideration of public finances, expenditure and appropriation. Through questions, debates, motions and committee scrutiny, legislators can examine government decisions and seek explanations for administrative failures.

These functions are central to the exercise of representative authority. Legislators are expected to consider public policy, examine the allocation and utilisation of public resources, and raise matters that require institutional rather than merely individual remedies.

The legal responsibility for delivering routine civic amenities, however, rests elsewhere.

Section 43 of the Jammu and Kashmir Municipal Corporation Act, 2000, places the construction, maintenance and cleaning of drains among the obligatory functions of municipal corporations. The provision also addresses municipal streets, sanitation and public lighting. Other infrastructure falls within the jurisdiction of the Public Works Department, electricity distribution utilities, Jal Shakti Department and designated agencies, depending on the nature and ownership of the asset.

An MLA may pursue the construction of a drain, but the technical assessment, sanction, execution and maintenance of the work remain subject to the responsibilities of the competent authorities. The distinction between political representation and administrative execution is not incidental; it is fundamental to identifying who must answer when public services fail.

The Constitution provides a further reason to preserve this distinction. The 74th Constitutional Amendment envisaged municipalities as institutions of urban self-government. Article 243W and the Twelfth Schedule provide a framework for assigning responsibilities relating to urban planning, roads, water supply, sanitation and other civic amenities to municipal institutions through law.

This constitutional architecture recognises that local problems require institutions capable of planning, delivering and answering for local services.

Yet Jammu and Kashmir presents an institutional contradiction. The terms of its elected municipal bodies expired in October and November 2023, and fresh elections remained pending in 2026. The delay has been associated with unresolved electoral and administrative preparations, including reservation-related questions and the updating of electoral rolls.



The absence of elected municipal representatives raises a question beyond the activities of individual MLAs: when local democratic institutions remain vacant, who provides political accountability for the everyday services they were intended to oversee?

Municipal administration does not cease in the absence of elected councils. Commissioners, engineers and other officials continue to exercise their assigned functions. What is missing is the elected municipal tier through which neighbourhood concerns can be represented and administrative decisions subjected to local democratic scrutiny.

An MLA's participation in civic works cannot substitute for that institutional arrangement. Legislative representation and elected municipal governance serve different, though complementary, democratic purposes.

The Constituency Development Fund (CDF) offers another important distinction. The Jammu and Kashmir government's guidelines of March 2025 authorise MLAs to recommend eligible development works. In July 2025, the annual allocation was enhanced from 3 crore to 4 crore per legislator, effective from financial year 2025-26. This gives MLAs a recognised role in identifying constituency priorities. It does not, however, make them the executing agencies. Technical feasibility, cost estimation, administrative sanctions and project implementation are governed by the responsibilities assigned to competent authorities.

An MLA who identifies a genuine public need,

recommends a work and follows up on its implementation performs a legitimate representative function. But recommendation, execution and ceremonial inauguration are not interchangeable achievements.

Public money does not become personal generosity because a legislator recommended its expenditure. Nor does the presence of a political representative at the inauguration transfer responsibility for the asset from the department that constructed it. This distinction matters because the political visibility of a completed project can obscure the more demanding questions of governance.

Who prepared the estimate? Was the work sanctioned under a departmental scheme or through constituency development recommendations? Was the contractor selected through the prescribed procedure? Did the completed project meet technical specifications? Who is responsible for maintenance, and how will its performance be assessed?

The inauguration of a drain says little about whether it can accommodate rainfall or prevent waterlogging. The opening of a road does not establish its durability. The commissioning of electricity infrastructure does not, by itself, demonstrate improvement in supply reliability.

A photograph records an event; it does not measure a public outcome.

These are matters on which legislative oversight could make a more substantial contribution. Rather than treating recurring problems as isolated opportunities for individual intervention, legislators can examine

whether departmental planning, financial allocations, procurement practices and maintenance systems are adequate.

The Assembly's financial committees, including the Public Accounts Committee and the Estimates Committee, provide institutional mechanisms for such scrutiny within their respective mandates. Their work may attract less publicity than ceremonial appearances, but it is relevant to determining whether public resources are used effectively.

There is, of course, a legitimate place for political participation in local events. Residents may appreciate a representative's presence when a long-pending project is completed. Such engagement can also help legislators remain connected with constituency concerns. Attendance at an inauguration is neither inherently unlawful nor evidence that other legislative duties have been neglected. The concern arises when ceremonial visibility becomes a prominent measure of public performance without a corresponding account of substantive legislative activity.

Hidayat Bukhari is a business strategist, AI transformation commentator, and US government contracting consultant focused on economic resilience, technology, and market competitiveness. He is a member of JK Climate Action Group and J&K RTI Movement and can be reached at Hidayat.bukhari@gentechprollc.com

Climb the mountains and get their good tidings

Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees.



By M S Nazki

Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of Autumn...

-Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity -Faeries, come take me out of this dull world, for I would ride with you upon the wind, run on the top of the dishevelled tide, And dance upon the mountains like a flame

-I am losing precious days. I am degenerating into a machine for making money. I am learning nothing in this trivial world of men. I must break away and get out into the mountains to learn the news!.....Unknown

-We are now in the mountains and they are in us, kindling enthusiasm, making every nerve quiver, filling every pore and cell of us!..

-General Dhiraj Seth, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), flagged the members of the Joint Indo-Argentine Army Mountaineering Expedition in New Delhi, following their successful ascent of General Dhiraj Seth, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), flagged the members of the Joint Indo-Argentine Army Mountaineering Expedition in New Delhi, following their successful ascent of Mt Abi Gamin (7,355 metres) on 17 September and Mt Kamet (7,756 metres) on 21 September 2026.

-Mt Kamet located in Chamoli district, Uttarakhand is the third-highest peak in India after Mt Kanchenjunga and Mt Nanda Devi. The 35-member expedition, led by Lieutenant Colonel Chirag Chatterjee, comprising 25 personnel of the Indian Army and 10 personnel of the Argentine Army was flagged off from the Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi, on 21 August 2026.

-Operating in demanding Himalayan conditions, the mountaineers negotiated extreme cold, high winds, snowfields, steep rock sections,

crevasses and other challenges of high-altitude terrain to summit both peaks. The achievement reflects their physical endurance, technical proficiency, mental resilience and close coordination: Ministry of Defence on 17 September and Mt Kamet (7,756 metres) on 21 September 2026. Mt Kamet located in Chamoli district,

Uttarakhand is the third-highest peak in India after Mt Kanchenjunga and Mt Nanda Devi.

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-Mt Abi Gamin stands at 7,355 metres (24,131 feet) and is located in the Garhwal Himalayas along the India-Tibet border in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district.

-Quick Facts
• Elevation: 7,355 metres (24,131 feet)
• Location: Chamoli district, Uttarakhand, India / Ngari, Tibet (part of the Zaskar Range)

• Neighboring Peak: Situated near Mt Kamet, separated by Meade's Col (7,138 m)

• First Ascent: August 22, 1950, by an Anglo-Swiss expedition (R. Dittert, A. Tissieres, G. Chevalley, K. Berrill)

-Recent News

• Joint Indo-Argentine Army Expedition: A 35-member team led by Lieutenant Colonel Chirag Chatterjee successfully summited Mt Abi Gamin on September 17, 2026, and Mt Kamet on September 21, 2026. Chief of the Army Staff General Dhiraj Seth flagged in the team in New Delhi on October 6, 2026.

• ITBP Expedition: A 23-member Indo-Tibetan Border Police team led by Deputy Commandant Parikshit Shah also successfully scaled the peak on September 16, 2026."

Mt Kamet

Mountain in Uttarakhand:

-AI Overview

-Kamet [7756m

-Mount Kamet is the second-highest

mountain in the Garhwal region of

Uttarakhand, India, standing at an elevation

of 7,756 meters (25,446 feet).

-Location: It lies in the Chamoli district

of Uttarakhand, near the border with the

Tibet Autonomous Region of China.

-Range: It is part of the Zaskar Range

in the Himalayas.

-Glaciers: Glaciers including Raikana,

West Kamet, and East Kamet surround

the base.

-Highest Climable Peak: Because

climbing Nanda Devi and Kanchenjunga

is restricted for religious reasons, Kamet

is the highest major peak in India that

mountaineers are permitted to scale.

Mental Health

An Integral Part of Overall Health

“There is no health without mental health.”



Sayed Mobashar Ali

Every year, 10 October is observed as World Mental Health Day to raise awareness about mental health and encourage people to take psychological well-being seriously. The day reminds us of an important truth: health is not merely the absence of physical illness. It also includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. We cannot consider a person completely healthy while ignoring their mental health.

In our society, physical illnesses often receive immediate attention, while mental health continues to be overlooked and misunderstood. People are encouraged to take care of their bodies, but when they struggle emotionally, they are often told to remain strong, stop overthinking, or simply move on. Such responses may silence their struggles rather than help them. It is time to recognise mental health as an integral part of overall health and treat it with the same seriousness as physical health.

How Mental Health Affects Overall Health

Mental health influences how we think, feel, behave, make decisions, maintain relationships, and respond to everyday challenges. It affects our ability to study, work, communicate, and participate in society. Our mind and



body are closely connected, and difficulties in one can affect the other.

Prolonged stress can disturb sleep, affect concentration, reduce energy, and contribute to physical problems such as headaches and muscle tension. Similarly, physical illness and chronic pain can affect our emotional well-being. Healthcare, therefore, should not focus only on physical symptoms while overlooking a person's psychological needs. Good mental health does not mean that a person never experiences sadness, fear, stress, or disappointment. These are normal parts of life. It means being able to cope with challenges, understand our emotions, seek support when necessary, and gradually recover from difficult experiences.

Depression, Anxiety, Stress and the Burden of Overthinking

In today's world, people face numerous pressures. Students worry about examinations, academic performance, and career opportunities. Young adults face uncertainty about employment and the future. Family expectations, financial difficulties, social comparisons, and personal disappointments can add to these pressures. When stress and anxiety persist and begin to interfere with everyday life, they deserve attention. Depression can affect a person's mood, motivation, energy, sleep, and ability to enjoy life. These difficulties should not be dismissed as laziness, a lack of discipline, or an inability to remain positive. When symptoms persist or become severe, professional help is important.

Overthinking and self-doubt also affect mental well-being. Repeatedly worrying about past mistakes, imagining negative outcomes, or questioning one's abilities can create emotional exhaustion. A person may begin to feel that they are not good enough, that they have failed in life, or that everyone

else is moving forward while they remain behind. However, failure is not the end of a person's journey, and self-doubt does not define their worth. Everyone faces difficulties, and there is no single timetable for success. We must learn to distinguish between constructive self-reflection and constant



self-criticism.

At the same time, not every difficult emotion is a mental disorder. Sadness and worry are natural human experiences. What matters is their intensity, duration, and impact on everyday life.

Breaking the Stigma Around Mental Health

One of the major obstacles to mental healthcare is the stigma surrounding psychological difficulties. Many people hesitate to seek help because they fear being judged, misunderstood, or treated differently. Some worry that discussing their struggles will make others consider them weak. As a result, people often suffer in silence instead of asking for support. This attitude must change. Mental health difficulties are not a personal failure, and seeking professional help should never be a source of shame. Just as we consult a doctor when we experience physical illness, we should feel equally comfortable seeking psychological support when we need it.

Families, friends, teachers, and communities all have a role to play. Listening patiently, showing understanding, and avoiding judgement can make a meaningful difference. We should never compare one person's suffering with another's or assume that someone has nothing to worry about simply because their life appears comfortable.

A compassionate society is one in which people can express their feelings without fear and seek help without losing their dignity.

The Role of Government and Educational Institutions

Individual awareness is important, but mental healthcare cannot depend on personal efforts alone. The government and public institutions must ensure that mental health services are accessible, affordable, and effective.

India has taken important steps in this direction. The Mental Healthcare Act, 2017, provides for access to mental healthcare and treatment and safeguards the rights and dignity of people with mental illness. The government has also introduced the National Tele Mental Health Programme, known as Tele-MANAS, to improve access to mental health support. Its toll-free helpline, 14416, provides mental health assistance across India.

These initiatives are important, but more needs to be done. Adequate numbers of psychologists, psychiatrists, and counsellors must be made available in hospitals and healthcare institutions. Mental health services should also be strengthened in rural and remote areas, where access to professional care may be limited.

Schools and colleges must become more supportive environments for students. Counselling facilities, awareness programmes, and opportunities to discuss academic and personal difficulties should be available. Teachers should be encouraged to recognise signs of emotional distress and guide students towards appropriate support.

Mental healthcare must reach not only people in major cities but also those living in smaller towns, villages, and underserved communities.

From Awareness to Action

World Mental Health Day should not remain limited to speeches, posters, and social media messages. It should encourage meaningful action at the individual, community, institutional, and governmental levels. We can begin by taking mental health seriously in our daily lives, maintaining supportive relationships, and seeking help when difficulties become overwhelming. Our homes and educational institutions should be places where people feel safe discussing their concerns.

The media and social media platforms can also help by spreading reliable information and challenging harmful stereotypes. The government must strengthen mental health programmes and address gaps in service delivery, while healthcare institutions must ensure that people receive

timely and appropriate support. Most importantly, we must learn to respond to emotional distress with understanding rather than judgement. A person who is struggling does not always need criticism or advice. Sometimes, they simply need someone who is willing to listen.

As we observe World Mental Health Day on 10 October, let us move beyond the idea that health concerns only the physical body. Mental health influences our relationships, education, work, confidence, and ability to enjoy life. Depression, anxiety, prolonged stress, overthinking, and self-doubt should not be ignored when they begin affecting our well-being. We must build a society in which seeking help is accepted, professional care is accessible, and no individual feels ashamed of their struggles.

A healthy society is not one in which everyone appears happy all the time. It is one in which people are allowed to express their pain, receive appropriate support, and live with dignity. Mental health is not separate from health, and caring for the mind is not less important than caring for the body. Let us make mental well-being a shared priority, not merely for one day, but throughout the year.

Sayed Mobashar Ali is a writer, poet, and author from Jammu and Kashmir, India. He holds a B.A. (Hons.) in Psychology from Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. He is the author of The Soul of Pir Panjal, a book that reflects on the region's history, culture, heritage, and identity. His poems and writings have appeared in LitStream and Jamia Times. His writing often explores themes of homeland, identity, nature, culture, society, and human emotions, with particular inspiration drawn from the Pir Panjal region.

DIABETES AWARENESS: DIET & EXERCISE



Dr Tasaduk Hussain Itoo, Physician, shares important insights on two essential pillars of diabetes management: healthy eating and regular physical activity.

1. Healthy Diet

A balanced diet with appropriate portions, plenty of vegetables, whole grains, pulses, and fibre-rich foods can help maintain better blood glucose control. Limiting sugary drinks, sweets, and highly processed foods is equally important. Consistency and portion control are key.

2. Regular Exercise

Regular physical activity helps improve insulin sensitivity, supports weight management, and contributes to better blood glucose control. Walking, cycling, and other activities suited to an individual's health and fitness level can make a meaningful difference. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week, as appropriate.

