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HEADLINES TODAY
Voice To The Voiceless



P:12 New Zealand star Rachin Ravindra provides update on fitness for India Tests

Ladakh Records Higher Voter Turnout in First Polls Since UT Formation

73.60% turnout recorded in Panch polls, 70.03% in Sarpanch elections; LG Saxena calls it a historic milestone for grassroots democracy

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

LEH, NOVEMBER 21 : Ladakh witnessed an encouraging display of democratic participation on Saturday as voters turned out in large numbers for Panchayat and Municipal elections, with Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena describing the occasion as a historic milestone in the Union Territory's democratic journey.

According to the figures shared by the LG, polling stood at 73.60 per cent for Panch elections and 70.03 per cent for Sarpanch elections, surpassing the overall turnout of 67.8 per cent recorded in the 2018 Panchayat elections.

>>> MORE ON P 02

PM Modi Challenges IITians To Develop Technologies For Viksit Bharat 2047

Interacts with 75 selected students at IIT Kharagpur; pushes innovation in AI, data analytics, drones and indigenous technologies to address national challenges



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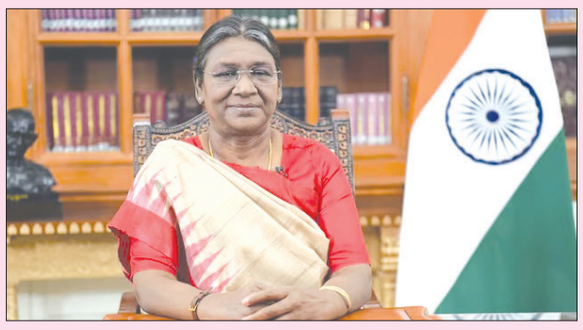
KHARAGPUR: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday challenged 75 selected students of IIT Kharagpur to channel their scientific research and technological innovations towards addressing India's pressing challenges and realising the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047. During an interaction under the '75 Voices for Viksit Bharat' initiative, Modi engaged with young researchers on emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, data analytics and drone applications, while examining indigenous innovations developed by the institute. He also reviewed healthcare technologies benefiting women in remote areas and offered suggestions on improving an indigenous Mangalyaan rover prototype for commercialisation. Calling the coming two decades decisive for India's future, the Prime Minister urged students to overcome limiting beliefs and embrace the principle of 'Nation First'.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi put 75 selected students of IIT Kharagpur through a series of technological challenges during an interaction at the institute on Saturday, asking them to channel their research and innovations towards building a developed India by 2047.Recounting the interaction, IIT Kharagpur director

>>> MORE ON P 02

President Murmu To Review Naval Academy Passing-Out Parade On November 28

Over 400 officer trainees to participate in Ezhimala ceremony; foreign cadets also join as Navy prepares to induct new commissioned officers



HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

NEW DELHI: President Droupadi Murmu will review the Autumn Term 2026 Passing Out Parade of the Indian Naval Academy at Ezhimala in Kerala on November 28, marking the culmination of training for more than 400 officer trainees preparing to enter commissioned service in the Indian Navy. The ceremony, to be held at Pereira Parade Ground, will witness trainees from various courses, including those from friendly foreign countries, completing their professional training in leadership, physical endurance and naval skills. A key highlight will be the traditional 'Shipping of Stripes', symbolising their transition into

>>> MORE ON P 02

CM Omar Abdullah Calls On Youth To Shape Governance, Build A Stronger Nation

IILM University convocation : CM says voting alone is not enough, urges graduates to embrace public service, ethical leadership and nation-building



HT NEWS NETWORK

NEW DELHI: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Saturday called upon young graduates to move beyond conventional career ambitions and actively participate in governance, public life and nation-building, asserting that India's demographic dividend could become a powerful engine of prosperity only through responsible leadership, integrity and meaningful civic engagement. Addressing the Class of 2026 at the IILM University convocation in New Delhi as Chief Guest, he said voting was merely the beginning of democratic participation, not its entirety, and

>>> MORE ON P 02

Food Safety Department Battling Staff Shortage For 24 Years: Sakeena Itoo

Minister acknowledges manpower crisis dating back to 2002; says licences cancelled, fines imposed and adulteration cases referred to police for criminal action

HT NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM: Jammu and Kashmir Health Minister Sakeena Itoo on Saturday acknowledged that the Food Safety Department has been grappling with a chronic manpower shortage since its establishment in 2002, raising concerns over its enforcement capacity amid growing public anxiety over food adulteration. Speaking in Kulgam, she said the government had reviewed the staffing situation and would take steps to address the shortage, while maintaining that enforcement against violators had been intensified. The minister said licences had been cancelled, fines imposed and inspections conducted in cases involving food safety violations. She added that matters requiring registration of FIRs and criminal proceedings had been referred to the police, asserting that those endangering public health would not be spared. She also urged people to report suspected adulteration and called upon Deputy Commissioners to extend support to enforcement teams.



Jammu and Kashmir Health Minister Sakeena Itoo on Saturday acknowledged that the Food Safety Department has been facing a shortage of staff

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'SKILLS, Not Certificates, Will Define Future': PM Modi

Says AI cannot take away livelihood of skilled workers; calls for restoring dignity of vocational education; India to host 2027 WorldSkills Competition in Greater Noida

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES



LUCKNOW, NOV 21: As artificial intelligence reshapes the global employment landscape and triggers concerns over the future of jobs, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday made a strong pitch for skill-based education, asserting that technology cannot replace the livelihood of those equipped with practical skills and professional expertise. Declaring that skilled individuals would command greater respect than those relying merely on academic qualifications, Modi said India must move beyond its traditional preference for certificate-oriented education and recognise vocational training as an equally prestigious pathway to professional success. "There is a lot of discussion about AI, but remember that no one can take away the

>>> MORE ON P 02

No local terrorist left in Kashmir, only foreigners remain: Amit Shah

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, NOV 21 : Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said that not a single local terrorist is left in Kashmir Valley and remaining terrorists operating in the Valley are foreign nationals.

Shah while addressing a ceremony in Banderdewa, Arunachal Pradesh, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), referred to the recent killing of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) commander and the last known active local terrorist, Lateef Bhat in South Kashmir and said, "In Kulgam, Kashmir, the Jammu and Kashmir Police neutralised the last known active Kashmiri terrorist affiliated with

>>> MORE ON P 02

Kashmir Gets Temporary Weather Relief, But Mercury Set To Dip Again

MeT forecasts dry conditions till November 30, followed by cloudy skies in early December; minimum temperatures likely to fall by 1–2°C



HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir is likely to experience largely dry weather until November 30, offering a temporary respite from the prospect of early winter precipitation, even as the Meteorological Department has forecast a fresh decline of 1–2 degrees Celsius in night temperatures towards the end of the month. According to the Meteorological Centre Srinagar, partly to generally cloudy conditions are expected between December 1 and 3, with no significant rainfall or snowfall anticipated until the

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HT BOTTOM NEWS

DGP Reviews Jammu Security Grid As J&K Braces For Winter Challenges

Security operations assessed amid LG's directive to dismantle terror networks; surveillance along LoC, IB and action against narco-terrorism remain priorities

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES



SRINAGAR: Director General of Police Nalin Prabhat on Saturday reviewed ongoing security operations across Jammu Zone as security agencies stepped up preparations for winter challenges following Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha's call for intensified surveillance and a comprehensive crackdown on terror-support networks. The meeting in Jammu, attended by senior police officers, examined operational preparedness and prevailing security arrangements across the region. The review follows the Lieutenant Governor's directive that counter-terrorism efforts must extend beyond neutralising militants to dismantling the wider ecosystem sustaining terrorism and separatism. The directions include stronger surveillance along the Line of Control and International Border, intensified action against narco-terror networks, and targeted seizure and forfeiture of properties linked to terror and separatist elements. Police did not disclose details of specific operations or any fresh decisions taken during Saturday's meeting.

Jammu and Kashmir Director General of Police Nalin Prabhat on Saturday reviewed ongoing security operations across Jammu Zone amid directions from Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha to intensify winter surveillance and

>>> MORE ON P 02

High Court pulls up authorities over women's safety in public transport

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, NOV 21 : Flagging gaps in the enforcement of government directions meant to ensure safer travel for women commuters the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh has pulled up the authorities over safety of females using public transport.

A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Dr Pushpendra Singh Bhati and Justice Rahul Bharti while hearing a public interest litigation (PIL), according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) observed: "Reserved seats for women and persons with disabilities in public transport exist more on paper rather than on the roads"

The PIL filed by Advocate Monisa Manzoor Mir has raised concerns over the safety and security of

>>> MORE ON P 02

Winter Break For Nursery To Class 5 Under Consideration : Education Minister

Shameema Firdous says decision will depend on weather conditions; warns private schools against unauthorised donations and compulsory purchase of extra textbooks

HT NEWS NETWORK



SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir Government is considering announcing winter vacations for students from nursery to Class 5 in Kashmir in view of the prevailing cold conditions, Education Minister Shameema Firdous said on Saturday, while warning private schools against imposing unauthorised financial charges on parents. Speaking in Srinagar, the minister said a decision on holidays for younger students would be taken after assessing weather conditions and the health concerns of children exposed to cold mornings. She also made it clear that private schools could not compel students to purchase additional textbooks or collect donations beyond authorised charges, warning of strict action against institutions found violating government directives. Suggesting digital resources and shared classroom material as alternatives, she said supplementary education must not become an additional financial burden on parents. Jammu and Kashmir Education

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Continue from Front Page.....

Ladakh Records

In a post on X, Saxena expressed gratitude to the people of Ladakh for their enthusiastic participation, saying the impressive turnout reflected their faith in democracy and grassroots self-governance.

He said the participation of first-time voters, along with senior citizens, demonstrated the people's unwavering commitment to the democratic process and strengthened the spirit of local self-governance.

The LG described the polls as particularly significant as they were the first Panchayat and Municipal elections since 2018 and the first to be held after Ladakh attained Union Territory status in 2019.

Saxena also acknowledged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for their commitment to strengthening grassroots democratic institutions and empowering people across Ladakh.

Ladakh recorded significant voter participation in its first Panchayat and Municipal Council elections since becoming a Union Territory in 2019, with 70.03 per cent polling in Panchayat elections and 52.40 per cent in municipal polls.

The elections covered 192 Panchayat Halqas across eight districts and 38 municipal wards in Leh and Kargil. Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena hailed the turnout as a historic milestone, appreciating people across age groups for participating in the democratic process.

He said the elections marked an important step towards strengthening grassroots democracy and local self-governance in Ladakh.(KINS)

PM Modi

Professor Suman Chakraborty said the Prime Minister engaged individually with the students, posed challenging questions on emerging technologies and sought their ideas on how scientific research could address some of the country's pressing problems.

"The Prime Minister gave them some challenging problems on what work needs to be done. He also looked into some of the technologies that have been developed for healthcare at IIT Kharagpur, which are being used by women in villages like the Sundarbans and other distant regions, and shared his insights on it," Professor Chakraborty said.

The interaction was organised under the '75 Voices for Viksit Bharat' initiative as part of the institute's Platinum Jubilee celebrations. The director said the central theme of the Prime Minister's visit was IIT Kharagpur's contribution to the national mission of building Viksit Bharat.

"The most important part of this is our current students, because they will become the driving force of the country," he said.

According to students who participated in the session, discussions covered data analytics, artificial intelligence and drone technology. The Prime Minister raised questions about how fragmented data available across different platforms could be integrated to generate meaningful intelligence and improve decision-making.

He also questioned whether conventional character certificates issued by schools could adequately assess a student's character, prompting a discussion on the possible application of data analysis in evaluating human attributes.

The Prime Minister urged the participating students to take up technological challenges that could contribute directly to the country's development, student Dhruv Agarwal said.

Another notable moment was the presentation of an indigenous Mangalyaan rover developed by IIT Kharagpur students. The Prime Minister offered suggestions on improving the prototype and taking it towards commercialisation, encouraging the young researchers to move beyond developing a model and work towards making it a practical technological achievement.

The Prime Minister subsequently addressed the Platinum Jubilee gathering, urging students to overcome what he called "limiting beliefs" and follow the principle of "Nation First". He said the coming two decades would be decisive for India's development and called upon the young generation to make the country's centenary of independence in 2047 a milestone in its journey towards becoming a developed

President Murmu

commissioned officers, while distinguished trainees will receive medals and trophies for outstanding performance.

President Droupadi Murmu will review the Passing Out Parade (POP) of Autumn Term 2026 at the Indian Naval Academy (INA), Ezhimala, Kerala, on November 28.

The President will attend the ceremony as the chief guest and reviewing officer, marking the completion of training by officer trainees and their transition into commissioned service in the Indian Navy, according to the Ministry of Defence.

More than 400 officer trainees from various courses will participate in the parade at Pereira Parade Ground. The trainees have undergone comprehensive training in professional skills, leadership, physical endurance and character development, with emphasis on the core values of duty, honour and courage.

Officer trainees from friendly foreign countries will also take part alongside their Indian counterparts. Their participation, the Ministry said, reflects India's efforts to strengthen maritime cooperation and build professional ties with friendly maritime nations.

Medals and trophies will be presented to trainees who have distinguished themselves in different aspects of training. A key part of the ceremony will be the traditional 'Shipping of Stripes', marking the conferment of commissioned officer ranks and the transition of trainees into officers of the Indian Navy.

Family members of the passing-out trainees and the Academy's training faculty will also witness the ceremony.

The Passing Out Parade will be livestreamed on the Indian Navy's official social media channels.

'Skills, Not

livelihood of a person who possesses skills," the Prime Minister said while addressing the fifth National Skill Convocation Ceremony at Indira Gandhi Pratishthan in Lucknow.

He argued that the country's future economic strength would depend not merely on academic degrees but on the ability of its workforce to acquire, develop and apply practical skills in a rapidly changing technological environment.

In a significant message on the dignity of vocational education, Modi said students graduating from Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) deserved the same respect as those studying at Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs).

"Be it IIT or ITI, for me, students are the treasure, strength and future of the country," he said, underlining the need to dismantle the social distinction between conventional higher education and technical training.

Tracing the historical decline of India's traditional craftsmanship, the Prime Minister alleged that foreign invaders deliberately targeted the country's indigenous skills and artisans because their craftsmanship had contributed to India's prosperity.

He said the British later adopted a different approach by introducing an education system under Thomas Babington Macaulay that, according to him, reduced the emphasis on practical skills and encouraged the production of clerical manpower.

Even after Independence, this preference for clerical employment continued to dominate perceptions of professional success, leaving traditional craftsmanship and vocational education neglected, Modi observed.

The Prime Minister said changing global circumstances were creating fresh opportunities for India to reclaim its position as a major centre of skills and craftsmanship. He expressed confidence that the country was steadily progressing towards becoming the world's skill capital.

In a major announcement, Modi said India would host the 2027 WorldSkills Competition at Greater Noida in Uttar Pradesh, providing a global platform for skilled Indian youth to showcase their capabilities and compete with talent from across the world.

His address placed vocational education, traditional craftsmanship and emerging technological challenges at the centre of India's future workforce strategy, with a clear message that practical competence must receive recognition alongside academic achievement.

Kashmir Gets

end of November. Night temperatures improved across most parts of Kashmir on Saturday, with Srinagar recording 2.0°C, while Pahalgam and Gulmarg registered 0.4°C each. Jammu city recorded a minimum of 13.3°C. The department said no rainfall was recorded at major weather stations during the preceding 24 hours.

The Meteorological Department on Saturday forecast generally dry weather across Jammu and Kashmir till November 30, with night temperatures expected to fall by one to two degrees Celsius towards the end of the month.

According to the Meteorological Centre Srinagar, the weather is likely to remain generally dry till November 30, while partly to generally cloudy conditions are expected from December 1 to 3.

The department said minimum temperatures are likely to witness a gradual decline towards the end of November.

Meanwhile, night temperatures increased across most parts of Kashmir on Saturday, with Srinagar recording a minimum temperature of 2.0 degrees Celsius against 0.2 degrees Celsius the previous night.

Pahalgam recorded a minimum temperature of 0.4 degrees Celsius against minus 2.2 degrees Celsius on Friday, while Gulmarg registered 0.4 degrees Celsius against minus 0.4 degrees Celsius.

Qazigund recorded 2.2 degrees Celsius against minus 0.8 degrees Celsius, Kupwara 0.8 degrees Celsius against minus 1.1 degrees Celsius and Kokernag 3.1 degrees Celsius against 0.7 degrees Celsius the previous night.

In Jammu division, Jammu city recorded a minimum temperature of 13.3 degrees Celsius, Katra 12.6 degrees Celsius, Banihal 5.3 degrees Celsius, Batote 7.1 degrees Celsius and Bhaderwah 3.6 degrees Celsius.

The department said no rainfall was recorded at the major weather stations across Jammu and Kashmir during the 24 hours ending at 8:30 am on Saturday.

Day temperatures also remained above normal at several places on Friday, with Srinagar recording a maximum of 16.1 degrees Celsius, Gulmarg 11 degrees Celsius, Pahalgam 14.5 degrees Celsius and Kupwara 18 degrees Celsius.

Jammu city recorded a maximum temperature of 26.5 degrees Celsius, while Banihal and Bhaderwah registered 22.3 and 22.4 degrees Celsius, respectively.

The department has not forecast any significant rain or snowfall across Jammu and Kashmir till the end of November. (KNS)

Winter Break

Minister Shameema Firdous on Saturday said the government was considering winter vacations for students from nursery to Class 5 in Kashmir in view of the prevailing cold conditions.

Speaking to reporters at the National Conference headquarters in Srinagar, Firdous said a decision on winter vacations for junior classes would be taken after assessing weather conditions and their impact on the health of children.

"We are considering the matter for children from nursery to Class 5 and will take a decision accordingly," she said.

Referring to the difficulties faced by children attending schools during cold mornings, the minister said the government was mindful of health concerns, including throat and chest infections, cough and fever among young students.

However, she did not specify a date for the commencement of winter vacations.

Food Safety

for years, saying the issue has persisted since 2002, even as she maintained that action was being taken against those involved in food adulteration.

Speaking to reporters in Kulgam amid growing concerns over the safety of food products following recent seizures, Itoo said the department had been working with inadequate manpower and that she had reviewed the situation to address the shortage.

"The department was established in 2002, but adequate staff has not been provided since then. There are difficulties because of the shortage, but I have already reviewed the matter and these issues will be addressed," she said.

The minister said the Food Safety Department had taken action in cases involving violations of food safety regulations, including cancellation of licences, imposition of fines and inspections.

However, she did not identify the businesses or establishments whose licences had been cancelled or specify the cases in which penalties were imposed.

"We have taken all the necessary measures. The department is following the rules and regulations. Licences have been cancelled and on-the-spot investigations have been conducted," Itoo said.

Responding to questions about criminal proceedings against those involved in food adulteration, the minister said the department had limitations in taking direct police action and had already referred relevant matters to the police.

"The Food Safety Department can cancel licences under the law, but for registration of FIRs and further criminal proceedings, we have to approach the police. The department has already written to them," she said.

Itoo did not disclose how many cases had been referred to the police or whether FIRs had been registered in those matters.

She said further action would be taken by the police in accordance with the law, while the Food Safety Department would continue exercising its enforcement powers.

The minister said recent enforcement activities had brought food safety violations to public attention and maintained that the department had stepped up its work.

"It is because the department started taking action that people came to know what they were consuming. Otherwise, people would not have known about these things," she said.

Referring to the health risks associated with adulterated food, Itoo said the government would not tolerate practices that endangered consumers.

"Those who are putting people's health at risk will not be spared. Strict action will be taken against anyone found involved," she said.

The minister said the department had already imposed fines and cancelled licences in cases involving violations, while further proceedings were being pursued through the police.

She also appealed to people to report suspected food adulteration and the sale of unsafe products to the Food Safety Department.

Itoo said Deputy Commissioners had been asked to assist the department in identifying violations and ensuring appropriate action.

"Wherever people come across such activities, they should bring them to the notice of the Food Safety Department. We have also spoken to the Deputy Commissioners and asked them to cooperate," she said.

The minister maintained that enforcement would continue and said steps would be taken to address the manpower shortage affecting the department. (KNS)

CM Omar

urged educated youth to contribute to public policy, ethical entrepreneurship and grassroots development. Inviting young professionals to explore opportunities in Jammu and Kashmir beyond tourism, he stressed that collaboration between young people from different parts of the country could strengthen national unity and unlock the region's potential. He also urged graduates to uphold integrity, create opportunities for others, remain curious and view their degrees as a responsibility towards society.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today called upon the graduating Class of 2026 of IILM University to actively participate in governance, public life, and nation-building, stressing that the country's demographic dividend can translate into lasting prosperity only through responsible leadership and meaningful engagement.

The Chief Minister was addressing the Convocation Ceremony as Chief Guest in New Delhi.

Addressing the graduating students, faculty members, and parents, the Chief Minister said young people must recognise their responsibility in shaping the country's institutions and future. Observing that voting is only the beginning of democratic participation and not its entirety, he said, "Voting is the entry ticket to democracy, not the entirety of the performance," and urged capable, ethical, and educated youth not to remain detached from governance and public affairs.

The Chief Minister highlighted various avenues through which young professionals can contribute to governance, including ethical entrepreneurship, data-driven public policy, grassroots-level engagement, and public service. He stressed that governance is not confined to political offices but requires participation and commitment from every section of society.

Reflecting on his experience of governing Jammu and Kashmir, Omar Abdullah emphasised that trust between citizens and the government is fundamental to development and effective administration.

Inviting young graduates to look at Jammu and Kashmir beyond its tourism potential, he encouraged them to engage with the region as investors, educators, and innovators.

"When young professionals from Delhi, Bengaluru, and Mumbai collaborate with young minds from Srinagar and Jammu, we strengthen the fabric of the nation," he said.

The Chief Minister also shared five guiding principles with the graduating students, emphasising the importance of listening before leading, creating opportunities for others, exercising strategic patience, maintaining uncompromising integrity, and nurturing lifelong curiosity. He urged the graduates to view their degrees not merely as academic achievements, but as a responsibility to contribute meaningfully to society and make a positive difference in the lives of others.

During the convocation, IILM University conferred honorary Doctor of Philosophy degrees (Honoris Causa) upon three distinguished personalities—former Vice Chairman and Managing Director of Tata Motors Limited Ravi Kant, eminent educationist Dasho Arun Kapur, and Dr. V. L. Indira Dutt—alongside awarding doctoral degrees, Dr. Kulwant Rai Gold Medals, and certificates of merit to graduating scholars across various disciplines.

No local

Lashkar-eToiba (LeT) in an encounter. With this, I can say with pride today that there is not a single local terrorist left in Kashmir Valley. All those who remain are foreign terrorists."

"Development marks a significant change in the security situation in the Valley. It's a matter of pride for us. No Kashmiri youth is currently involved in terrorist activities in the Valley," he added.

The Union Home Minister also linked the decline in locals joining terrorist ranks to the Centre's decision to abrogate Article 370 in August 2019. "Constitutional changes have ended separatist sentiments among Kashmiri youth," he added.

Recalling the political and security situation in the Valley during the 1990s, Shah said, "I also want to remind the people of this country about the situation in the Kashmir during the 1990s, a time when many questioned how long we would even be able to hold onto Kashmir."

He credited security personnel deployed in the region during those difficult years with maintaining India's control over the Valley.

Shah said that when Article 370 was abrogated, opposition parties had questioned the connection between the constitutional provision and terrorism. "Today, I can proudly tell the entire nation that the abrogation of Article 370 has put an end to the sentiment of separatism among the youth of Kashmir," he said—(KNO)

DGP Reviews

step up action against terror and separatist networks.

The review, held in Jammu, was attended by senior police officers, including Special DG Coordination, IGP Railways, IGP Security and IGP Jammu Zone.

According to Jammu Zone Police, the meeting assessed ongoing operations and security measures being implemented across the region.

The review comes in the backdrop of a high-level security meeting chaired by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, during which he called for a shift beyond conventional counter-terrorism operations towards dismantling the wider networks supporting militancy and separatism.

"Our goal cannot stop at neutralising terrorists. We must tear down the entire terrorist, separatist ecosystem that sustains them," Sinha had told police officers.

The Lieutenant Governor had also directed security agencies to strengthen winter surveillance, improve operational preparedness and maintain effective control over security operations.

He had stressed that action against narco-terror networks must continue, with a focus on disrupting the financial and logistical structures supporting such activities.

The directions also included setting district-specific targets for the seizure and forfeiture of properties linked to anti-national elements, with Deputy Commissioners and Senior Superintendents of Police asked to appoint dedicated nodal officers.

Security agencies were further directed to maintain vigilance along the Line of Control (LoC) and International Border (IB), particularly against encroachments, while stepping up enforcement against illegal mining, drug trafficking and bovine smuggling.

Saturday's review comes as security agencies prepare for winter conditions in Jammu and Kashmir, when snowfall and difficult terrain can affect surveillance and operational movement in mountainous areas.

Police, however, did not disclose details of specific operations discussed during the meeting or any fresh operational decisions taken. (KNS)

High Court pulls

women travelling in buses, matadors and other public transport vehicles without assurance of reserved seating.

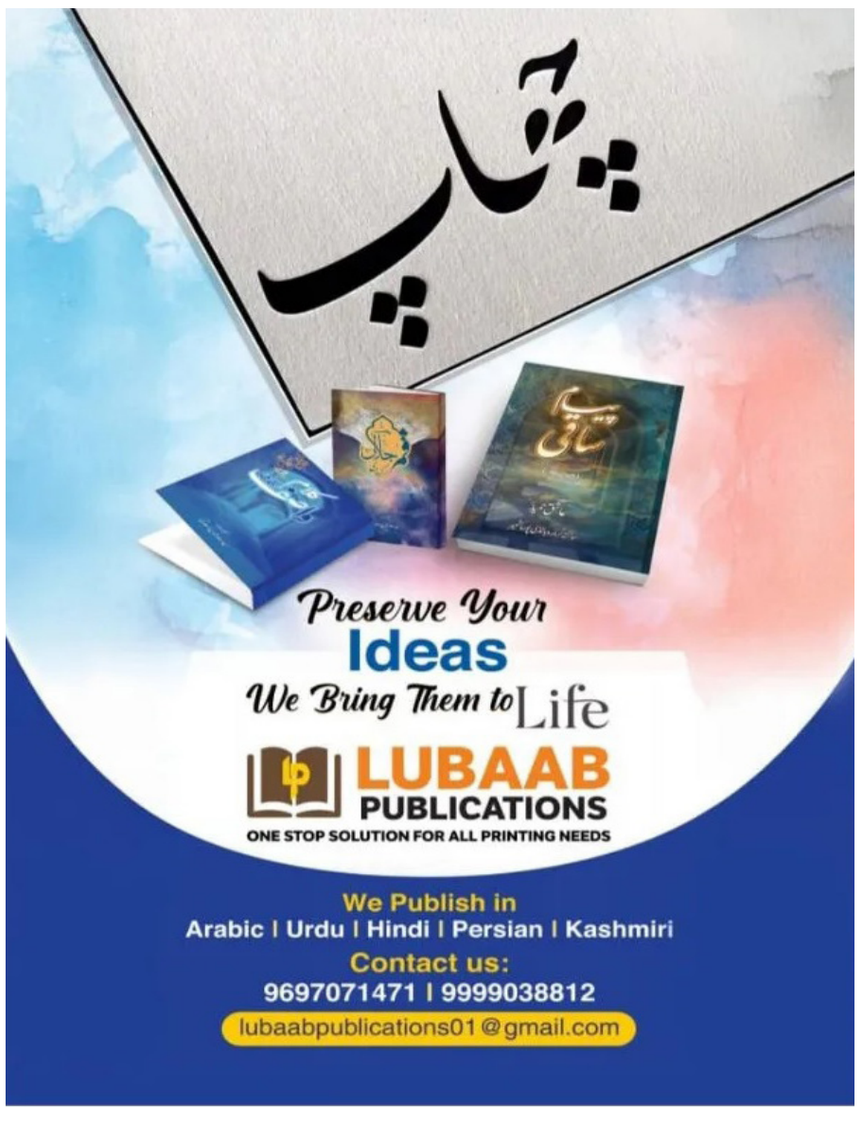
The High Court noted that even the Srinagar Traffic Police Chief had expressed difficulty in enforcing the directives, stating that their implementation required executive decisions, statutory notifications or departmental directions from the competent authorities.

The High Court also took note of government directions requiring Regional Transport Officers (RTOs) and Assistant Regional Transport Officers (ARTOs) to ensure strict implementation of seat reservation for women and persons with disabilities in buses, mini-buses, sumos, e-rickshaws and other public service vehicles.

The directions, as per KNO, also require weekly compliance and enforcement reports to be submitted to the Transport Commissioner. The High Court observed that compliance reports sought through its August 10 order were still awaited from the Transport Commissioner, J&K Legal Services Authority, Transport Department and Traffic Police.

Allowing more time to the respondents to submit compliance details, the High Court said it reserves the

discretion to issue further directions to make the PIL more effective and ensure a sense of safety and security for women commuters. The matter has been listed for further hearing on December 23, 2026—(KNO)



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DC Anantnag presides over vibrant Public Grievance Redressal Camp at Chittergul

Redresses several Grievances on the Spot, directs Officers to ensure Time-Bound Redressal of remaining Public Grievances

■ HT News Network



ANANTNAG, NOVEMBER 21: As part of the public outreach initiative aimed at bringing the administration closer to the people, a mega public darbar-cum-grievance redressal camp was today held at Model Higher Secondary School, Chittergul, to listen to the grievances, demands and developmental concerns of the people of Block Chittergul.

The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from people belonging to different villages and sections of society across the block, who put forth their issues and demands before Deputy Commissioner (DC) Anantnag, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat.

During the public darbar, participants raised a wide range of issues pertaining to road connectivity, drinking water, irrigation, healthcare, education, electricity, telecommunications, tourism, agriculture, horticulture and other essential public services. Several issues were redressed on the spot, while the DC directed the concerned departments to take prompt action on the remaining genuine demands.

The major demands raised during the programme included construction of a Shamshan Ghat, improvement of mobile network connectivity, resolution of drinking water supply issues in Patribal and Didnard, upgradation and construction of Wuzkhan Road and Ziyarat Road, provision of PHE and irrigation facilities, availability of additional ration at Cheerpora, upgradation of Government Girls Middle School Dethu, and adequate deployment of medical staff at Chittergul Hospital.

Other demands included installation of an X-ray facility at the hospital, establishment of Fire and Emergency Services facilities, organisation of agricultural and horticultural awareness camps, construction of Achabal-Chowgund Road, establishment of a laboratory at Higher Secondary School Chittergul, opening of a public library, construction of a Block Office and release of pending land compensation for PMGSY Tangmullah Road.

The people also demanded construction of a water supply tunnel from Nagbal to Sonach, upgradation of the Sub-Centre at PHC Brah, provision of banking facilities at Brah, establishment of a CSC complex, construction of a slaughterhouse at Chittergul, development of Chatabal as a tourist destination and improvement of irrigation facilities at Gamkul, besides other area-specific demands.

The DC gave a patient hearing to the participants and took detailed stock of the issues raised by the public. He directed the concerned officers to examine the grievances on priority and take immediate necessary action for redressal of the genuine demands.

The DC also instructed the departments to ensure close coordination and regular follow-up so that the issues raised during the public darbar are addressed within stipulated timelines. He stressed that officers should remain responsive to public concerns and ensure effective delivery of services at the grassroots level.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasised that such public outreach programmes provide an important platform for direct interaction between the administration and the public, enabling the government to understand local issues and address them effectively.

He urged people to avail themselves of the benefits of various government welfare and self-employment schemes, stating that these initiatives can improve livelihoods, promote economic self-reliance and generate employment opportunities, particularly in rural areas.

The DC assured that all genuine public grievances would be addressed on priority and that the District Administration remains committed to ensuring equitable development and effective delivery of public services across the district.

Additional District Development Commissioner Mahima Madan, Chief Planning Officer, Superintending Engineer Hydraulic, Superintending Engineer R&B, Chief Agriculture Officer, Chief Horticulture Officer, Chief Sheep Husbandry Officer, Chief Education Officer, Lead District Manager J&K Bank, Assistant Commissioner Panchayats, Executive Engineers of Irrigation & Flood Control, R&B and PDD, Tehsildar Vailoo, District Medical Officer, Block Development Officer Chittergul and other district and sectoral

SDM Karnah inspects Farmer ID Camps, reviews Registration Progress

■ HT News Network



KUPWARA, NOVEMBER 21: Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Karnah, accompanied by Tehsildar Karnah, today inspected Farmer ID generation camps across the sub-division to review the ongoing registration drive and check facilities for local farmers.

During the visit, the SDM spoke with field staff at the camps and reviewed the number of IDs generated so far. He stressed that every eligible farmer must be registered so they can easily access government welfare schemes and agriculture services.

The SDM directed officials from the Revenue and Agriculture departments to work closely together to ensure a smooth and hassle-free process for farmers. He asked them to pay special attention to remote and far-flung areas so that no eligible person is left out due to distance or poor network connectivity.

To help residents of remote villages like Jabdi which lacks mobile network coverage for online registration, a special camp has been set up at Toli with the help of local Army authorities. Residents of Jabdi have been informed to visit the Toli camp to complete their registration.

The SDM praised the teamwork of the Revenue and Agriculture departments, as well as the Army, for reachingdifficult areas in Karnah. He stated that the administration is committed to registering all eligible farmers and directed teams to finish the work accurately on time.

DC Ganderbal reviews functioning of WMDA, Takes Stock of Lake Conservation, Tourism Development Works

■ HT News Network



GANDERBAL, NOVEMBER 21: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Shreya Singhal, today chaired a review meeting in the Meeting Hall of Wullar Manasbal Development Authority (WMDA) to assess its overall functioning, with particular focus on ongoing developmental works, conservation of Manasbal Lake and tourism infrastructure.

During the meeting, the Chief Executive Officer, WMDA, Dr. Ahsan Ul Haq Chishti, presented a detailed overview of the Authority's achievements, ongoing initiatives and future development plans, highlighting key interventions in lake conservation, environmental management, infrastructure development and tourism promotion.The meeting reviewed various measures undertaken for the conservation of Manasbal Lake, including dredging, de-weeding, cleanliness drives, waste management and sanitation initiatives. The progress of major infrastructure projects, particularly the lakeside pedestrian pathway, parking facilities and Manasbal bypass, was also discussed.The Authority's initiatives to promote Manasbal as a sustainable tourism destination through cultural activities, recreational facilities and adventure tourism were highlighted. The proposed sewage management system for the lake's catchment area and the need for strengthened solid waste management were also deliberated upon.

The DC emphasized the importance of balancing tourism development with ecological preservation and called for coordinated efforts among the concerned departments to ensure effective implementation of ongoing projects.

DC Shopian visits PARESHA Girls' Home, One Stop Centre (Sakhi) for Women

■ HT News Network



SHOPIAN, NOVEMBER 21: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Charandeep Singh, today visited PARESHA, Child Care Institution (Girls' Home), Shopian, and the One Stop Centre (Sakhi) for Women at Heemal Administrative Complex, Old DC Office, Shopian, to assess the functioning, facilities and welfare services being provided at the institutions.

During his visit to PARESHA, the Deputy Commissioner interacted with the girls residing at the institution. The girls introduced themselves and shared their interests, hobbies and future aspirations. He listened to their concerns, enquired about their basic needs and encouraged them to overcome life's challenges through education, hard work and perseverance, emphasising that their circumstances should never limit their aspirations.

Accompanied by the District Social Welfare Officer, Shopian, the DC inspected the accommodation, mess, classrooms, library and other facilities. He reviewed food quality, hygiene, the menu and mess roster, and directed proper cleanliness and upkeep of the campus.

The girls requested improved sports facilities, including an outdoor gym, a small playground and a badminton court. Taking note of their demands, the DC stressed the need to strengthen sports and recreational facilities to promote their physical fitness and overall development.

During his visit to the art and craft classroom, the girls showcased their creative work. Appreciating their talent, the DC encouraged innovative activities, particularly 'Waste to Wonder' projects using cardboard, sand art and other materials. He directed the concerned art and craft teacher to enhance the quality of their work, improve classroom furnishing and organise exhibitions to provide a platform for showcasing their creativity.

DLSA Srinagar settles 18,856 Cases in Special Lok Adalat

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 21: In compliance to the directions of JK Legal Services Authority, District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Srinagar, organized a Special Lok Adalat for Traffic Challans, other civil cases and Negotiable Instruments, Act, 1881 Cases which was held under the guidance of Naseer Ahmad Dar, Chairman District Legal Services Authority (Principal District & Sessions Judge), Srinagar, and overall supervision of Secretary DLSA Srinagar.

To facilitate the amicable settlement of cases, thrrr benches were constituted for the Special Lok Adalat. The 1st bench was presided over by Mohammad Ishtiyaq Alam Baba, Forest Magistrate Srinagar, along with Tasneem Kawoos City Munsiff, Srinagar asmember. 2nd bench was presided over by Junaid Imtiyaz Mir Sub-Judge Srinagar, and Iram Irtiza , 2nd Additional Munsiff Srinagar as member and 3rd bench was presided over by Mufti Nahida, Additional Spl. Mobile Magistrate/JMIC Panthachowk (Incharge), along with Advocate Sameena Ramzan as member.

A total number of19,204 Cases including traffic challanswere taken up by these benches for amicable settlement, out of which 18,856 Cases were settled.

An amount of Rs 68,83,290 was awarded as settlement amount in all these cases.

DC Pulwama launches Tobacco Free Youth Campaign 4.0

■ HT News Network



PULWAMA, NOVEMBER 21: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Pulwama, Kuldeep Krishan Sidha, today launched the Tobacco Free Youth Campaign 4.0 at the Office of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Pulwama, emphasising the need for greater awareness and active youth participation in the collective effort to make the district tobacco-free.

During the launching ceremony, District Health Officer, Pulwama, presented a detailed presentation on the National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP), highlighting the district's achievements and ongoing interventions aimed at curbing tobacco consumption and strengthening enforcement of tobacco control regulations.

It was informed that 72 villages have so far been declared Tobacco-Free Villages in the district, while 651 schools have achieved compliance under the Tobacco-Free Educational Institutions (TOFEI) guidelines. It was apprised that the Tobacco Free Youth Campaign 4.0, is being implemented over a period of two months, focusing on intensifying public awareness regarding the harmful effects of tobacco, strengthening Tobacco-Free Educational Institutions, declaring atleast 42 more villages tobacco-free, and ensuring stricter enforcement of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003, and the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Act (PECA), 2019.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC appreciated the Health Department for its efforts and ongoing interventions under the National Tobacco Control Programme. He stressed that the campaign should translate into tangible behavioural change through coordinated efforts of the Health Department, educational institutions, local bodies and other stakeholders to achieve the goal of a tobacco-free Pulwama.

On the occasion, the DC advised students against falling prey to peer pressure, curiosity and misleading influences that may lead to tobacco and other drug consumption. He urged them to make informed choices, adopt healthy lifestyles and act as ambassadors of the tobacco-free campaign within their families, educational institutions and communities.He encouraged students to focus on education and hard work, highlighting that the pen in their hands and their dedication and hard work would shape their future, not tobacco or any form of substance abuse. He also sensitised them about the harmful effects of passive smoking, highlighting that exposure to tobacco smoke puts the health of non-smokers, including children and family members, at risk.

Highlighting the role of students in shaping a healthier society, the DC stressed that awareness among young people is crucial for preventing the initiation of tobacco use. He called upon educational institutions, health functionaries and other stakeholders to work in close coordination to ensure effective implementation of the campaign and realise the objective of building a tobacco-free society.The DC also directed the Health Department to maintain close coordination with the District Administration and communicate any requirement for administrative intervention or support to ensure the smooth implementation of campaign activities. He further informed that a senior officer would be assigned to each of the 42 villages envisaged to be declared tobacco-free under the campaign to oversee and facilitate the process.

On the occasion, the DC also led the gathering in a pledge wherein the participants resolved never to consume tobacco in any form, encourage tobacco users to quit, support healthy lifestyles and contribute towards building a Tobacco-Free India. He also flagged off a rally on the occasion.

Progress of Developmental Works under District CAPEX Budget 2026-27 reviewed at Kupwara

■ HT News Network



KUPWARA, NOVEMBER 21: Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Kupwara, Ghulam Rasool Chodhary, today chaired a comprehensive review meeting to assess the physical and financial progress of developmental works being executed under the District CAPEX Budget 2026-27.

During the meeting, the ADDC undertook a detailed department-wise and work-wise review of the ongoing projects and took stock of the progress achieved so far. He directed all concerned departments and executing agencies to expedite the pace of execution and ensure timely completion of all approved works within the stipulated timelines.

Emphasizing the importance of quality and accountability, the ADDC stressed that all developmental works must be executed strictly in accordance with the prescribed technical specifications and quality standards. He also called for regular field inspections and effective monitoring of the projects to ensure transparency, accountability and optimal utilization of public funds.

The ADDC reviewed the progress of works across various sectors and funding components, including PRI Grants, BDC Grants, DDC Grants, Elementary and Secondary Education, Health, APDS, ABDS, SSY, UT CAPEX (Tribal), UT CAPEX (Revenue), Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and MPLADS.

He stressed upon the officers to maintain close coordination with the executing agencies, promptly address bottlenecks, if any, and ensure that the benefits of developmental initiatives reach the people in a timely and effective manner.

Superintendent Engineer R&B Kupwara, Chief Planning Officer, Assistant Commissioner Panchayats, Chief Medical Officer, Chief Education Officer, besides, other district and sectoral officers and representatives from various departments attended the meeting.

Save Youth Save Future Foundation's NEXGEN connects Kulgam Youth with District Administration

■ Farooq Rather



KULGAM, NOVEMBER 21: Save Youth Save Future Foundation (SYSF), through its Students' Wing, NEXGEN, organised a Youth–Administration Interactive Session at the Auditorium Hall, Mini Secretariat, Kulgam, aimed at strengthening youth participation and creating meaningful opportunities for direct engagement with public institutions.

The programme brought together local students, youth representatives and district administration for an interactive exchange of ideas and concerns.

The programme was graced by Shahzad Alam, Deputy Commissioner, Kulgam, as the Chief Guest, along with Wajahat Farooq Bhat, Founder and Chairman of Save Youth Save Future Foundation. Several senior office bearers, organisational representatives and a large number of local youth also participated.

During the interaction, young participants highlighted key issues concerning Kulgam, including tourism development, Sports, healthcare infrastructure, education, employment opportunities, public transport, women's safety and the growing concern of substance abuse.

Suggestions were also put forward regarding sports infrastructure, adventure tourism and youth entrepreneurship under Mission YUVA.

The Deputy Commissioner interacted extensively with the participating youth, patiently heard their concerns and shared valuable insights on various developmental priorities of the district. He encouraged young people to remain actively engaged in community development, identify local challenges and contribute constructive suggestions. His interaction also provided participants with an opportunity to understand the role of the district administration in addressing public concerns and facilitating development.

Addressing the gathering, Wajahat Farooq Bhat, highlighted the vision behind NEXGEN, emphasising that the initiative aims to bridge the gap between young people and public institutions by providing a meaningful platform for dialogue, expression and participation. He stressed that the aspirations and concerns of young people must find space in discussions concerning local development and the future of the region.

Through NEXGEN, Save Youth Save Future Foundation reaffirms its commitment to strengthening youth leadership, encouraging meaningful institutional engagement and ensuring that the voices, aspirations and concerns of young people remain an important part of the developmental journey of Jammu and Kashmir. During the interaction, young participants highlighted key issues concerning Kulgam, including tourism development, Sports, healthcare infrastructure, education, employment opportunities, public transport, women's safety and the growing concern of substance abuse.

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DC Pulwama chairs meeting to discuss issues of senior citizens

■ HT News Network



PULWAMA, NOVEMBER 21: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Pulwama, Kuldeep Krishan Sidha, today chaired a meeting at the District Administrative Complex Pulwama to discuss issues and concerns of senior citizens and seek their suggestions for improving public services.

The meeting was attended by ADDC Pulwama Gulzar Ahmad Bhat, ADC Pulwama Dr. S.M. Ashraf, CPO Aashiq Khanday, Additional SP Pulwama, ACD Pulwama, CMO Pulwama, Executive Engineers of R&B and KPDCL, other officers and senior citizens from across the district.

At the outset, the DC acknowledged the invaluable contributions and services rendered by senior citizens to society and emphasised the need to ensure their dignity, well-being and access to essential services.

During the meeting, senior citizens raised issues relating to healthcare, drinking water, electricity infrastructure, road connectivity, sanitation, revenue services, social security and implementation of welfare schemes.

A key demand was the establishment of a Viqaar House with library and recreational facilities. The DC assured that suitable land would be identified and the proposal taken up on priority.

Other issues included macadamisation of roads, strengthening of power infrastructure, rationalization of Patwari halqas and extension of pipes attached to municipal suction vehicles. The DC issued directions to the concerned officers for necessary action. He also directed the ACD to ensure immediate resumption of door-to-door waste collection in villages where the service had been disrupted.

Emphasising the participation of senior citizens in local development, the DC directed the Rural Development Department to specially invite them to Gram Sabha meetings. He also assured that the procedure for issuance of Senior Citizen Cards would be examined and taken forward at the earliest.

Taking note of traffic congestion, particularly along the approach road to District Hospital Pulwama, the DC said that an on-ground survey would be conducted with concerned officers to identify measures for improved traffic management. He also stressed collective responsibility and public participation in maintaining cleanliness and sanitation.

Regarding healthcare, the CMO was directed to facilitate essential medical tests and investigations free of cost for financially disadvantaged senior citizens during medical emergencies, with the district administration bearing the expenditure in such cases.

The DC gave a patient hearing to individual grievances and assured that all genuine concerns would be taken up with the concerned departments for timely redressal.

The senior citizens appreciated the district administration for providing them a platform to highlight their concerns and called for continued coordination and follow-up.

District-Level Essay Writing, Quiz Competitions held in Anantnag

■ HT News Network

ANANTNAG, NOVEMBER 20: District-level Essay Writing and Quiz Competitions for members of Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs) were organised today at Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Ranibagh, Anantnag, with the participation of over 60 students representing all seven Assembly Constituencies of the district.

The competitions aimed to promote electoral awareness, democratic values and responsible citizenship among students. The programme was inaugurated by the Deputy District Election Officer, Anantnag, and the District Education Planning Officer, Anantnag.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Anantnag, Dr. Muzamil Maqbool, attended the concluding-cum-felicitation ceremony as the Chief Guest and appreciated the initiative and participation of students.

On the occasion, ten top-performing students were shortlisted to represent District Anantnag in the forthcoming Divisional-Level Competition.

Special Lok Adalat in Pulwama settles 383 Cases, Awards Rs 43.75 Lakh as Settlement Amount

■ HT News Network

PULWAMA, NOVEMBER 21: Special Lok-Adalat for Criminal Compoundable cases was organized in District Court and other sub-ordinate courts of District Pulwama under the Chairmanship of Malik Shabir Ahmad, Chairman District Legal Services Authority (Principal District & Sessions Judge), Pulwama and under the supervision of In charge Secretary DLSA Pulwama.By the concerted efforts of all presiding officers of all the courts, cooperation rendered by the learned advocates a total of 655 cases were taken up by two benches in the district out of which 383 cases were amicably settled and Rs 4375717 was awarded as settlement amount in the Lok-Adalat. By the concerted efforts of all presiding officers of all the courts, cooperation rendered by the learned advocates a total of 655 cases were taken up by two benches in the district out of which 383 cases were amicably settled and Rs 4375717 was awarded as settlement amount.

DC visits Budgam Town; Reviews Civic Amenities, Transport Facilities, Infrastructure Development

Inspects Bus Stands, stresses improved Public Transport connectivity, Sanitation & Beautification of Town

■ HT News Network



BUDGAM, NOVEMBER 21: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Jatin Kishore, today visited Budgam Town and inspected the New and Old Bus Stands to take stock of public amenities, transportation facilities and infrastructure requirements.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner interacted with stakeholders, transporters and other concerned persons and took stock of issues requiring attention to improve public convenience and ensure better management of transport facilities in the town.

The discussions primarily focused on the provision of adequate washroom facilities, office accommodation for local transporters, improvement of water supply and connectivity, and strengthening of other basic amenities at the bus stands.

The Deputy Commissioner stressed the importance of ensuring smooth availability and regular operation of public transport services across all routes in Budgam district to strengthen connectivity between the District Headquarters and different areas of the district.

He emphasised that adequate and reliable transport services must be ensured for the convenience of the general public, particularly commuters travelling from far-flung areas.

He also stressed the need for proper sanitation, regular garbage collection and effective waste management across Budgam Town.

The DC called for focused measures towards the beautification and upkeep of the town, including improved cleanliness and maintenance of public spaces, to ensure a clean and pleasant environment for residents, commuters and visitors.

He directed the concerned officers to examine the requirements highlighted during the visit and prepare necessary estimates for the proposed developmental works and improvement of public facilities.

The Deputy Commissioner also directed the concerned officers to ensure timely execution and quality completion of all ongoing developmental works across Budgam Town.

He stressed the importance of regular monitoring, adherence to prescribed quality standards and completion of works within stipulated timelines.

He also called for coordinated efforts among the concerned departments to ensure timely resolution of the issues.

Emphasising the need for better management and maintenance of public infrastructure, the Deputy Commissioner stressed that both bus stands must have adequate civic amenities, proper sanitation, reliable water supply and a clean, accessible and commuter-friendly environment.

The Deputy Commissioner was accompanied by Additional Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Mehraj-ud-Din Shah; Joint Director Planning; Executive Engineers of various engineering wings; and other concerned officers.

DLSA Ganderbal conducts Special Lok Adalat on Negotiable Instruments Act Cases for settlement of Traffic Challans, other Civil Cases

■ HT News Network

GANDERBAL, NOVEMBER 21: District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Ganderbal, under the aegis of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) and the Jammu & Kashmir Legal Services Authority, successfully conducted a Special Lok Adalat for Negotiable Instruments (NI) Act Cases under Section 138 and for settlement of Traffic Challans and other Civil Cases today across District Ganderbal.The Special Lok Adalat was held under the guidance of Abdul Nasir, Chairman, District Legal Services Authority (Principal District & Sessions Judge), Ganderbal and under the supervision of Sheikh Babar Hussain, Secretary District Legal Services Authority Ganderbal.For the smooth and effective conduct of the Lok Adalat, four benches were constituted to facilitate the amicable settlement of cases.

The first bench was presided over by Abdul Nasir, Principal District & Sessions Judge, Ganderbal, with Adv. Syed Shafat Andrabi as a member. The second bench was presided over by Nusrat Ali Hakak, Chief Judicial Magistrate, Ganderbal, with Rameen Rashid Khan, Munsiff/JMIC, Ganderbal, as a member. The third bench was presided over by Sheikh Babar Hussain, Secretary, District Legal Services Authority, Ganderbal, with Syed Sibtain Mehdi, Trainee Judge, attached to the Court of the Additional Special Mobile Magistrate, Ganderbal, as a member. The fourth bench was presided over by Aiman Amin, Munsiff/JMIC, Kangan, with Adv. Suhail Ahmed Mir, Panel Lawyer, TLSC Kangan, as a member.While the first three benches conducted proceedings at the District Court Complex, Ganderbal, the fourth bench held proceedings at the Munsiff Court Complex, Kangan, ensuring wider access to litigants across the district.

During the Special Lok Adalat, a total of 194 cases were taken up before the four benches, out of which 148 cases were amicably settled through mutual consent, involving a total settlement amount of Rs 8278900.

During the proceedings, information was also disseminated among the Advocates, litigants and the general public regarding the upcoming 4th National Lok Adalat scheduled to be held on 12th December, 2026, and they were encouraged to avail themselves of the opportunity to get their pending disputes resolved amicably through the Lok Adalat mechanism.

The Special Lok Adalat provided an effective platform for litigants to resolve their disputes amicably, expeditiously and in a cost-effective manner and promoting the spirit of mutual understanding and compromise. The initiative also reaffirmed the commitment of DLSA Ganderbal towards ensuring accessible, affordable and speedy justice for all.

DLSA Ganderbal continues to undertake such initiatives to strengthen the legal aid mechanism and promote alternative dispute resolution.

DC Budgam visits Transit Accommodation Sheikhpora Reviews Public Issues, Infrastructure Development & availability of Civic Amenities

■ HT News Network

BUDGAM, NOVEMBER 21: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Jatin Kishore, today visited Transit Accommodation Sheikhpora, and took stock of various public issues, infrastructure requirements and the availability of basic civic amenities for residents.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner interacted with local residents and listened to their demands and grievances regarding the availability and improvement of essential facilities.He also reviewed the existing infrastructure and discussed measures to address the issues highlighted by the residents.The Deputy Commissioner reviewed the requirements pertaining to the repair and renovation of old buildings, resolution of seepage and leakage issues, renovation of the children's park, improvement of kitchen facilities at the Community Hall, proper functioning of drainage systems and septic tanks, and strengthening of sanitation arrangements.

He directed the concerned authorities to ensure adequate manpower for sanitation and regular garbage collection to maintain cleanliness in the locality. He also passed directions for macadamisation of internal roads, landscaping and beautification of the area, and the creation of additional recreational spaces.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned Block Development Officer (BDO) to prepare and submit an estimate for the development of an additional park, including lawn development and tiling works.

The Rural Development Department was also instructed to carry out beautification works and lawn development in the Colony.The Deputy Commissioner instructed Superintending Engineer, Jal Shakti to explore options for creation of additional direct tap water supply for the residents.

He also took stock of the availability of medicines and healthcare staff in the colony.



Besides, instructions were also given for establishment of Jan Aushadhi facility for residents.

He inspected the Community Hall and directed the concerned authorities to ensure its proper functioning and maintenance.

The Deputy Commissioner also issued directions for measures to control the stray dog menace, ensure the proper functioning of streetlights and replace defunct lights to improve public convenience and safety.

He emphasised the need for coordinated efforts among the departments to ensure proper maintenance of civic amenities and planned upgradation of public infrastructure.He stressed that sanitation, road connectivity, water supply, street lighting and maintenance of public spaces must receive due attention, with regular monitoring and accountability to ensure effective delivery of public services.The Deputy Commissioner assured the residents that their genuine demands would be examined on merit and appropriate follow-up action would be taken by the concerned departments within a stipulated timeframe.

The Deputy Commissioner was accompanied by Additional Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Mehraj-ud-Din Shah; Joint Director Planning; Superintending Engineer, Jal Shakti; Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD); Chief Medical Officer (CMO); Assistant Regional Transport Officer (ARTO); Executive Engineers of various engineering wings; and other concerned officers. The Deputy Commissioner assured the residents that their genuine demands would be examined on merit and appropriate follow-up action would be taken by the concerned departments within a stipulated timeframe.The Deputy Commissioner was accompanied by Additional Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Mehraj-ud-Din Shah; Joint Director Planning; Superintending Engineer, Jal Shakti; Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD); Chief Medical Officer (CMO).

Charar-i-Sharief comes Alive with Sufi Music, Cultural Celebrations

■ HT News Network



BUDGAM, NOVEMBER 21: On the directions of Director Tourism, Kashmir, Syed Qamar Sajjad, the Directorate of Tourism, Kashmir, organised a vibrant Sufi Festival today at Tourist Bungalow, Charar-i-Sharief, celebrating the Valley's rich spiritual, cultural, and musical heritage.

The festival was graced by Basharat Mahmood, Assistant Director Tourism, Kashmir, who attended the programme and addressed the gathering. In his remarks, he highlighted the enduring role of Sufi traditions in preserving Kashmir's unique cultural identity and spiritual legacy. He further emphasised that such initiatives are vital for promoting the region's heritage, offering a dedicated platform to local artists, and strengthening the cultural tourism potential of Jammu and Kashmir.

The programme featured soulful Sufi musical performances by local artists, who captivated the audience with traditional Kashmiri compositions and melodious renditions accompanied by indigenous instruments. The performances offered attendees an immersive experience of the timeless musical traditions deeply rooted in Kashmir's Sufi culture.

Drawing enthusiastic participation from both local residents and visitors, the festival fostered a spirited atmosphere of community engagement and celebration. The event underscored the importance of cultural festivals in positioning Kashmir as a premier destination for spiritual and cultural tourism while safeguarding traditional art forms.

The celebration reaffirmed the timeless relevance of Kashmir's Sufi heritage and its universal message of peace, harmony, brotherhood, and communal amity - values that remain central to the Valley's cultural ethos.

The festival was a part of a broader series of winter events organised by the Directorate of Tourism across Kashmir.

The department will host several upcoming programmes, including the Caddy Tournament (November 22), Roller Skating Championship (November 26), and a Cultural Event (December 1) in Pahalgam; the Chinar Festival at Padshahi Bagh, Bijbehara (November 25); Sufi Festival at Achabal (November 28); and a Sufi Event at Sonamarg (Dexember 3)

JKPCC holds public hearing for Environment Clearance

■ HT News Network



KATHUA, NOVEMBER 21: Jammu and Kashmir Pollution Control Committee (JKPCC) today conducted a public hearing at SIDCO Industrial Estate- Bhagthali, in connection with the proposed expansion of manufacturing capacity of aluminium products by M/s Jupiter Aluminium Industries Pvt. Ltd from 0.0580 MTPA to 0.1663 MTPA, for obtaining Environmental Clearance.

The public hearing was chaired by Additional District Development Commissioner Kathua Surinder Mohan Sharma, with Regional Director, JKPCC Jammu Suresh Manda, representing the Pollution Control Committee. Divisional Officer PCC Kathua Deepak Abrol was also present.'

During the hearing, Rahul Singh Thakur, Environmental Consultant, M/s Perfect Enviro Solutions Pvt. Ltd., presented the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report, outlining the baseline study and potential impacts of the proposed expansion on air, water, soil, noise, ecology and socio-economic environment, along with the proposed mitigation measures.

It was informed that 1,935 lakh has been earmarked for implementation of the Environment Management Plan, with a recurring expenditure of 131 lakh per annum. The proposed expansion is also expected to generate 237 additional employment opportunities.

Public representatives, social activists and residents of adjoining areas put forth their views, concerns and suggestions regarding the proposed project. The CEO of M/s Jupiter Aluminium Industries Pvt. Ltd. apprised the gathering of initiatives undertaken by the unit for local employment and allocation of funds under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Regional Director, JKPCC Jammu, assured that all issues and suggestions raised during the hearing had been duly recorded and the proceedings.

Movement Kalki seeks restoration of Mian Dido Ji statue, renovation of Chowk

Delegation submits memorandum to newly appointed JMC Commissioner

■ HT News Network

Jammu: Movement Kalki has raised serious concerns over the alleged tampering with the statue of legendary Dogra warrior Mian Dido Ji and the deteriorating condition of the Chowk named after him, demanding its immediate restoration and beautification.

A delegation of the organisation, led by Founder Deepak Jamwal and Advisor Pritam Sharma, met and felicitated the newly appointed Commissioner of Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC). During the meeting, the delegation submitted a memorandum highlighting various issues related to civic amenities, urban development and preservation of Jammu's historical heritage.

The organisation expressed concern over the damage caused to Mian Dido Ji's statue and the neglected condition of the Chowk, stating that the legendary warrior represents Dogra bravery, courage, self-respect and patriotism. It stressed that protecting his legacy is essential for preserving Jammu's historical identity and cultural pride.Movement Kalki demanded immediate repair and restoration of the statue, along with comprehensive renovation, beautification and regular maintenance of the Chowk. It also called for proper protection and upkeep of historical monuments and memorials dedicated to prominent Dogra personalities. Besides heritage-related concerns, the memorandum highlighted several civic issues, including the resumption of night-time sanitation drives from 9 PM to 11 PM for timely garbage collection after market closures, priority-based repair and blacktopping of damaged roads, reconstruction of drains and culverts damaged during previous floods, and completion of pending tile work .

IUST organises Alumni Meet 2026

■ HT News Network

Awantipora, Nov 21: The Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), through the Alumni Connect vertical of its Office of Dean Outreach, organised Alumni Meet 2026 as part of the University's Foundation Week Celebrations. The meet brought together alumni and Departmental Alumni Coordinators to reconnect with their alma mater and explore avenues for strengthening their association with the University.

The meet was presided over by Prof. Shameem Ahmad, Registrar, IUST, who highlighted the important role alumni can play in the University's growth and development through mentorship, career guidance, industry collaboration and sharing of their professional experiences. Dr. Ruheela Hassan, Dean Outreach, emphasized the need to strengthen alumni engagement and encouraged graduates to contribute towards mentoring students, facilitating internships and building academic and industry linkages.

Dr. Hilal Ahmad Makroo, Coordinator Alumni Connect, spoke about the objectives of the initiative and the need to build a vibrant alumni network that fosters meaningful and sustained interaction between the University and its graduates. The gathering provided an opportunity for alumni and Departmental Alumni Coordinators from various departments and centres to interact, exchange ideas and discuss ways to strengthen alumni engagement. Discussions centred on updating alumni databases, identifying distinguished alumni, and exploring opportunities for mentorship, professional networking and collaborative initiatives.

School students showcase their talent at Cambridge Blanket BIG JAMMU TALENT HUNT 2026

■ HT News Network

Jammu, November 21: School students across Jammu are getting a platform to showcase their creativity and stage presence through 92.7 BIG FM's Cambridge Blanket BIG JAMMU TALENT HUNT 2026, presented by Tawi Automobiles. The initiative visited SNS Vidya Mandir, Talab Tillo, today, where students participated with great enthusiasm, making the campus come alive with performances and youthful energy.

The talent hunt, which has already made its way through several schools in Jammu, is offering students an opportunity to explore their interests in music, dance and drama. Beyond the performances, the initiative is encouraging children to overcome stage fear, express themselves freely and discover the confidence that comes with performing in front of an audience.

The campaign is backed by Cambridge Blanket as Title Partner; Tawi Automobiles and Digiana as Presenting Partners; Hotel Asia The Heritage as Co-Presenting Partner; and Nice Gems, Jain Bazar as Co-Powered By Partner. Aroma Multicuisine Family Restaurant.

Ex-Servicemen, Elderly citizens undertake Heritage Tour on Day 3 of World Heritage Week 2026

■ HT News Network



SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 21: As part of the ongoing week-long celebrations of World Heritage Week (November 19–25, 2026), the Department of Archives, Archaeology & Museums, Kashmir Division, organized a special heritage excursion and exhibition visit today for a delegation of Ex-Servicemen and Elderly Citizens across prominent protected monuments and heritage sites of Srinagar District.

The tour featured guided visits to the historic Mughal Hamam, Nishat Garden, and other protected heritage monuments in Srinagar. Departmental officials accompanied the delegation throughout the tour, briefing the veterans and senior citizens on the architectural brilliance, historical significance, and ongoing conservation and restoration measures undertaken to safeguard Kashmir's tangible cultural legacy.

Following the monument visits, the delegation arrived at the Exhibition Hall and Art Gallery, Shergarhi Complex (Old Secretariat), Srinagar, where they were warmly welcomed by the Administrative Officer of the Department and the Assistant Director, Department of Archives, Archaeology & Museums (Kashmir Division).

During the interactive session at the venue, the officers apprised the visiting veterans and senior citizens about the objective and significance of the Week-Long Heritage Exhibition, showcasing rare historic manuscripts, archival records, treaties, and significant historical documents preserved for posterity. The delegation also witnessed a Live Calligraphy Demonstration, where skilled calligraphers displayed diverse traditional styles and artistic techniques, drawing deep appreciation from the guests.

Speaking on the occasion, the departmental officers highlighted that involving senior citizens and ex-servicemen in heritage outreach dialogue, honors their lifetime of service, and strengthens collective community toward preserving Jammu & Kashmir's rich historical and cultural heritage.

Over 100 girl trekkers embark on five-day Pahalgam Trekking Camp from Kulgam

Initiative aims to promote adventure sports, and leadership among young girls

■ Farooq Rather



KULGAM, NOVEMBER 21: Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Kulgam, Altaf Ahmad Khan, today flagged off a group of over 100 young girl trekkers from the Mini Secretariat, Kulgam, for a five-day trekking camp at Pahalgam, organised by the Youth Services and Sports Department, Kulgam.

The initiative is aimed at encouraging young girls to explore adventure sports, develop physical endurance and build confidence through outdoor activities. The camp will provide participants an opportunity to strengthen team spirit and develop a sense of discipline and self-reliance.

Speaking on the occasion, the ADDC appreciated the Youth Services and Sports Department for organising the programme and creating avenues for youth engagement through sports and adventure activities. He encouraged the participants to make the most of the camp and remain actively involved in sports and other constructive pursuits, while keeping away from social evils and negative influences.

He emphasised that such initiatives play an important role in promoting a healthy lifestyle and nurturing discipline, confidence, teamwork and a positive outlook among young people.

The flag-off ceremony was attended by ACR Kulgam, Reyaz Ahmad Shah, District Youth Services and Sports Officer, Narinder Pal Singh, and other departmental officials.

University of Jammu's Dr Abhishek Dutta Conferred S. K. Jain Award for Best Ph.D. Thesis in Ethnobotany

■ HT News Network

JAMMU: Dr Abhishek Dutta, Teaching Faculty in the Department of Botany, University of Jammu, has been conferred the prestigious S. K. Jain Award for Best Ph.D. Thesis in Ethnobotany by the Society of Ethnobotanists for his doctoral research entitled "Ethnobotanical Studies on the Plants of District Poonch (J&K)."

The award, comprising a medal and citation, was presented during the International Symposium on Ethnobotany in Human Well-being, organised by the Society of Ethnobotanists in collaboration with Martin Luther Christian University, Shillong, from November 16 to 18, 2026. On the occasion, Dr. Dutta also delivered an award lecture, highlighting the key findings of his research and their significance in preserving traditional botanical knowledge.

Dr. Dutta completed his Ph.D. in Botany from the University of Jammu in 2023 under the supervision of Prof. Yash Pal Sharma, Dean, Faculty of Life Sciences and Rector, Udhampur Campus, University of Jammu, and Dr. Bikarma Singh, Principal Scientist, CSIR-National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI), Lucknow.

His doctoral research documents the traditional uses of plants in District Poonch, particularly in the field of healthcare. Based on extensive fieldwork involving local communities and traditional healers, the study provides valuable insights into the region's rich ethnobotanical heritage. It also highlights the importance of safeguarding traditional knowledge while ensuring the conservation of plant diversity.

Instituted in 2013, the S. K. Jain Award recognises excellence in doctoral research in ethnobotany. Named in honour of Professor S. K. Jain, widely known as the Father



of Indian Ethnobotany, the award commemorates his pioneering contributions to the development of systematic ethnobotanical research in India.

Expressing his gratitude for the recognition, Dr. Dutta acknowledged the guidance and encouragement of his research supervisors, the support extended by the Department of Botany, University of Jammu, and the recognition bestowed upon him by the Society of Ethnobotanists. He also expressed his appreciation to the people of Poonch, whose cooperation and willingness to share their traditional knowledge formed the foundation of his research.

The achievement brings pride to the University of Jammu and underscores the significance of documenting, promoting and preserving the rich ethnobotanical heritage of Jammu and Kashmir.

Expressing his gratitude for the recognition, Dr. Dutta acknowledged the guidance and encouragement of his research supervisors, the support extended by the Department of Botany, University of Jammu, and the recognition bestowed upon him by the Society of Ethnobotanists. He also expressed his appreciation to the people of Poonch, whose cooperation and willingness to share their traditional knowledge formed the foundation of his research.

HT EDITORIAL

Private Schools or Commercial Empires? Who Will Check Their Arrogance?

From exorbitantly priced textbooks and compulsory uniforms to promotional branding on notebooks and stationery, private schools are turning education into a commercial enterprises

Education is meant to enlighten young minds, not become a business model for extracting money from parents. Yet, across Jammu and Kashmir, an increasing number of private schools appear to have transformed themselves into powerful commercial establishments, dictating their own terms and expecting parents to comply without question. The growing complaints over expensive textbooks, prescribed uniforms, branded stationery and other compulsory purchases expose a disturbing reality: private school managements are increasingly behaving as though they are beyond the authority of the government and the legitimate concerns of parents.

The issue goes far beyond textbook sets costing between Rs 6,000 and Rs 10,000. Parents are being burdened on multiple fronts. From books and uniforms to notebooks, school bags, stationery and other seemingly essential items, every academic session brings another round of expenditure. What is particularly questionable is the practice of promoting school names, logos and advertisements on notebooks and other educational material, the cost of which is ultimately borne by parents. In effect, families are paying for products that also serve as promotional platforms for the institutions themselves. Why should the hard-earned money of ordinary parents be used to finance the branding and publicity of private schools?

The more serious concern is the growing tendency among certain school managements to dictate where parents must purchase books, uniforms and other items. In some instances, parents complain that they are left with little freedom to explore cheaper alternatives and are expected to follow arrangements prescribed by the institutions. Whether through designated vendors, exclusive outlets or compulsory branded merchandise, such practices raise legitimate questions about transparency and possible commercial interests involving schools, publishers and suppliers. Education should not become an arrangement in which parents are treated as captive consumers.

Equally disturbing is the apparent disregard for government guidelines. Private schools are not independent commercial territories operating outside the regulatory framework of Jammu and Kashmir. They function within a system governed by rules and directions issued by the competent authorities. Yet, the recurring nature of complaints suggests that several institutions do not take these instructions seriously. Government advisories and orders are often followed by announcements, meetings and assurances, but their impact on the ground remains questionable. This raises an uncomfortable question: what is the purpose of issuing guidelines if institutions can disregard them with little fear of consequences?

The problem, therefore, is not confined to the attitude of private school managements. It also reflects a serious weakness in the government's enforcement mechanism. The Education Department cannot continue to function merely as an advisory authority while private institutions exercise considerable control over parents' choices and expenditure. Every time a violation is reported, a meeting or a fresh direction cannot be the only response. The administration must establish that its orders are binding and that non-compliance will invite consequences.

Education Minister Shameema Firdous has acknowledged the concerns surrounding expensive textbooks and indicated that a meeting would be convened with the Directors of School Education and other concerned officials. This is a welcome beginning, but the scope of intervention must be much wider. The government must examine the entire system of compulsory purchases imposed by private schools, including uniforms, notebooks, stationery, bags and other branded material. It must also investigate whether parents are being indirectly compelled to purchase products from selected vendors or outlets.

A comprehensive regulatory mechanism is urgently required. Every private school should be directed to disclose its annual list of prescribed textbooks, publishers, editions, uniforms and other compulsory educational items, along with their prices. Parents should have the freedom to purchase standard books and uniforms from the market rather than being restricted to selected shops. Schools should not be permitted to impose unnecessary changes in textbook editions, insist on expensive branded stationery or shift the cost of their promotional activities onto parents. Any arrangement that restricts consumer choice or violates applicable regulations must be examined and dealt with appropriately.

The government should also establish a dedicated grievance-redressal mechanism where parents can report overcharging, compulsory purchases and other unfair practices. Regular inspections, verification of school procurement arrangements and meaningful penalties for violations must form part of the enforcement framework. The identity and commercial interests of suppliers associated with schools should be transparent wherever such arrangements are relevant to compulsory purchases.

It is important to understand that parents choosing private schools are not necessarily wealthy. A substantial section belongs to the middle and lower-middle-income groups, who make considerable sacrifices to provide their children with what they believe is better education. For such families, the annual school expenditure is a major financial commitment. They already face rising household expenses, and the additional burden of expensive books, uniforms and branded stationery leaves little room for financial flexibility. Their inability to challenge school managements should not be mistaken for consent.

The government must simultaneously strengthen public education institutions through better infrastructure, teaching standards and accountability. Government schools should become credible alternatives so that parents are not left feeling compelled to depend on private institutions regardless of the financial burden.

Private schools undoubtedly have an important role in the education system, and many institutions make genuine contributions to academic development. But their role does not give them unrestricted authority to impose commercial decisions on families. Institutional autonomy cannot become a licence for arbitrary practices, and educational excellence cannot be measured by the price of a school bag, the brand of a notebook or the cost of a uniform.

The textbook controversy should serve as a wake-up call for the entire School Education Department. The issue is about the rights of parents, the accountability of private institutions and the credibility of government regulations. If private schools continue to disregard official directions, the government must explain why its regulatory authority is failing to translate into action.

The Education Minister must move beyond assurances and initiate a time-bound, comprehensive review of private school practices. The objective should not be to discourage private education but to ensure that it operates within the law, with transparency and sensitivity towards parents.

Schools are institutions of learning, not commercial empires. Parents send their children to acquire knowledge, not to become an assured market for school-branded products and the commercial interests of managements. The government must draw a clear line: no private school can be allowed to place its commercial interests above the educational rights and financial dignity of ordinary families. The time has come to end the culture of unchecked institutional dominance and make accountability a reality rather than an official promise.

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Children, Where Is Your Smile

The Vanishing Childhood in an Age of Competition



Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee

A child's smile is perhaps the most beautiful expression of hope in human civilisation. It is spontaneous, innocent and free from calculation. Yet, increasingly, one is compelled to ask an uncomfortable question: Where has that smile disappeared? Why do so many children, surrounded by expensive toys, sophisticated gadgets, fashionable clothes and endless entertainment, appear emotionally exhausted, anxious and strangely unhappy? Childhood, once associated with carefree laughter, muddy shoes, playground adventures and imaginative dreams, is gradually becoming an organised exercise in performance. The child is expected to achieve, compete, behave, excel and remain digitally connected, but is rarely given sufficient freedom simply to be a child.

The question, therefore, is not merely sentimental. It is social, psychological and deeply civilisational. What kind of society are we creating when children have more things to possess but less time to enjoy, more opportunities to communicate but fewer meaningful conversations, and more academic resources but less emotional security? The modern child inhabits a world dramatically different from that of previous generations. Technology has transformed education, communication and recreation. Smartphones, tablets, online games and digital classrooms have opened extraordinary possibilities. Children can explore distant countries, discover scientific wonders and communicate across continents without leaving their homes. However, the same digital revolution has introduced a paradox. The child is increasingly connected to the world but may remain disconnected from the people sitting beside them.

A family dinner table, once a place of conversation, storytelling and shared laughter, is often occupied by individual screens.



Parents check office messages, children watch videos, and grandparents struggle to compete with digital entertainment for attention. Physical proximity no longer guarantees emotional intimacy. The child may have hundreds of online friends but nobody to whom they can comfortably express their fears. The problem becomes more complicated when childhood is transformed into a permanent competition. From an early age, children are expected to demonstrate academic excellence, develop communication skills, participate in extracurricular activities and prepare for a future that adults themselves cannot confidently predict. School examinations, coaching centres, admission tests, Olympiads and performance assessments increasingly dominate their daily routines.

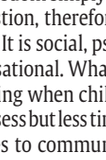
Education should certainly encourage discipline, intellectual curiosity and ambition. But when achievement becomes the only measure of a child's worth, learning loses its joy. A child who secures ninety-five per cent may be asked why the score was not ninety-eight. Another who struggles academically may begin to believe that disappointment is the only identity available to them. Comparisons between siblings, classmates and neighbourhood children can silently damage self-esteem. The tragedy is that adults frequently mistake pressure for motivation. They believe that constant supervision and competition will prepare children for a difficult future. Yet, an emotionally burdened child may acquire excellent grades without developing confidence, resilience or the capacity to enjoy life. Success without psychological well-being is an incomplete achievement.

The growing dependence on digital entertainment deserves particular attention. Social media platforms, short-form videos and online gaming are designed to hold attention. Children, whose capacities for self-regulation are still developing, can find it difficult to disengage. Hours that could have been devoted to outdoor games, reading, painting, music or imaginative play disappear into an endless digital stream. The issue is not that technology is inherently harmful. It is an indispensable part of contemporary life. The challenge lies in establishing boundaries and ensuring that technology serves childhood rather than controlling it. Parents cannot reasonably demand that children abandon smartphones while remaining permanently attached to their own devices. Responsible digital behaviour must begin with adult example.

There is also a growing emotional dimension to the crisis. Children experience loneliness, insecurity, bullying, academic anxiety and fear of rejection. Cyberbullying can follow them from school into their bedrooms. The traditional schoolyard conflict may once have ended when the child returned home; online harassment can continue throughout the night. A humiliating photograph, an insulting comment or exclusion from a digital group can become a source of persistent distress. The pressure to appear happy and successful online creates another burden. Children encounter carefully selected images of other people's achievements, holidays, possessions and appearances. They may begin comparing their ordinary lives with unrealistic digital representations. Such comparisons can produce dissatisfaction at an age when identity and self-confidence are still developing. Schools have an important responsibility in this situation. They cannot remain examination-producing institutions alone. A meaningful educational environment must recognise emotional development alongside intellectual achievement.

International Tagore Awardee Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee is a former Affiliate Faculty of Virginia Commonwealth University and Founder President of Kolkata Indian American Society . Email profratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com whatsaap +1 (804) -564-2383

The Mystery Of Pandemic



Surinderpal Singh



A pandemic is one of the greatest challenges that humanity can face in the future. It is not merely a medical emergency but a serious threat to human life, the economy, education, social relationships and the overall development of society. The COVID-19 pandemic reminded the entire world that even in an age of advanced science and modern technology, human beings remain vulnerable to invisible threats. It changed the way we live, work, study and interact with one another. More importantly, it taught us valuable lessons about health, humanity, preparedness and global cooperation.

The COVID-19 pandemic was one of the most difficult periods in modern history. A virus that first emerged in late 2019 spread rapidly across countries and continents. Governments were forced to impose lockdowns, schools and colleges were closed, businesses stopped operating, and international travel came to a standstill. Streets became empty, markets were deserted and people were confined to their homes. Hospitals faced an enormous burden, and healthcare workers worked day and night to save lives. Many families lost their loved ones, while millions of people experienced fear, uncertainty and loneliness. The pandemic clearly demonstrated how quickly an infectious disease can affect the entire world.

The most serious impact of a pandemic is on human health. Infectious diseases can spread rapidly through communities, putting the lives of millions of people at risk. During COVID-19, hospitals struggled with shortages of beds, oxygen, medicines and medical equipment. Doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers became the frontline defenders of humanity. The pandemic also highlighted the importance of mental health. Isolation, fear of infection, financial difficulties and the loss of loved ones caused stress, anxiety and depression among many people. It reminded us that health does not simply mean the absence of disease; it also includes mental and emotional well-being.

Education was among the sectors most seriously affected by the pandemic. Schools, colleges and universities were closed for long periods, forcing students and teachers to shift towards online learning. Digital classrooms, video lectures and online examinations became part of everyday education. Although technology helped continue the learning process, not every student had access to smartphones, computers or a reliable internet connection. Children from economically weaker families faced greater difficulties. Many students also suffered from a lack of personal interaction, classroom discipline and practical learning opportunities. This experience taught us that technology can support education, but it cannot completely replace the value of teachers, classrooms and direct human interaction.

The pandemic created a major economic crisis across the world. Small businesses, industries, shops, hotels and transport services suffered heavy losses. Millions of people lost their jobs, while daily-wage workers faced serious financial difficulties. Migrant workers were among the worst affected, as many struggled to return to their homes during lockdowns.

The crisis also exposed the economic inequalities present in society. People with secure jobs and financial resources were better able to manage the situation, whereas poor and vulnerable families faced greater hardships. However, the pandemic also brought out the best qualities of humanity. Many individuals, voluntary organisations, social workers and community groups came forward to distribute food, medicines and essential supplies. This spirit of kindness and cooperation showed that humanity becomes stronger when people stand together during difficult times.

One of the most important lessons of the pandemic was the power of science and medical research. Scientists across the world worked together to understand the virus, develop diagnostic tests, improve treatments and produce vaccines. The rapid development of COVID-19 vaccines was a remarkable achievement of modern medical science. Digital technology also played an important role in spreading health information, conducting online consultations and maintaining communication during lockdowns. The pandemic proved that investment in scientific research, medical education and healthcare infrastructure is essential for the safety of society. It also demonstrated the importance of sharing scientific knowledge across national boundaries.

Forests: The Green Blanket of the Earth



Sahil Manzoor Bhatti



Forests are the Oxygen Oceans of Our Planet

Forests are the oxygen oceans of our planet. Deforestation is not merely the cutting down of trees it is an act of murder, the murder of life itself. Anyone who destroys forests commits a crime against nature, and such acts must be dealt with under strict laws.

The Almighty has blessed us with countless gifts, each serving the welfare of humankind. Yet humans have become selfish and destructive, turning into the very culprits who damage the Earth's natural assets. Forests are not just clusters of trees; they are the lifeline of existence. They provide timber and fodder and act as shields against natural disasters such as flash floods, landslides, and soil erosion.

Deforestation the large scale cutting of trees leads to soil erosion, flash floods, and climate imbalance. It decreases oxygen levels while increasing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, accelerating global warming. Forests maintain the essential balance of gases that sustains life a balance that no human innovation can replace.

Every academic subject has its own importance, but when it comes to solving environmental challenges, science holds the key. Through scientific understanding, we can analyze, preserve, and protect the planet's ecosystems effectively.

Unfortunately, some selfish individuals exploit forest resources for personal profit. Forests are not lifeless timberlands they are golden assets of our nation. Our government and forest departments must step beyond office walls to educate citizens through public campaigns, counseling sessions, and awareness drives.

In recent years, I have personally visited forest regions across Budgam, Gulmarg, and Pahalgam. It is heartbreaking to see large scale destruction where once dense greenery thrived all sacrificed to greed.

Forests have long inspired poets, artists, and filmmakers. The lush green leaves, the majestic pines, and the gentle hum of insects reflect nature's unmatched beauty. Forests beautify our Mother Earth, offer recreation, and refresh the human spirit.

According to recent data, about 7,12,249 sq. km of land in India is under forest cover, including 20,230 sq. km in Jammu and Kashmir. The Pir Panjal range of the Lesser Himalayas, stretching from Himachal Pradesh to Azad Kashmir, is home to diverse flora and fauna, acting as a guardian of biodiversity and ecological wealth.

Forests for Recreation and Research

For centuries, forests have provided spaces for recreation trekking, camping, and mountaineering. They also serve as living laboratories for researchers studying rare herbs, shrubs, and unique ecological patterns.

Uses and Benefits of Forests

Forests maintain ecological balance through food chains and food webs. They provide shelter for wildlife, grazing lands for nomads, and medicinal plants for humans. Communities living near forests depend on them for their livelihood, which must be sustained responsibly.

Causes of Deforestation

The major causes of deforestation include smuggling, construction, urbanization, and the demand for timber in various industries. Human interference and negligence remain the primary reasons for ecological imbalance.

Solutions and Way Forward

Afforestation planting trees in deforested areas is the most effective solution to deforestation. However, since forests take decades to grow, awareness, strict monitoring, and public participation are essential. The government must conduct regular awareness drives, ensure forest protection through patrolling, and promote community involvement.

Conclusion

Deforestation is a crime against life—against air, water, wildlife, and humanity itself. Forests are living treasures, the golden lungs of our Earth. Let us pledge to protect them for the sake of today and future generations.

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Taking welfare step further!



By M S Nazki

In building on this significant welfare initiative, DG NCC Lt Gen Virendra Vats, YSM, SM, VSM highlights what the reclassification of 87 Non-Military Stations means for NCC personnel. Recognising their service. Strengthening their welfare!

-National Cadet Corps (NCC) boy cadets across India have repeatedly shown extraordinary courage, stepping into life-threatening situations long before wearing an armed forces uniform. Here are some of the most inspiring real-life stories of bravery by boy cadets…

1. Sgt. Pratap Singh (1965 Indo-Pak War):

•The Crisis. On September 13, 1965, enemy aircraft bombed a goods train carrying diesel oil and live ammunition at the Gurdaspur railway station in Punjab. The diesel wagons caught fire, creating a massive inferno that threatened to detonate the adjacent ammunition wagons and wipe out the surrounding town.

•The Act of Bravery. Ignoring the blinding smoke, intense heat, and threat of imminent explosions, Sergeant Pratap Singh of the 10th Punjab Battalion NCC led 59 fellow cadets straight into the danger zone. Together, they manually uncoupled the burning diesel coaches from the ammunition wagons and pushed the explosive-laden cars to safety, sustaining severe burns in the process.

• Recognition. His quick thinking and leadership averted a catastrophic disaster, earning him the Ashoka Chakra Class III (now Shaurya Chakra) from the President of India in 1966.

2. SUO Bimal Jagdishchandra Kapadia (2002 Akshardham Temple Attack)

•The Crisis. On September 24, 2002, heavily armed terrorists stormed the Akshardham Temple complex in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, trapping hundreds of panicked pilgrims, including women and children, inside.

•The Act of Bravery. Senior Under Officer Bimal Jagdishchandra Kapadia, an NCC cadet present at the site, chose not to flee. Drawing on his NCC training, he remained calm under gunfire, guided terrified families away from the line of fire, and coordinated the evacuation of numerous women and children to safety before commando operations neutralized the threat.

•Recognition. For disregarding his personal safety to save innocent lives, he was awarded the prestigious Raksha Mantri Padak at the NCC Republic Day Camp in 2004…

3. Future War Heroes Shaped by the NCC

-Several of India's highest-decorated soldiers began their journeys of courage as young NCC boy cadets, where their leadership instincts were first tested:

• Capt. Manoj Kumar Pandey (Param Vir Chakra). Before leading the legendary Gorkha Rifles charge at Khalubar during the 1999 Kargil War, he was adjudged the Best Cadet of the Junior Division NCC in the Uttar Pradesh Directorate in 1990.

• Capt. Vikram Batra (Param Vir Chakra). Known as Shershaah for his fearless recapture of Point 4875 in Kargil, Vikram Batra was an active Senior Division Air Wing NCC cadet in Chandigarh, earning his 'C' Certificate and marching in the Republic Day Parade.

• Maj. Sandeep Unnikrishnan (Ashoka Chakra). Before making the supreme sacrifice rescuing hostages during the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, he honed his discipline and resolve as an NCC cadet during his school years in Bengaluru…

-The National Cadet Corps (NCC) in India was formed in 1948 (under the NCC Act of 1948 and formally raised on July 15, 1948) to build a trained youth reserve for national



emergencies, spark interest in defense, and shape young citizens into disciplined leaders.

-Early Roots (1917–1942):

•University Corps (1917): Created under the Indian Defence Act of 1917 to address shortages in the British Indian Army during World War I.

• UTC and UOTC (1920–1942): Replaced by the University Training Corps (UTC) under the Indian Territorial Act of 1920 to attract youth and advance the Indianization of the armed forces, later renamed the University Officers Training Corps (UOTC) in 1942.

-Post-Independence Formation (1946–1948)

•Kunzru Committee (1946): Set up at the request of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to recommend a nationwide youth cadet scheme for schools and colleges, as earlier schemes fell short during World War II.

•National Security & Youth Development: Following independence and partition, leaders saw the need for an organized, trained youth force that could support defense expansion in emergencies while fostering strong citizenship.

-Core Aims of the NCC

•Develop character, courage, comradeship, discipline, leadership, and selfless service among young people.

• Encourage interest in the defense of the country through service training.

• Maintain a reserve pool of youth to help the Armed Forces expand quickly during emergencies.

-In November 2026, India's Ministry of Defence reclassified 87 Non-Military Stations across the country as "Hard Non-Military Stations" (HNMS) to improve welfare and allowances for armed forces personnel serving there, including those posted with the National Cadet Corps (NCC).

-What It Means for NCC Personnel

•Footprint reach: The NCC operates across more than 800 units and 831 locations covering nearly all districts in India, placing many personnel in remote or infrastructure-limited areas.

•Family accommodation: Personnel posted to these 87 locations do not have to move their families there and can retain family accommodation at a station of their choice.

• Financial & living support: The reclassification extends enhanced House Rent Allowance (HRA) and accommodation benefits to address gaps in local infrastructure, such as medical and family education facilities.

-What a Non-Military Station Is?

-Unlike a cantonment or dedicated military base, a non-military station has no military-controlled land. Personnel posted there live and work within civilian areas.

-Defence Ministry reclassifies 87 non-military stations as 'hard'; NCC hails enhanced benefits

-The Ministry of Defence has officially reclassified 87 Non-Military Stations across India as 'Hard Non-Military Stations' (HNMS), extending enhanced House Rent Allowance (HRA) and accommodation benefits to defence personnel posted to these challenging locations.

-The policy shift is expected to provide substantial relief to armed forces personnel attached to the National Cadet Corps (NCC).

-Welcoming the move, the NCC highlighted its broad operational expanse and the positive impact on its staff: "The NCC, with its pan-India footprint in 831 locations across the country, truly represents the diversity of Bharat. This measure will be a significant relief to the personnel of NCC posted to remote and challenging areas."

-The organisation further characterised the reclassification as a meaningful step towards ensuring the financial security and family welfare of its personnel.

-A Non-Military Station refers to any location, city, or town where military personnel or units are posted but which lacks a dedicated, self-contained military base, cantonment, or exclusive service infrastructure.

-Unlike traditional military stations or cantonments managed by the Army or Defence Estates, Non-Military Stations have no military-controlled land.

-In these civilian environments, personnel, including those assigned to NCC units, recruiting offices, or liaison details, live and work within standard civilian communities. Because official married quarters or specialised military housing are frequently unavailable in these areas, stationed personnel are entitled to specific housing benefits, including HRA.

-Similarly, instead of accessing local service hospitals within a base, military personnel, retired staff, and veterans in these non-military areas rely on healthcare provided through standalone Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) polyclinics and empanelled private or civilian hospitals.

-Under the updated framework, Hard Non-Military Stations (HNMS) are formally recognised as non-combat or civilian-adjacent postings that present particularly difficult living conditions, remote geography, or a severe lack of suitable family accommodation.

-Although these sites are not active tactical combat zones, the government and defence administration designate them as "hard" or difficult posts, comparable to field or tenure postings.

-Because official family accommodation is often missing or inadequate at these remote administrative, training, and NCC or Sainik School nodes, personnel posted to designated Hard Non-Military Stations are typically permitted to retain their families at a designated or last-held duty station.

-Alternatively, they can claim HRA alongside Special/Separated Family Accommodation (SPR) benefits under specific administrative orders.

-Modern Acts of Grit & Expedition Bravery:

• 2025 NCC Everest Expedition. A team of 10 teenage NCC cadets (five boys and five girls aged 16 to 19) battled sub-zero blizzards, avalanches, and thin air across the Siachen and Himalayan ranges to successfully summit Mount Everest in May 2025, showcasing immense physical endurance and teamwork.

• 2026 Konkan Sea Expedition. Boy and girl naval cadets rowed non-motorized 27-foot DK Whaler boats across 254 km of open, rough Arabian Sea between Ratnagiri and Palshet using purely muscle power and tidal navigation.

-Women cadets in the National Cadet Corps (NCC) demonstrate courage through high-altitude expeditions, real-life acts of bravery, military training, and civic service. Female participation in the NCC has expanded significantly since the Girls Division was raised in 1949, building leadership and resilience among young women across India.

When The Classroom Learns To Listen Back



BY- MOOL RAJ

Jammu & Kashmir's Vidya Samiksha Kendra has brought AI chatbots—"Shikshak Sahayak" for teachers and "Study Buddy" for students—into the schooling system under Samagra Shiksha. With real-time dashboards tracking attendance and learning outcomes, and smart classrooms rising across Shopian, the platform is quietly redefining how the Valley teaches and learns.

Jammu & Kashmir's Vidya Samiksha Kendra (VSK)—a new digital governance platform under Samagra Shiksha—is revolutionising schooling by integrating AI chatbots for teachers and students. Designed to provide real-time monitoring of attendance, learning outcomes and schemes, the VSK platform includes tools like the "Shikshak Sahayak" and "Study Buddy" chatbots. Research shows that such chatbots can reduce teacher workload (handling routine queries, grading and scheduling) and personalise learning for students. In practice, many Shopian schools have become "smart classrooms" with digital lessons, and district leaders (notably District Coordinator Shopian and Poonch Riyaz Ahmad) are actively deploying VSK technology. We salute the vision of J&K's education leadership (Project Director Bhawani Rakwal (IAS) and team) and the indefatigable Bashir Ahmed Shah (CEO Shopian), ever "on his toes for district Shopian", in championing these innovations.

J&K VSK: An overview

The Vidya Samiksha Kendra (VSK) is an initiative of the Jammu & Kashmir Government (School Education Department) to modernise education monitoring with real-time data and transparency. Official sources describe VSK as an integrated educational monitoring and governance system under the Samagra Shiksha umbrella. It provides digital dashboards for tracking student and teacher attendance, school infrastructure, learning outcomes and scheme implementation. Crucially, VSK now incorporates AI-powered chatbots: for example, "Shikshak Sahayak" (a teacher's assistant bot), "Study Buddy" (a student help bot), a Smart Attendance bot and even a "J&K Sarvekshan ChatBot" for surveys and feedback. These tools are part of new "Digital Studios" and the JK e-Pathshala tele-education channel (producing lessons in Kashmiri, Urdu, Dogri, etc.). The official goal is to improve governance, outreach and education quality through technology—a vision underscored by Commissioner Secretary R. N. Sharma's push for data-driven management. Get Class Supplies

Why chatbots matter in education

Research worldwide finds that AI chatbots can be powerful allies in classrooms. These conversational agents—ranging from simple rule-based "FAQ bots" to advanced models like ChatGPT—mimic human dialogue to provide instant help. Studies emphasise that, when well implemented, chatbots "reduce teacher workload, personalise learning and increase student motivation". They offer immediate assistance and quick access to information, creating more engaging educational experiences. Chatbots can tutor students in self-study (especially language learning), automate routine tasks and even co-create content (such as quiz questions or lesson prompts) for teachers. Importantly, they work 24/7: a student can ask questions at any hour (unlike a human teacher) and get explanations, definitions or exercises



to practise. This flexibility is vital for remote or after-school learning. Enroll in Classes

Academic reviews note both the promise and the caveats of chatbots. They highlight benefits like immediate feedback, customised practice and interactive learning that boost engagement. But they also caution about accuracy, ethical use and fair assessment. Crucially, experts stress that chatbots augment rather than replace teachers: educators must guide, verify and integrate chatbot output into meaningful pedagogy. The consensus is that, with proper oversight and training, chatbots can streamline many tasks and open new learning channels, benefiting both teachers and pupils. Get Class Supplies

Benefits for teachers

For teachers, the advantages of chatbot technology are concrete and immediate. One study notes a "significant reduction in teachers' workload" thanks to chatbots automating repetitive administrative tasks. In practice, a teacher can delegate attendance queries, homework FAQs, schedule information and even initial grading of simple quizzes to a chatbot. For example, if a student forgets tomorrow's exam date, a "classroom bot" can reply instantly with the schedule—no teacher intervention needed. Chatbots also manage reminders (for projects or fee payments) and routine communications, freeing teachers to focus on instruction and student mentoring. Moreover, AI tools enhance pedagogical work. Teachers can use chatbots to generate lesson materials—from multiple-choice quizzes to writing prompts aligned with learning objectives. One review highlights that, with ChatGPT, teachers can craft open-ended questions tailored to each lesson's goals. This lowers the barrier to designing differentiated lessons: the chatbot suggests extra practice for struggling students or enrichment tasks for advanced learners. By relieving the grind of preparation and paperwork, chatbots can help reinvigorate teachers' creativity. Educators can explore more project-based or inquiry-led activities, while routine supervision (e.g. classroom management notices, rule reminders) is partly handled by smart bots in the background. In short, teachers save time and gain tools to personalise and enrich instruction. Get Class Supplies

Benefits for students

Students, in turn, gain a more supportive and flexible learning environment. A key student benefit is round-the-clock help: chatbots are always "on", providing instant answers and study guidance outside school hours. If a pupil is stuck on algebra late at night, a maths chatbot can explain concepts step by step. This immediacy keeps learning momentum going and helps students manage their own study schedules. Research finds that students appreciate the interactive, "social" aspect of chatbots: their conversational tone and gamified feedback make learning feel more engaging than static texts. Young learners especially report higher enjoyment and motivation when responding to a friendly bot that offers encouragement or unlocks levels of difficulty.

Chatbots also enable personalised practice. They can identify a student's weaknesses (e.g. in grammar or arithmetic) and suggest targeted exercises. For instance, a language-learning chatbot might quiz a student on vocabulary, gradually increasing difficulty as the student improves. This adaptive support means faster progress for each student and less one-size-fits-all instruction. In essence, chatbots function like ever-available study buddies—giving feedback on homework, clarifying doubts and even simulating peer discussion. These benefits are echoed in many studies: students get flexible study aids and gain skills (problem-solving, self-pacing) while feeling more confident to experiment and inquire.

J&K VSK and Shopian district: Local impact

J&K's education reforms are bearing fruit on the ground. For example, Shopian district has seen substantial digital upgrades: "multiple schools have been upgraded into smart classrooms to support modern teaching methods". Under Samagra Shiksha, officials report stronger enrolment drives and tech-enabled infrastructure in Shopian (new buildings, boundary walls and separate toilets). Crucially, the district claims 100 per cent literacy under the national ULLAS programme and vigorous foundational learning campaigns. These strides are complemented by VSK's tools: every school's attendance and learning data now feeds into the Vidya Samiksha Kendra system.

In practice, Shopian's teachers and students are beginning to tap chatbot features. For instance, local principals note that Study Buddy chatbots (accessible via mobile phone or school tablets) are helping rural students revise English and science lessons at home. Teachers report that Shikshak Sahayak has eased their paperwork—automatically generating attendance registers and routine notices. District authorities (under the leadership of DOE Riyaz Ahmad) are also using VSK's analytic dashboards to target villages with lower attendance, ensuring no child is left behind. While detailed impact evaluations are pending, the combination of "smart classrooms" and chatbots is generally seen as expanding access: even students in remote hamlets can now get learning support and feedback. (Specific user testimonials are still being collected, but initial feedback in Shopian is positive.)

Recommendations for scaling up

To fully realise these gains, experts recommend several steps. Infrastructure and access: Every school needs reliable devices and connectivity. The government should continue investing in ICT labs and internet access in hilly areas (building on the existing smart classrooms). Training and support: Teachers must be trained to use chatbots effectively. Professional development workshops (perhaps led by Samagra Shiksha's digital team) can show educators how to integrate Shikshak Sahayak, ChatGPT or similar bots into lesson planning, while emphasising critical judgment of AI outputs. Localised content: The digital studios at VSK should expand production of chatbot-supported lessons in Kashmiri, Urdu, Dogri, etc., so that AI tools respond fluently in learners' own languages. Pilot and iterate: Start with pilot projects in districts like Shopian and Jammu to refine

chatbot use cases before scaling. Gather feedback from teachers and students to improve the bots' accuracy and relevance. Monitoring and ethics: The VSK dashboard itself can track chatbot usage and outcomes, ensuring data privacy and addressing any reliability issues.

The threat of power crisis

India: Between energy policy claims and ground realities



Dr. Satyawan Saurabh

Electricity is not merely an advertisement for a government's achievements, but a true test of its development potential. When industries are forced to halt production, farmers wait for electricity for irrigation, cities face power cuts during summer, and consumers have to buy expensive electricity, it's natural to question claims of energy self-sufficiency. India's power sector grapples with this very paradox. While on the one hand, there is celebration of record power generation, renewable energy expansion, and grand plans for the future, on the other, there are challenges like fuel crisis, weak distribution companies, inadequate storage, and demand pressure.

The biggest weakness of the power sector is that our energy planning often seems to focus more on installed capacity figures than actual demand. Growth is measured by the number of megawatts of power plants installed, the number of solar projects launched, and the number of new schemes announced. But the real question for consumers is whether electricity is available when needed. The gap between installed capacity and actual supply poses a serious challenge to energy planning. Having a power plant and having it produce continuously during a crisis are two different things.

While calls to reduce coal dependence have been circulating for years, thermal power remains the backbone of India's power system. Instead of acknowledging this dependence, the energy transition debate is often limited to the expansion of clean energy. If serious attention is not paid to coal supply, rail transportation, adequate plant reserves, and the maintenance of production units, all plans will remain on paper in times of crisis. Energy policy requires pragmatism, not contradiction. Until alternative sources become sufficient, stable, and economically viable, weakening the traditional generation system would be risky.

Expanding solar energy is certainly a future necessity, but energy security isn't simply about having electricity available when the sun is shining. Solar production declines as the sun sets, while domestic and commercial demand increases in many sectors. Filling this gap requires battery storage, pumped storage, hydropower, nuclear power, and sufficient regulated generation capacity. The question is: are our plans developing these systems with the same seriousness as presenting solar capacity figures? If storage and grid preparedness lag behind, renewable energy expansion could also create new instability.

The financial plight of power distribution companies is an aspect of this crisis that can no longer be ignored. Distribution companies, which have been incurring losses for years, have been financially weakened by technical losses, power theft, weak billing systems, and political pressure. The politics of free electricity and subsidies are valid, but if payments are not made on time and transparently, the power system ultimately suffers. Leaving distribution companies in financial crisis in the name of consumer relief is not a visionary policy. Governments must understand that a world-class power system cannot be built with weak discoms.

Transmission systems are also a significant weakness in the power sector. Increasing power generation is insufficient if the network to deliver it to the areas in need is not robust. Sometimes, power availability and demand differ in different regions, but limited transmission capacity prevents its effective use. Investment in modern transmission lines, interstate networks, smart grids, and technical monitoring is no longer an option, but a necessity. A single weak link in the power system can impact the entire system.

Rising electricity demand can no longer be simply ignored. Industrialization, the digital economy, data centers, electric vehicles, urbanization, and increasing heat have transformed the nature of electricity needs. Merely outdated demand projections will not suffice in the coming years. The government, power companies, and regulators must realistically assess future needs. Otherwise, every heat wave, every industrial expansion, and every demand increase will create crisis management situations.

Reforming the energy sector means more than just announcing new projects, but also ensuring accountability. Transparency in power procurement, realistic assessment of distribution companies' losses, timely project implementation, smart metering, energy efficiency, and demand management should be prioritized. Industries should be encouraged to conserve energy, and domestic consumers should be made aware of efficient appliances and their efficient use. Saving electricity will be possible not just through moral appeals, but through technology, incentives, and effective policy.

India must avoid both extremes—impractical targets in the name of energy transition and clinging to old patterns in the name of power crisis. On the one hand, there's environmental responsibility, on the other, economic growth and the needs of millions of consumers. A true energy policy is to balance these two. Clean energy should expand, but it should also be accompanied by the development of storage, grids, reliable generation, and economic stability.

The measure of success in the power sector should not be megawatt announcements, but uninterrupted supply, reasonable bills, a robust distribution system, and energy availability during times of crisis. India needs a power system that is not only large in numbers, but also reliable in the lives of its citizens. After all, the light of development is meaningful only when it transcends manifestos and statistics and reaches homes, farms, hospitals, and industries without hindrance. This is the true test of India's energy policy.

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

Div Com reviews working of revenue department across Jammu Division

Directs time-bound eviction of encroachments, close check on recurrence

■ HT News Network



JAMMU, NOVEMBER 21: Divisional Commissioner Jammu Vikas Kundal today chaired a meeting to review the key revenue-related issues and assess the progress made in the resolution of the same across the Jammu Division.

The Divisional Commissioner stressed on a close check on re-encroachment on State land and Kahcharai. He directed the DCs to take concrete measures to remove existing encroachments in a time-bound manner and conduct regular anti-encroachment drives across their respective districts.

He further asked the DCs to ensure that concerned Tehsildars visit the sites of retrieved land, take necessary measures to secure the retrieved land against re-encroachment and maintain proper records and details of all land retrieved from encroachers.

Assessing working of the department, the Divisional Commissioner reviewed progress of revenue record digitisation, delivery of online revenue services, land acquisition cases, mutation attestation and maintenance of revenue records.

Emphasising timely delivery of public services, the Div Com directed the DCs to ensure strict implementation of the Public Services Guarantee Act (PSGA) and clear all pending cases within the prescribed timelines, leaving no pendency at any level.

The meeting also reviewed the progress of the AgriStack initiative and creation of Farmers' IDs, conferment of ownership rights to Displaced Persons (DPs) and West Pakistani Refugees (WPRs) and reconstruction of missing or dilapidated Musavis and Lathas.

The Div Com asked the DCs to hold meetings with Tehsildars and Patwaris and obtain proper certification regarding the non-availability of the concerned Musavis and Lathas.

Other important issues discussed included the progress of departmental enquiries, RDA and vigilance cases and disposal of public grievances received through the J&K Grievance Redressal Portal and JK Raabta. The Divisional Commissioner directed the officers to ensure timely examination and disposal of all grievances on the respective portals.

The Divisional Commissioner also reviewed land acquisition and land transfer cases pertaining to security forces and other government departments, besides the status of mutation of defence land.

The meeting further reviewed the proposed BSNL tower sites across different districts. The Div Com asked the DCs to set monthly targets for activation of BSNL towers in their respective districts and ensure timely availability of land for installation of the towers.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioners, Additional Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners Revenue and Sub-Divisional Magistrates of all districts of Jammu divisions.

ADC inspects Govt offices in Bhaderwah

■ HT News Network



BHADERWAH, NOVEMBER 21: Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Bhaderwah Sunil Kumar Bhutyal today conducted a surprise inspection of the government offices across the Sub-District to review their functioning and assess the delivery of public services.

The ADC visited the Block Development Office (BDO), Youth Services and Sports Office, Health Centre Old Hospital, Tehsil Social Welfare Office (TSWO), Fire and Emergency Services Office, Public Health Engineering (PHE) Office and Jammu Kashmir Power Distribution Limited (JPDCL) Office. He inspected the functioning of these offices and took stock of the facilities and services being provided to the public. He also stressed the importance of punctuality, accountability and maintaining efficiency in the functioning of government departments.

Kulgam Police Organises Football Tournament to Promote Drug-Free Society

■ Farooq Rather

Kulgam, November 21: Reaffirming its commitment to youth engagement and the fight against drug abuse, Kulgam Police organised a football tournament under the Civic Action Programme (CAP) 2026-27 at Mini Sports Stadium, Kulgam.The tournament was organised with the objective of channelising the energy of youth towards constructive activities, promoting sportsmanship and teamwork, and creating awareness about the harmful effects of drug abuse. Players from participating teams displayed enthusiasm, competitive spirit and sportsmanship throughout the event. On the occasion, Kulgam Police reiterated its commitment to organising more youth-oriented sports activities and awareness programmes to encourage young people to stay away from drugs and adopt a healthy and positive lifestyle. Kulgam Police also appealed to the general public, particularly the youth, to join hands in the collective fight against drug abuse and contribute towards building a healthy, safe and drug-free society.



FDA continues Enforcement drive, 127 Inspections conducted, 39 Samples lifted

■ HT News Network



SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 21: Food and Drugs Administration (FDA), J&K, continued its enforcement drive across all the districts to ensure strict compliance with the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and to safeguard public health.

During the drive, 127 inspections were conducted and 39 food samples were lifted for laboratory analysis. As part of the enforcement action against violations of food safety, hygiene and sanitary requirements, the licenses/registrations of seven Food Business Establishments were suspended until further orders and compliance with the deficiencies observed during inspection. These include M/s Jan Sweets, Hazoori Bagh, Srinagar; Bakery Manufacturing Unit of M/s Mughal Darbar, Residency Road, Srinagar; M/s Cottage Inn Restaurant, Baghat, Srinagar; M/s Madina Sunrise Poultry, Baghat, Srinagar; M/s Madina Zaika Biryani, Baghat, Srinagar; M/s Orbit Restaurant, New Pulwama; and M/s NFS Poultry, Mandli, Tehsil Billawar, M/s Delhi Ki Mashoor Biryani, Vijaypur, Samba, and M/s Restaurant NAZ, Vijaypur, Samba.

During the inspections, approximately 35 kg of sweets found stored under temperature-abuse conditions were destroyed on the spot to prevent their sale and consumption. In a separate action, notices were served upon six Food Business Operators engaged in the processing and sale of momos at Hawal, directing them to suspend operations until the observed sanitary and hygienic deficiencies are rectified.

The FDA, J&K, will also undertake a dedicated awareness and handholding programme for the concerned operators to facilitate compliance with prescribed food safety, hygiene and sanitation requirements.

The FDA also initiated legal proceedings against violators, including three cases under Section 56, three cases under Section 58 and three cases compounded under Section 69 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. A compounding fee of 3,000 was realized in the cases compounded under the Act. As part of measures aimed at ensuring transparency, traceability and informed consumer choice, Food Business Operators (FBOs) dealing in non-vegetarian food preparations were directed to prominently display clear and accurate information regarding the type of meat used, including mutton, beef or chicken; whether the meat used is fresh or frozen; and the ingredients used in the preparation of non-vegetarian food items.

Udhampur Special Lok Adalat settles 526 cases

■ HT News Network



JAMMU, NOVEMBER 21: The Special Lok Adalat for Traffic Challans, Civil Cases and cases under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act was held today in District Udhampur under the chairmanship of Kalpana Revo, Principal District and Sessions Judge/Chairperson, District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) and under the overall supervision of Sumati Sharma, Sub-Judge/ Secretary, DLSA.

The aim of organizing the Special Lok Adalat on Traffic Challans, Civil Cases and Section 138 NI Act cases was to help people resolve their pending cases quickly and amicably through mutual settlement. It provided parties involved an opportunity to settle their disputes without going through lengthy court proceedings.

The Lok Adalat settled 526 cases out of 589, with a total settlement amount of 8,05,200/-. Similar Special Lok Adalat sessions were also held at TLSC Ramnagar, Majalta and Chenani, extending the reach of justice to different parts of the district.

DLSA Jammu holds Special Lok Adalat on NI Act, Civil Cases & Traffic Challans

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, NOVEMBER 21: A Special Lok Adalat on NI Act cases under Section 138, Civil Cases and Traffic Challans was organised today by the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Jammu here at the District Court Complex under the guidance of Tahir Khurshid Raina, Principal District & Sessions Judge (Chairman, DLSA) and under the supervision of Civil Judge (Senior Division)- Secretary DLSA Maleeka Sharma.

As many as 26 Benches comprising Judicial Officers and Panel Lawyers of DLSA Jammu, were constituted to take up the matters. A total of 455 cases were taken up, of which 225 cases were disposed of amicably with the mutual consent of the parties.

Sat Sharma reviews Seva Doot Abhiyan, Samvidhan Gaurav Diwas preparations

■ HT News Network



Jammu, 21 November 2026: J&K BJP President and Rajya Sabha MP Sat Sharma (CA) chaired an organizational meeting at the party headquarters, Trikuta Nagar, Jammu, to discuss preparations for the upcoming Seva Doot Abhiyan and review organizational programmes.

J&K BJP Vice President Rajiv Charak, General Secretaries Sanjita Dogra and Baldev Singh Billawaria, State Secretary Pawan Sharma, State Treasurer Prabhat Singh Jamwal, OBC Morcha President Brahamjyot Satti, Kisan Morcha President Rakesh Pant and other senior leaders participated in the meeting.

Sat Sharma, while addressing the meeting, stated that the BJP would organize the Seva Doot Abhiyan from December 1 to 25, 2026, to take Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message of Seva to every section of society. He said the campaign would further strengthen the party's grassroots connect through public service, awareness and direct engagement with people.

Sharma said that Seva Doots would undertake various service activities, spread awareness about Central Government welfare schemes, facilitate the enrolment of eligible beneficiaries and coordinate with local organizational units for addressing public grievances. They would also identify local issues and assess the socio-economic conditions of people in their respective areas. He stressed that the campaign must be implemented through proper planning, active participation and coordination at every organizational level.

Sat Sharma also reviewed preparations for Samvidhan Gaurav Diwas on November 26, marking the adoption of the Indian Constitution in 1949. He discussed the proposed massive padayatra in Jammu under the Loktantra Bachao Abhiyan, aimed at highlighting Congress and its allies' attempts to undermine democratic values and constitutional institutions.

DC Ramban reviews progress of work on NH-44 Four-Laning Project

■ HT News Network



RAMBAN, NOVEMBER 21: Deputy Commissioner Ramban Mohammad Alyas Khan today conducted an extensive inspection of ongoing works under the Jammu–Srinagar National Highway (NH-44) four-laning project between Ramban-Banihal stretch. He took stock of the progress of key infrastructure works and reviewed measures for ensuring smoother, safer and hassle-free traffic movement along the vital highway.SSP Traffic National Highway Wing K.M. Priyanka; Project Director NHAI Shubham Yadav and other concerned officers and representatives from executing agencies accompanied the Deputy Commissioner during the inspection.The Deputy Commissioner asked the concerned agencies to make the Nachilana–Kishtwari Pathar Viaduct operational by the end of November, emphasising that its timely opening would significantly improve traffic movement and enhance connectivity along this strategically important stretch of NH-44.The Deputy Commissioner also inspected the ongoing construction of the second tube of the Panthyal Tunnel, directing the executing agency to expedite the remaining works and make the tunnel operational by the end of the current month, without compromising on construction quality and safety standards. He further instructed the concerned agencies to create essential commuter facilities, including passenger sheds and toilet facilities at designated locations along the highway, for the convenience of passengers and other road users.

Emphasising the strategic and economic importance of NH-44 as the principal road link connecting the Kashmir Valley with the rest of the country.

Sat Sharma seeks Union Minister's intervention for OBC certificate of four communities

Four OBC communities face certificate hurdles, Sat Sharma takes up issue with Union Minister

■ HT News Network

Jammu, 21 November 2026: Taking up the difficulties faced by four OBC communities in obtaining caste certificates in urban areas of Jammu and Kashmir, BJP Jammu & Kashmir President and Rajya Sabha MP Sat Sharma raised the issue with Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Virendra Kumar, seeking his intervention to ensure that eligible members of these communities receive equal access to OBC certification and associated benefits.

The issue was brought to Sat Sharma's attention by a delegation of BJP OBC Morcha Jammu & Kashmir, led by its State President Brahm Jyot Satti, which met him and submitted a detailed memorandum highlighting the difficulties faced by members of the Kumhar, Nai, Dhobi and Teli communities in obtaining OBC caste certificates in urban areas.

J&K BJP Vice President Bharat Bhushan, State General Secretary Baldev Billawaria, District President Naresh Singh Jadrotia, SC Morcha President Dharmendra Kumar, Kisan Morcha President Rakesh Pant, and spokesperson Balbir Ram Rattan were present on the occasion.

The delegation explained that members of these four communities are currently being issued OBC certificates only in rural areas, while those residing in urban areas are facing difficulties and are not being granted the same certificates. The delegation pointed out that this



discriminatory situation is creating unnecessary hardships for eligible members of these communities and depriving them of the benefits and opportunities available under the OBC category.

The representatives strongly urged that the issue be addressed on priority and that the necessary directions be issued to ensure that eligible members of the Kumhar, Nai, Dhobi and Teli communities residing in urban areas are also provided OBC certificates, just like their counterparts in rural areas. Sat Sharma called upon Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Virendra Kumar over the phone in the presence of the OBC Morcha delegation and discussed the issue in detail. He also sent an email to the Union Minister, formally bringing the matter to his attention and seeking appropriate intervention for an early resolution.

The delegation expressed gratitude to Sat Sharma for taking prompt cognizance of the issue and directly raising the concerns of the affected communities with the Union Minister. It stated that a timely resolution would provide much-needed relief to thousands of eligible families and ensure equal treatment and access to their rightful entitlements.

The delegation emphasized that ensuring social justice requires addressing genuine difficulties faced by every section of society and that no eligible community should be deprived of its rights and benefits due to administrative or procedural hurdles.

The OBC Morcha delegation included State Executive Member Manohar Babbar, State Secretary Ashok Salgotra, Spokesperson Ashok Pandey, Treasurer Rampal Mehra, OBC District Vice President Rakesh Thakre and other members of the Morcha.

The OBC Morcha reiterated its commitment to continuously raising the genuine concerns of the OBC community and working towards ensuring social justice, equality and the protection of the rights of all eligible sections of society.

35th Battalion CRPF Clinches

Inter-Battalion Cricket Tournament Title, 43rd Battalion Finishes Runner-Up

■ HT News Network



Srinagar, November 21: The CRPF Inter-Battalion (Ops) Cricket Tournament for units of Srinagar Sector was successfully conducted at the cricket ground of Group Centre CRPF, Srinagar, from November 16 to November 20, 2026.

A total of six teams from different CRPF battalions participated in the tournament, showcasing impressive performances and competitive spirit throughout the event.

The final match was played on November 20, 2026, between the 35th Battalion and the 43rd Battalion CRPF. In an exciting contest, the 35th Battalion delivered a strong performance to emerge as the champions of the tournament, while the 43rd Battalion secured the runner-up position.

Shri Vivek Bhandral, DIGP, Group Centre CRPF, Srinagar, graced the closing ceremony as the Chief Guest. He presented trophies and medals to the winning and runner-up teams.

On the occasion, Shri Bhandral congratulated all the participating players for their performances and appreciated the organisers for successfully conducting the tournament.

The event provided an opportunity for personnel from different CRPF battalions to showcase their sporting talent and promote team spirit, camaraderie and sportsmanship.

PUBLIC NOTICE

it is notified that the applicant namely Mushtaq Ahmad Dar S/o Mohd Sultan Dar R/o Arwah Tehsil Beerwah District BUDGAM applied for the issuance of birth certificate of his own as Mushtaq Ahmad Dar S/o Mohd Sultan Dar
The applicant intends to register the Date of birth of his own as per school record is ; 15_12_1981
If any one has objection in this regard, he can approach concerned Births and Death authorities within the period of seven days after the publication of said Notice .
No objection will be entertained .
21/11/2026

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Mehraj Ud Din Mir S/o Ali Mohammad Mir R/o Rampora, Chattabal, P.O. Karan Nagar, District Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir - 190010, do hereby declare that my name has been wrongly recorded in my Driving Licence.In Driving Licence it is recorded as:
LATIF AHMAD MIRWhereas my actual / correct name as per my Aadhaar Card is:
MEHRAJ UD DIN MIRI have applied for correction of my name in my Driving Licence bearing No. JK-01 2002 0057085 issued by RTO Kashmir, as per my Aadhaar Card.Both the names LATIF AHMAD MIR and MEHRAJ UD DIN MIR belong to one and the same person i.e. me.If any person has any objection in this regard, he/she may file objection in the office of RTO Kashmir, Srinagar within 7 days from publication of this notice, failing which no objection shall be entertained.Applicant:
Mehraj Ud Din Mir
S/o Ali Mohammad Mir
R/o Rampora, Chattabal, Srinagar

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE TEHSILDAR KALANTRA / KREER

Subject: Application of SUMAIRA HASSAN ,SAIMA HASSAN D/O GH HASSAN MOCHI for the issuance of ST (SCHEDULE TRIBE Gujjar and Bakerwal)in favour of self
PUBLIC NOTICE
Regarding the subject cited above, the applicant has submitted the file in the office of the undersigned for the issuance of ST . in this connection a report of patwari halqa concerned has been sought which reveals that the applicant is currently residing in village KALANTARA PAYEEN and belongs to the ST caste and MUCHI community, having annual income is 48000 the details of the family of the applicant are as follows
1..GH HASSAN MOCHI Father 52 years Labour
2.... RAJA BEGUM Mother 48 years H/W
3....SAIMA BANO applicant 24 years student
4....SUMAIRA HASSAN applicant 20 years student
5....MUZAMIL HASSAN Brother 13 years student

.The applicant has applied for Issuance of ST (SCHEDULE TRIBE Gujar & Bakerwal) certificate in favour of Self
if anyone have any objection to the issuance of delay order of said certificate certificate shall present his/her claim this office within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained

NAIB TEHSILDAR KREERI

ADC Ramban reviews implementation of Rural Sector Schemes, Mission YUVA

■ HT News Network

RAMBAN, NOVEMBER 21: Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Ramban Varunjeet Singh Charak today chaired a comprehensive review meeting to assess the implementation and progress of the Rural Development Department schemes, execution of developmental works, Mission YUVA and digital outreach initiatives in the district.

The meeting was attended by ACD Mohammad Imran Naik; Executive Engineer, Rural Engineering Wing (REW), Assistant Director Employment, Assistant Executive Engineers (AEEs), Tehsildar Headquarters, BDOs, Panchayat Secretaries, Gram Rozgar Sahayaks and representatives of Small Business Development Units (SBDUs) and Business Help Desks (BHDs).

The ACD and AD Employment briefed the chair about the physical and financial progress of the schemes, ongoing projects and initiatives being implemented by their respective departments.

Reviewing the Rural Development Department sector, the ADC took a detailed assessment of the implementation of key rural development schemes, including VB-G RAM-G, Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G), District Capex Budget and Constituency Development Fund (CDF). He reviewed the progress of ongoing developmental works, fund utilisation, physical achievements and execution status of projects approved and taken up under the District Capex Budget 2026-27 and other schemes across different blocks of the district.

Taking stock of the performance under VB-G RAM-G, the ADC directed the concerned officers to improve implementation and expedite the completion of pending formalities, particularly e-KYC, asset geo-tagging and Social Audits. He directed the ACD, Block Development Officers (BDOs), executing agencies and other concerned functionaries to accelerate the pace of ongoing works, ensure timely completion of projects, strengthen field-level monitoring and maintain transparency and accountability in implementation. He further emphasised optimum utilisation of available funds and timely achievement of prescribed targets.

Reviewing Mission YUVA and Digital Outreach Initiatives, the ADC assessed the functioning and performance of Small Business Development Units (SBDUs) and Business Help Desks (BHDs), besides reviewing progress under the youth entrepreneurship initiative. He directed the concerned officials to intensify awareness and public outreach activities to ensure that eligible youth are adequately informed and facilitated in availing the benefits of the scheme.He also called for expediting registrations on the JK Samadhan and Youth Empowerment portals through direct public outreach and coordinated field-level efforts.

IN THE COURT OF JUDICIAL MAGISTRATE 1ST CLASS, KULGAM

Present: Rabyia Sanober Gulzar
In the Case of:

Mohammad Ashraf Bhat S/o Gull Mohammad Bhat, R/o Khaloora, Tehsil Pahloo, District Kulgam.
Applicant

V/S
B.D.O. Pahloo
Non-Applicant

Whereas, the applicant, namely Mohammad Ashraf Bhat, has sought a direction against the non-applicant for registration of the birth particulars of his daughter, namely Iqra Bint-e-Ashraf, who was born on 05-09-2011. Through the medium of this notice, the general public is hereby informed that if any person has any objection regarding the registration of the birth particulars of the applicant's daughter, as mentioned above, he/she/they shall do so on or before 05-12-2026, when the matter is listed for further proceedings.
Given under my hand and seal of this Court today on 14-11-2026.
Announced.

Sd/
Judicial Magistrate 1st Class Kulgam

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Shameema Bano D/o Ab. Karim Hajam R/o Batapora Kanihama, Tehsil Magam, District Budgam do hereby declare that I have applied for correction of my Name and Father's Name in my School Records at Jammu & Kashmir Board of School Education, Branch Office Magam.My particulars have been wrongly recorded as:FROM
Name: SHMEEMA BANO
Father's Name: MOHD KARIM HAJAMTO (Correct)
Name: SHAMEEMA BANO
Father's Name: AB. KARIM HAJAMIf any person has any objection in this regard, he/she may file objection in the office of the J&K BOSE, Branch Office Magam and in the office of Tehsildar Magam within 7 days from the publication of this notice. After expiry of said period, no objection shall be entertained.The same person with different spellings is one and the same person.Applicant:

Shameema Bano
D/o Ab. Karim Hajam
R/o Batapora Kanihama

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is notified that the applicant namely Imtiyaz Ahmad Bhat S/o Abdul Ahad Bhat R/o Narbal Tehsil NARBAL District BUDGAM applied for the issuance of birth certificate of his own son as Furqan Imtiyaz S/o Imtiyaz Ahmad Bhat
The applicant intends to register the Date of birth of his son as per school record is ; 06_10_2012
If any one has objection in this regard, he can approach concerned Births and Death authorities within the period of seven days after the publication of said Notice . No objection will be entertained .
21/11/2026

2 day Lawn Tennis tournament begins in Srinagar

■ HT News Network



Srinagar, Nov 21: The two-day Kashmir Open Lawn Tennis Tournament began at Gindun Stadium, Rajbagh, here today, to provide local talent an opportunity to compete. The tournament features 32 players in the men's category and 12 in the Under-19 category including boys and girls. It is being organised by the District Budgam Lawn Tennis Association under the aegis of the J&K Lawn Tennis Association, in collaboration with the J&K Sports Council. One of the senior players Rauf said that the tournament is a good initiative and it will popularise the game. "It is good that young boys and girls are also playing as we have no national players in the game from Kashmir so far and in future may be these kids play at national and international level," he said. Javaid Ahmed Dar, General Secretary of the District Budgam Lawn Tennis Association and Organising Secretary of the tournament, said the event was aimed at bringing local players together on a common platform and providing them an opportunity to test their skills against different opponents. Dar said the association intended to expand the initiative in the coming years by reaching out to educational institutions across Kashmir and involving more students and young players. "We want players from across Kashmir, especially young children and youngsters, to come forward and participate in this sport. Next time, we are planning to reach out to colleges and schools across the region and involve students and young players on a larger scale," he said. President of the Association, Shahjahan Khan, said that the aim of the tournament is to popularise the game. "Since there is a lack of tennis infrasture in Kashmir, there are not many people who play lawn tennis here. We have one dozen children who are part of this tournament. We will try to engage more children in future. This is just the beginning. We will be conducting tennis camps in schools as well so that more kids are attracted towards the game," he added. Players welcomed the initiative, describing it as an important opportunity to promote tennis at the grassroots level and build a competitive sporting culture. One of the senior players, Haider Hussain, a participant, described the tournament as a friendly and introductory event that could pave the way for bigger initiatives in the future. He said such events were important for local players as they helped develop competitive spirit, while also providing an opportunity for those playing recreationally to socialise and enjoy the sport. Altaf Hussain, another participant, said sports played an important role in keeping youngsters engaged in productive activities and away from distractions. He said sporting activities were equally important for maintaining physical fitness, providing recreation and relieving stress. Describing the tournament as a commendable initiative, Hussain expressed hope that the association would continue organising such events to encourage greater participation in sports.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Loss of motorcycle number plate bearing Registered No. JK05F2230 in between kalntra payeen to wagoora on dated 08-11-2026 Namely Shakeel Ahmad Najar son of Fayaz Ahmad Najar R/o kalantra bala ,Now I want apply for duplicate number plate if anybody has any objection they contact ARTO Sopore with in seven days after that no objection will be entertained.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Mohammad Tahir Qadri S/o Lt Ghulam Mohd Qadri R/o Bubernagh Kupwara, hereby inform the general public that I am applying for the issuance of a death certificate of my Mother, whose details are as follows:
Name: Raja Begum
W/o:- Lt Ghulam Mohammad Qadri
Date of death: 07-04-2011
Adress:-Bubernagh Kupwara
Claimant: Mohammad Tahir Qadri (Son of Lt Raja Begum)
If any person has any objection regarding the issuance of the said death certificate, he/she may report to the concerned authority within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. After that, no objection shall be entertained.

PUBLIC NOTICE

1, Abdul Rashid Bhat, S/o Ghulam Rasool Bhat, R/o Ganashbal, Pahalgam, District Anantnag, hereby state that my Date of Birth: 04/10 /2026.
I intend to obtain a Date of Birth Certificate from the Municipal Committee, Pahalgam. Any person having any objection regarding the issuance of the said Date of Birth Certificate may submit the same before the concerned authority within the prescribed period.
After expiry of the prescribed period, no objection shall be entertained.
Name: Abdul Rashid Bhat
S/o: Ghulam Rasool Bhat
R/o: Ganashbal, Pahalgam Date of Birth: 04/10 /2026

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Mohd Shafi Bhat, S/o Ghulam Rasool Bhat, R/o Ganishbal, Pahalgam, District Anantnag, hereby state that my Date of Birth is 04/10/2026
I intend to obtain a Date of Birth Certificate from the Municipal Committee, Pahalgam. Any person having any objection regarding the issuance of the said Date of Birth Certificate may submit the same before the concerned authority within the prescribed period.
After expiry of the prescribed period, no objection shall be entertained.
Name: Mohd Shafi Bhat
S/o: Ghulam Rasool Bhat
R/o: Ganishbal, Pahalgam Date of Birth: 04/10/2026

Government of Union Territory Jammu & Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL IRRIGATION CONSTRUCTION DIVISION SRINAGAR

NIT No: MICD/33 of 2026-27 Dated: 20 .11.2026

Short term tender notice

For and on behalf of Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, e-tenders are invited in two cover system (Technical and financial) on item rate basis from eligible contractors registered with J&K Govt. CPWD, Railway/State/Central Government organization and having experience for the below mentioned works:

S.No	Name of Work	Ceiling/ estimated Cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (In Rs)	Completion time (from the date of issue pf LOI/AO whichever is earlier)	- AA Accorded Vide No:	TS Accorded vide No.	Earnest Money (in of Rs)	Position of Funds	Tender opening Authority
01	Replacement of Worn-out 10000 GPH discharge, 150 Meters of dynamic head submersible pumping units at Tube Well Irrigation scheme Ghoom Ahmad Pora Baramulla.	1.40	500/-	20 days	Superintending Engineer Mechanical Circle I & F.C Department Srinagar's AAA No: - 35 -MCO of 2026-27 Dated: - 28.09.2026	TS Accorded vide this office No: MICD/TS-23 of 2026-27 Dated: - 29.09.2026.	2800/=	Approved under M & E head of account	Executive Engineer Mechanical Irrigation Construction Division Srinagar
02	Replacement of Worn-out 8000 GPH discharge, 130 Meters of dynamic head submersible pumping units at Tube Well Irrigation scheme Renzipora Pulwama.	1.35	500/-			TS Accorded vide this office No: MICD/TS-24 of 2026-27 Dated: - 29.09.2026.	2700/=		
03	Replacement of Worn-out 7000 GPH discharge, 175 Meters of dynamic head submersible pumping units at Tube Well Irrigation scheme Chichiloora Tangmarg.	1.40	500/-			TS Accorded vide this office No: MICD/TS-25 of 2026-27 Dated: - 29.09.2026.	2800/=		

The bidding document consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the Govt. website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below: -

01	Publishing Date	20.11.2026 (16.00 hrs)
02	Start of downloading of bidding document	20.11.2026 (16.10 hrs)
03	Bid submission start date	20.11.2026 (16.15 hrs)
04	Bid submission end date	26.11.2026(11.00 hrs)
05	Date and time of opening of bids (online)	26.11.2026(16.00 hrs)

DIPK-7887/26
Send Date: Nov 21 2026

Executive Engineer,
Mechanical Irrigation Construction Division
Srinagar

Bib Expo draws overwhelming response with over 860 registrations for inaugural Kathua Cyclothon

Race kits, bibs provided to participants ahead of today's cycling event

■ HT News Network



KATHUA, NOVEMBER 21: The Bib Expo for the inaugural Kathua Cyclothon 2026 witnessed an enthusiastic response from cycling enthusiasts and registered participants with over 860 registrations received for the event scheduled to be held tomorrow.

Organised at Sports Stadium Kathua, the day-long Bib Expo facilitated the distribution of official Cyclothon T-shirts and race bibs to participants, providing them an opportunity to complete the pre-event formalities ahead of the much-awaited sporting event.

Participants thronged the venue throughout the day to collect their race kits, reflecting growing enthusiasm for cycling, fitness and outdoor sporting activities among youth and citizens of the district. The expo also served as a platform to familiarise participants with the event arrangements, race categories and the spirit behind the Cyclothon.

The inaugural Kathua Cyclothon, being organised by the District Administration Kathua in collaboration with Bicycle for Change Club and other stakeholders, aims to promote a culture of fitness, road safety, environmental consciousness, sustainable mobility and a drug-free society through active community participation.

With registrations crossing 860, the event has generated considerable excitement across the district, bringing together cycling enthusiasts, young participants and fitness-conscious citizens for a collective sporting initiative.

The Cyclothon is expected to witness participation across different age groups and categories, transforming the town into a vibrant hub of sporting energy and community engagement.

The District Administration has called upon participants to report at 06:00AM sharp at Sports Stadium Kathua and follow all event-related instructions to ensure the smooth, safe and successful conduct of the Cyclothon.

The event carries the message of building a healthier, fitter and drug-free society, encouraging citizens to embrace cycling as a means of fitness, responsible mobility and positive lifestyle change.

Mission Vatsalya Bandipora organises Awareness Programme at Ashtangoo to strengthen Child Protection

■ HT News Network



BANDIPORA, NOVEMBER 21 : Continuing its efforts to reach every corner of society and strengthen awareness about Child Rights, Mission Vatsalya Bandipora organised an awareness programme at Ashtangoo, Bandipora.

During the programme teachers, students and community members were sensitised about various laws and provisions concerning child protection, including the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015, Child Labour Laws, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, Adoption Regulations, and the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA).

Participants were briefed about Child Helpline 1098 and various schemes and initiatives being implemented under Mission Vatsalya. The programme aimed to educate students and teachers about Child Rights promote a safe and protective environment for children.

As part of the awareness initiative, posters displaying the Child Helpline 1098 were also placed at prominent locations of the area to strengthen public awareness and encourage people to report child protection concerns promptly.

JKEDI Srinagar concludes Management Development Programme under RAMP at Balhama

■ HT News Network



SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 21: The Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI), District Office Srinagar, successfully concluded a Management Development Programme (MDP) under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) initiative at Balhama Srinagar.

The programme trained 22 entrepreneurs, equipping them with structured training designed to enhance their entrepreneurial competencies and strengthen their business capabilities.

The valedictory ceremony was graced by AnsarUllah Machloo Incharge-CNEC/ Program reviewer; Shabir Hussain Shah, District Nodal Officer, JKEDI Srinagar and Syed Miftah Andrabi, Manager CSF/Trainer.

Interacting with the participants, Ansar appreciated the efforts of JKEDI Srinagar in organizing capacity-building programmes in the interior rural areas of District Srinagar. Shabir Hussain Shah, in his address, commended the enthusiasm and active participation of the entrepreneurs and encouraged them to apply the knowledge and skills gained to establish sustainable and growth-oriented enterprises.

He stressed the importance of women entrepreneurship in building a sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem. He emphasized the importance of such initiatives in promoting entrepreneurship and empowering entrepreneurs at the grassroots level.

The participants expressed heartfelt gratitude to the course team and JKEDI for their dedicated guidance and support in successfully organizing the programme. Shabir Hussain Shah, in his address, commended the enthusiasm and active participation of the entrepreneurs and encouraged them to apply the knowledge and skills gained to establish sustainable and growth-oriented enterprises.

He stressed the importance of women entrepreneurship in building a sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem.

JKEDI Pulwama concludes Two Management Development Programmes under RAMP

■ HT News Network



PULWAMA, NOVEMBER 21: The Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI), Pulwama, in collaboration with NRLM, successfully concluded two Management Development Programmes (MDP-13 and MDP-14) under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) initiative at Aglar Drubgam, Pulwama.

The program trained the women entrepreneurs, providing them with structured, high-quality training aimed at enhancing their entrepreneurial skills and strengthening their business capabilities.

The valedictory ceremony was graced by the presence of Arif Khan, Reviewer; Raiyees Manzoor, District Nodal Officer, JKEDI Pulwama; Sajad Ahmad Mir, Trainer and Showkat Rasool, Trainer. While interacting with the participants, the dignitaries and faculty members highly appreciated JKEDI's efforts in organizing such impactful capacity-building programmes in the far-flung areas of Pulwama district. They commended the enthusiasm and active participation of the women entrepreneurs and encouraged them to utilize the acquired knowledge and skills to establish sustainable and growth-oriented enterprises. Raiyees Manzoor emphasized the importance of such initiatives in promoting entrepreneurship.

SWD Srinagar organizes Community Awareness Programmes on Financial Literacy, Social Security Schemes in Khanyar

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 21: Social Welfare Department (SWD), Srinagar, through SANKALP-HEW Srinagar, organized a Community Awareness Programme on Financial Literacy, Financial Assistance Schemes and other Social Security Schemes to empower community members with information regarding various welfare initiatives and financial support mechanisms available to eligible beneficiaries.

Bankers' Meeting reviews PMEGP, JKREGP Performance

■ HT News Network

BARAMULLA, NOVEMBER 21: A meeting of bankers was held today at the Government Conference Hall, Sopore, under the chairmanship of Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Dy. CEO), Kashmir Division (KD), to review the progress and performance of the PMEGP and JKREGP schemes.

The meeting was attended by Lead District Managers, Cluster Heads of J&K Bank, and Directors of RSETIs from Baramulla, Kupwara and Bandipora districts. Officers from J&K Grameen Bank, State Bank of India (SBI), Punjab National Bank (PNB), along with a large number of Branch Managers of J&K Bank, also participated.

During the meeting, the performance of PMEGP and JKREGP was thoroughly deliberated upon, with particular focus on pending rectifications under PMEGP.

The participating bankers were directed to ensure the clearance of all pending rectifications under PMEGP by or before November 30, 2026, positively. Emphasis was laid on timely action and effective coordination to ensure smooth implementation of the schemes.

Chirag Paswan supports review of 40 pc GST on beverages, says low-priced products need relief

■ HT News Network

NEW DELHI, Nov 20: Union Food Processing Industries Minister Chirag Paswan on Friday said the government is in talks with the GST Council for further sub-categorisation of beverages, particularly those with higher fruit content, while supporting the industry's demand for a review of the 40 per cent tax rate, noting that even products priced below Rs 20 are placed in the highest tax bracket. Speaking at a programme organised by the Indian Beverage Association (IBA), Paswan said he agreed with the industry's concerns over the taxation of aerated, carbonated and caffeinated beverages and believed that appropriate reforms and changes were necessary. The minister said he is "hopeful" and representing the beverage industry's concerns to the GST Council, which is a joint constitutional body of the Union and State governments that makes recommendations.

Rapido welcomes landmark SC verdict on bike taxis, terms it as a defining moment

■ HT News Network

Chennai, Nov 21 (UNI) Roppen Transportation Services Private Limited (Rapido), India's largest and most affordable one-stop mobility platform, has welcomed the Supreme Court's decision in the Karnataka bike taxi matter, calling it a landmark moment for the bike taxi category in India.

The verdict marks a major step forward for a category that serves millions of commuters and captains, while creating a stronger foundation for states to develop clear and workable bike taxi policies.

The verdict marks a significant milestone for the bike taxi category in India, which Rapido has played a leading role in building over the past several years. Bike taxis have emerged as an important option for short-distance and first- and last-mile travel, while also creating flexible earning opportunities for lakhs of captains and greater mobility choice for commuters across the country.

Pavan Guntupalli, Co-founder, Rapido, said, "We welcome the decision by the Supreme Court, it brings important clarity to the bike taxi category in Karnataka and marks a landmark moment for the sector in India. Over the years, bike taxis have demonstrated their value by helping commuters navigate congested cities, strengthening first- and last-mile connectivity, and creating flexible earning opportunities for captains. The verdict recognises the role the category already plays on the ground and provides a stronger foundation for its continued growth and integration into the mobility ecosystem."

"For Rapido, this is more than a legal outcome. It is an affirmation of something we have consistently believed in: that India needs mobility solutions designed around the way people actually travel. Two-wheelers are among the most widely owned and accessible mobility assets in the country, and enabling people to use them productively can create meaningful value for commuters, captains and cities alike. We look forward to working with the Government of Karnataka to take the category into its next phase, safe, responsible, regulated and at scale", he said.

GST Network adds metro rail as fifth mode of transport in e-way bill system

■ HT News Network

NEW DELHI, Nov 21: The GST Network (GSTN) has added metro rail as a new mode of transport in the e-way bill system.

Currently, the facility has also been released in the "Sandbox environment" for API users to test and make necessary changes to their systems. Its roll-out in the live API environment will be announced separately, GSTN, which manages the IT backbone of Goods and Services Tax, said.

The facility follows a government notification dated October 26. With this addition, the e-way bill system now has five modes of transport: Road, Rail, Air, Ship and Metro Rail.

Under the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the e-way bill is mandatory for transiting goods valued at Rs 50,000 and above, both inter- and intra-state.

GSTN, in an advisory issued on November 20, said the new option is available to web users for generating e-way bills and updating transport details.

India, Finland seek to deepen economic ties through startup cooperation: Envoy

■ HT News Network/UNI

NEW DELHI, Nov 21: India and Finland are looking to deepen economic cooperation by strengthening ties between their startup ecosystems and promoting greater two-way investment, Finnish Ambassador to India Mikko Kivikoski has said.

"We want to engage more with the Indian startup actors. And of course, at the end of the day, this is all about advancing the economic cooperation between our countries. And here we see the startup sector, startup ecosystems, as an important part of that cooperation," Kivikoski told PTI.Buy Maps

The ambassador was speaking at an unconventional startup event held at the Embassy of Finland in New Delhi on Friday, where entrepreneurs stepped into an ice-cold pool to pitch their ideas, drawing on Finland's winter-swimming tradition.

"We have quite a long tradition in Finland for these kinds of events," Kivikoski said.

"This year has been record-high when it comes to interaction and engagement between Finland and India," he said, referring to visits by the Finnish prime minister and president, as well as meetings between the leaders of the two countries.

The ambassador said the two sides agreed to elevate their bilateral relationship to a Strategic Partnership in Digitalisation and Sustainability during Finnish President Alexander Stubb's state visit to India in March.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met his Finnish counterpart, Petteri Orpo, in New Delhi on the sidelines of the AI Impact Summit in February and in Oslo on the margins of the 3rd India-Nordic Summit in May.



Kivikoski also referred to the visits to Finland by India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal during the summer.

"We see India as a trusted partner when it comes to the Indo-Pacific area," he said.

The ambassador said the India-Finland relationship was increasingly moving beyond conventional trade towards a partnership involving investments and people-to-people exchanges.

"What we are seeing already, and what is happening between the European Union and India and between India and Finland, is that we are now talking about partnership. It's not anymore about me selling something to you and you selling something to me," he said. Buy Maps

"There are more and more Finnish companies coming to the Indian market and more and more Indian companies going to the Finnish market. And of course we hope, and we are confident, that this dynamism will continue in the future," he said.

Bilateral trade in goods and services between India and Finland stood at around USD 3.7 billion in 2025-26, marking a growth of about 25 per cent over the previous year, and a 38.5 per cent rise from USD 2.64 billion in 2021-22.

The startup event, Polar Bear Pitching, originated in Oulu, northern Finland, and has expanded internationally, connecting startups with investors and business networks.

Six startups pitched their ideas on Friday at the third India edition of Polar Bear Pitching, with Mumbai-based Yash Goliya of Suryudey Plastic Electronics Pvt Ltd emerging as the winner.

Goliya will now compete alongside founders from other countries at the global event in Finland in February 2027. "I'm gonna make India proud and get the trophy home," Goliya said after his win.

Last year's India edition winner, Anshul Patyal, who represented computing hardware startup Vicharak, secured third place at the global competition in February this year.

The winner of the main Polar Bear Pitching competition in Oulu receives a cash prize of 10,000 euros (around Rs 10.1 lakh).

Why fibbing about stolen snacks is an important part of childhood

When drawings appear on the wall or biscuits disappear from the tin, your child might blame the dog or claim there was a ghost - even if they are clutching crayons or covered in crumbs.

Children telling fibs is something most parents experience, but such dishonesty and deception is an important part of mental development.

"It's actually a skill that they're developing and that they will play with in order to get better," clinical psychologist Dr Jade Redfern tells the CBeebies Parenting Download podcast.

Here, experts explain why learning to lie is a sign of healthy behaviour - and how to help encourage honesty.

Young children aren't quite sophisticated enough to lie, says Redfern, but they are capable of deception before the age of one.

One of the studies mentioned on the podcast comes from the University of Bristol, which found that around a quarter of children appear to understand some form of deception by the time they are 10 months old.

Prof Elena Hoicka, who led the study, says it was fascinating to see how "surprisingly young" kids could be so adept and cunning, including her own.

"As a mother of three, I can certainly vouch for how artful and wily they can be.

"Hiding under the table or in the bathroom to eat sweets or chocolate is their common ploy."

Hoicka says that the kind of deception a child uses from the age of two is quite basic - like pretending not to hear their parent or denying they've done something.

"It could also extend to doing forbidden activities in secret," she says. "For example, looking in a



bag they were told not to look in when no one is apparently watching, or making excuses, such as claiming to need the toilet when asked to tidy up."

y the age of three, they have become much more proficient and creative in their deceptions, showing a deeper understanding of language and how other people's minds work.

She says they also start to withhold information. For instance, truthfully telling their parents that their sibling has hit them but omitting the fact that they hit their sibling first.

These deceptions are a sign of them developing something Redfern calls "theory of mind".

"As children grow up, we want them to learn and develop the skill that they are their own human being with a separate mind and intentions," she explains.

"This is how [they] develop the skills in empathy, or being able to think about another person's thoughts and feelings that might differ from their own."

Another reason a child might lie is self-preservation as they don't want to upset or disappoint their parent.

"All human beings are driven by attachment," says Redfern. "[Children are] driven by being able to preserve that relationship with their caregivers as they depend upon it."

Early on, they learn what brings them closer to their caregiver and what pulls them apart, she says. With this in mind, Redfern thinks you can encourage honesty by creating a safe environment for a child to tell the truth.

"[We] have to think about ways we can help children feel safe enough to tell us the truth [when] they've made a mistake... and they don't want to disappoint us."

This is something Rachel Duffy, who won the latest series of The Traitors, tells the CBeebies Parenting podcast that she has been trying to do.

The mum-of-three recalls one occasion when her eldest son borrowed his brother's bike and broke it after crashing it into a car. Initially, he tried to lie about what happened.

"I said to him, 'You'll not get into big trouble when you tell me the truth.' I just left and gave him a little space.

"And he went, 'Yeah, that was me.' And then he knew that space was safe. We had a conversation - no raised voices, no roaring or shouting."

Redfern says this is a good example of how to deal with such a situation and that there are occasions when a lie, or nuance, might be appropriate - such as when they receive a gift they don't want or describe other people physically.

"My kids delightfully told me recently that I was very wrinkly," she says. "Again, I try to take it with open curiosity."

She does this by talking about why they think she is wrinkly.

"I think just being able to explore as children get older, just having open, curious conversations - it really develops empathy for somebody else's feelings when they've been shown and modelled empathy over and over again."

BBC NEWS

Five surprising ways to boost your iron - that have nothing to do with meat

Ferment it, boil it, or sprinkle it with lemon. When it comes to iron absorption, it's not just what you eat, but how you eat it that matters.Growing up I believed that if I ate plenty of spinach, I'd grow nice and strong. Even today I regularly add it to smoothies, pasta and omelettes.I like it not only because it's versatile, easy to cook and rich in fibre, but because it's also a good source of iron – right?

Well, while I'm not entirely wrong, we don't absorb that much iron from raw spinach.

Given that around one in three of us is iron-deficient, it's worth understanding it's not just what we eat – it's how we eat our food and prepare it – that gives us the best chance of getting the amounts we need.

The most common deficiency

Iron deficiency is the most common nutritional deficiency in the world, especially among children and women of reproductive age.

Feeling tired, weak or short of breath are all signs you may be low, since this essential mineral helps produce haemoglobin, the protein that carries oxygen to almost every part of our bodies.

"It's best to try and prevent becoming anaemic by eating the right diet," says Susan Fairweather-Tait, professor of mineral metabolism at the University of East Anglia.

When it comes to how readily we absorb iron from food, however, not all iron-rich foods are equal.

Meat-free diets require extra care

here are two dietary forms of iron. Heme iron is found in meat and seafood, while non-heme comes from plant-based foods.

We tend to absorb the former more easily than the latter. Our body absorbs about 15-30% of heme iron, and less from various kinds of non-heme (about 2% of that in dried legumes and about 7-9% in leafy vegetables).

But as concerns rise about cost, as well as the toll of red meat on health and the environment, some people are eating less. That could contribute to iron deficiency if not replaced with other iron sources, says Yemisi Latunde-Dada, a senior lecture in nutritional sciences at King's College London.

Thankfully, there are many plant-based sources of iron that can make up your daily goal.

And while these non-heme sources are absorbed less efficiently, there's numerous ways to maximise absorption from plant-based foods.

1. Boil some greens, steam others

How food is prepared can affect how much iron is available to us.

My trusty go-to – spinach – contains compounds called oxalates. These can bind to iron and block how much our bodies take up. But when we boil it, the compounds are released and more iron can be absorbed.

This rule only applies, however, to leafy greens that are high in oxalates, such as spinach, Swiss chard and beetroot leaves.

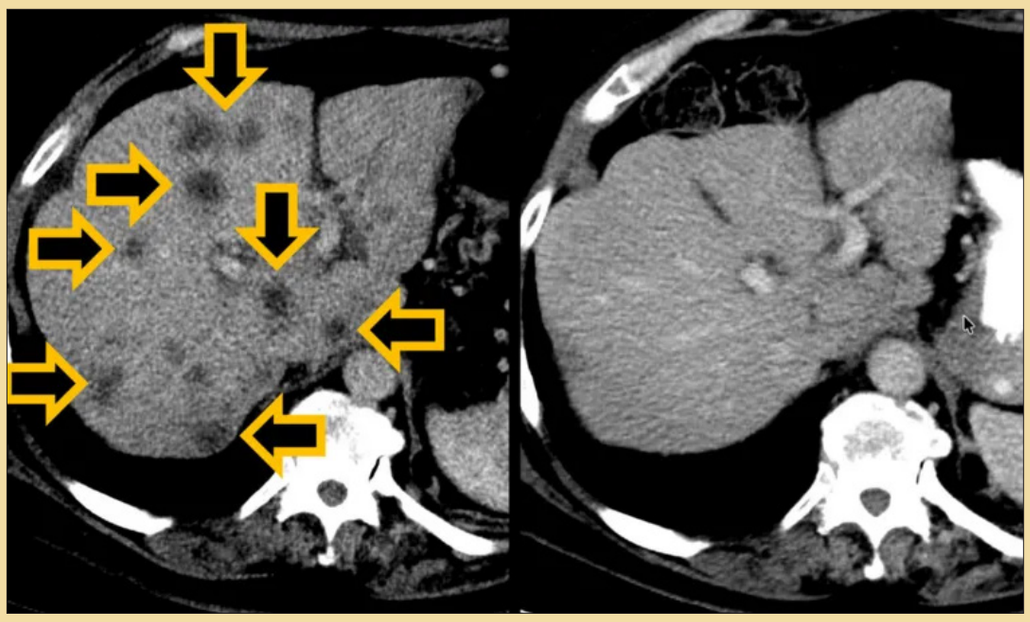
Other greens, like lettuce, cabbage and bok choy, don't need their oxalates leached out. In fact, eating them raw or steamed helps retain more vitamin C, providing an iron-absorption boost.

2. Pair iron-rich food with vitamin C

When we add vitamin C to our diet, we absorb more iron, research has shown.



Massive hope for pancreatic cancer pill after trial saw tumours vanish



Experts are calling it the biggest breakthrough in pancreatic cancer treatment for decades - a daily pill that appears to shrink and possibly even eliminate tumours in some patients with one of the deadliest and hardest-to-treat cancers.

Cancer became undetectable on scans in one in 12 of the patients given daraxonrasib along with chemotherapy in early medical trials.

Tumours stopped growing in almost all of the 61 participants who had recently been diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer that had spread to other parts of the body.

But doctors stress it is unclear how long it might keep the disease at bay and should not be seen as a cure.

Incredibly exciting

Cancer Research UK called it "the biggest leap forward in decades" for pancreatic cancer patients.

The charity's Dr Sam Godfrey told BBC News that the results were incredibly exciting. "What this new drug has done is it's found a way of drugging the undruggable.

"We are finally seeing progress in pancreatic cancer which is so long overdue."

Pancreatic cancer is notoriously hard to treat and has the lowest survival rate of all common cancers in the UK.

Although chemotherapy can shrink tumours a bit, the cancer often grows again.

Most patients with advanced disease survive months, not years.

Doctors hope the new treatment might offer patients more time, even if it cannot stop cancers for good.

The trial followed patients for a year and a half, on average, and some did not see their cancer return during this time.

Longer studies are needed to understand if any of these cancers can be put into remission and for how long.

In the phase I/II trial:

tumours stopped growing in 90% of patients

just over 60% of patients saw their tumours shrink or disappear

for around 8% of patients, or one in 12, tumours became undetectable on CT scans

Longer survival

Dr Wungki Park, from Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in the US and who is involved in the trial, said the results were extremely encouraging so far.

"We are beginning to see not only a higher percentage of tumour response rates, but also deeper responses and a near doubling in the duration of disease control, which may eventually translate into longer survival," he said.

Daraxonrasib is a targeted inhibitor treatment that has already been approved in the US. It works by locking on to and shutting off certain mutations, called RAS, found in most pancreatic cancers that drive tumour growth.

Dozens of other cancers, including lung and ovarian, can have similar mutations, meaning the drug might help lots of other patients too.

Dr Godfrey said: "I would hope that the early success that we are beginning to see in pancreatic cancer can also be rolled out to other cancers."

He said longer trials and results were vital. "Cancer can come back and even if scans show there is no sign of it, you don't necessarily know you are cancer-free until more time has passed."Prof Elena Garralda, chair of a European cancer conference called EORTC–NCI–AACR Symposium 2026 where the work is being presented to other doctors, said: "These results are exciting because they show the combined treatment could potentially significantly improve patients' overall survival, as well as the time before tumours start to grow again."

India finish Archery Asia Cup in Hangzhou with six medals

United News Of India

HANGZHOU, NOV 21 :Aditi Gopichand Swami and Ganesh Mani Ratnam won individual compound silver medals as India finished the Archery Asia Cup 2026 Stage 3 here in the People's Republic of China with six medals on Saturday.

India's final tally at the continental archery meet comprised three silver and three bronze medals. Four of these came on Saturday, following two bronzes in the team events on Friday.

The 2023 world champion Aditi Swami, who qualified 16th with 689 points, lost the women's compound individual final

146-144 to China's Hu Jingwen - the third seed. The contest was evenly poised after the first two ends, with the scores level at 30-30 and 58-58, respectively, according to olympics.com.

Aditi took a slender 88-87 lead after the third end. However, Hu Jingwen responded with three perfect 10s in the fourth while Aditi managed a 10 and two 9s, allowing the Chinese archer to move ahead 117-116.

Aditi began the final end with two 10s, while Hu Jingwen opened with a 9, keeping the Indian in contention. However,



an 8 with her final arrow proved costly as Hu Jingwen clinched the gold medal.

It was a welcome podium for Aditi, who won the individual bronze and women's team gold at the Asian Games 2023 - also held in the same Chinese city - but had

failed to make the Indian squad for Aichi-Nagoya 2026 held in Japan earlier this year.

Earlier in the tournament, Aditi had beaten China's Tang Jing 144-143 in the quarter-finals before edging the Republic of Korea's Oh Yoohyun 143-142 in the semi-finals.

In the men's individual compound final, Ganesh Mani Ratnam also settled for silver after losing 148-146 to Australia's Bailey Wildman. The archers were tied at 59-59 after two ends before

ailey Wildman took an 89-88 lead in the third. The Australian extended his advantage to

119-117 after the fourth end and maintained the two-point cushion to claim gold.

Ganesh, who won individual bronze and men's compound team gold at the Asian Games 2026, had qualified sixth with 707 points in Hangzhou. He beat Indonesia's Sostar Andaru Rinaldi 147-143 in the quarter-finals before overcoming China's Qi Biheng in a shoot-off following a 146-146 semi-final tie.

Ganesh also combined with Manav Ganeshrao Jadhao and Mohit Bhati to win silver in the men's compound team event after losing 234-229 to Australia in the final.

The Indian trio had qualified with a combined score of 2121, with Manav topping the individual qualification standings with 711 points. The trio defeated Chinese Taipei 234-230 in the quarter-finals and Singapore 231-224 in the semi-finals to reach the gold medal match.

Meanwhile, Prithika Pradeep settled for a bronze medal in individual women's compound. The 18-year-old Prithika, who beat reigning Asian Games champion Nurisa Dian Ashrifah of Indonesia 146-142 in the quarter-finals, claimed her podium spot after beating South Korea's Oh Yoohyun 145-142 in the third-place match.

Prithika, who won women's compound team gold at the Asian Games 2026, had qualified seventh with 700 points. She lost 149-145 to eventual champion Hu Jingwen in the semi-finals.

On Friday, the women's compound team of Aditi, Prithika and Tejal Rajendra Salve secured bronze after defeating Indonesia 230-228.

The men's recurve team of Ujjwal Dhama, Goldi Mishra and Abhyuday Amol Pakhale also took bronze, beating Chinese Taipei in a shoot-off after the scores were level at 4-4.

Bangladesh batter Hridoy found guilty of breaching ICC Code of Conduct

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DUBAI, NOV 21 :Bangladesh batter Towhid Hridoy has been fined 40 per cent of his match fee after he was found guilty of breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct during the first Test against South Africa in Johannesburg on Wednesday.

Hridoy was found to have breached Article 2.8 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to "showing dissent at an umpire's decision during an international match."

Two demerit points have been added to his disciplinary record, for whom it was the first offence in a 24-month period.

The incident occurred after play was suspended due to bad light when on-field umpires Ahsan Raza and Alex Wharf were walking past the Bangladesh team's dressing room balcony.

Hridoy criticized the umpires' decision and asserted that play should have stopped earlier, speaking to the umpires in a manner that was aggressive and unbecoming.



Hridoy admitted the offence and accepted the sanction proposed by Andy Pycroft of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees, so there was no need for a formal hearing.

On-field umpires Raza and Wharf, third umpire Asif Yaqoob and fourth umpire Lubabalo Gcuma levelled the charge.

I've been thinking about Test cricket in New Zealand for six or seven months: Rahul

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NEW DELHI, NOV 21 :KL Rahul's maiden Test appearance in New Zealand was the culmination of months of preparation.

The India opener made the most of the opportunity with a 136 on the third day of the Wellington Test, becoming only



the second Asian opener after Saeed Anwar to score Test centuries in all four SENA countries. Rahul revealed that playing Test cricket in New Zealand had been on his mind for several months and that he had arrived early to familiarise himself with the conditions."Obviously, when you play Test cricket for that long, when you finish your career, you want to at least get that opportunity to challenge yourself in different countries and play against the best attacks," Rahul said."New Zealand has been a country where a lot of batters have struggled to get runs, and it is difficult conditions. So I wanted to play a Test match here. I wanted to play a lot more, but unfortunately haven't played here before this. So when I got the opportunity, I wanted to make the most of it. That's why I decided to come in early as well, just to get used to the conditions, because I have no prior experience of coming to New Zealand and playing red-ball cricket.

"I've been thinking about Test cricket in New Zealand for the last six or seven months, trying to do my homework, trying to see the guys that have scored runs here and how they've been able to achieve that. So a lot of prep, a lot of homework. And once you've ticked all those boxes, it becomes slightly easier when you play the game," he added.As part of that preparation, Rahul studied footage of recent Test matches in New Zealand, focusing on batters who had succeeded in the conditions, including Joe Root and Harry Brook.

"I watched the last few years of Test cricket here," Rahul elaborated. "England played here, Australia played here, West Indies were here recently.

Karandeep takes Krishna Punjab Raptors GC to an exciting win in X-Golf in Auro Realty Invitational

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PUNE, NOV 21 :The new and exciting X-Golf contest brought the curtain down on an exhilarating week at the Auro Realty Invitational 2026 presented by Auro Goa Eagles GC and Karandeep Kochhar capped a highly successful week.

Kochhar completed a double at the Poona Golf Club as he helped Krishna Punjab Raptors to the X-golf success after winning the dramatic play-off a day earlier.

Commenting that the 18th hole had been very kind to him, the 27-year-old Kochhar was in full flow for Punjab Raptors

in the X-Golf contest, which was played over his 'favourite' hole, the 18th, where he had eagled out on each of the three days in the competition.

The 10 teams in the three-day 54-contest had seen the Vimtra Chennai Lions GC take the honors with Gaganjeet Bhullar, who lost the play-off to Kochhar, playing the lead role for his team.

Khawaja, Warner dropped from commentary duties as 2018 Sandpapergate resurfaces

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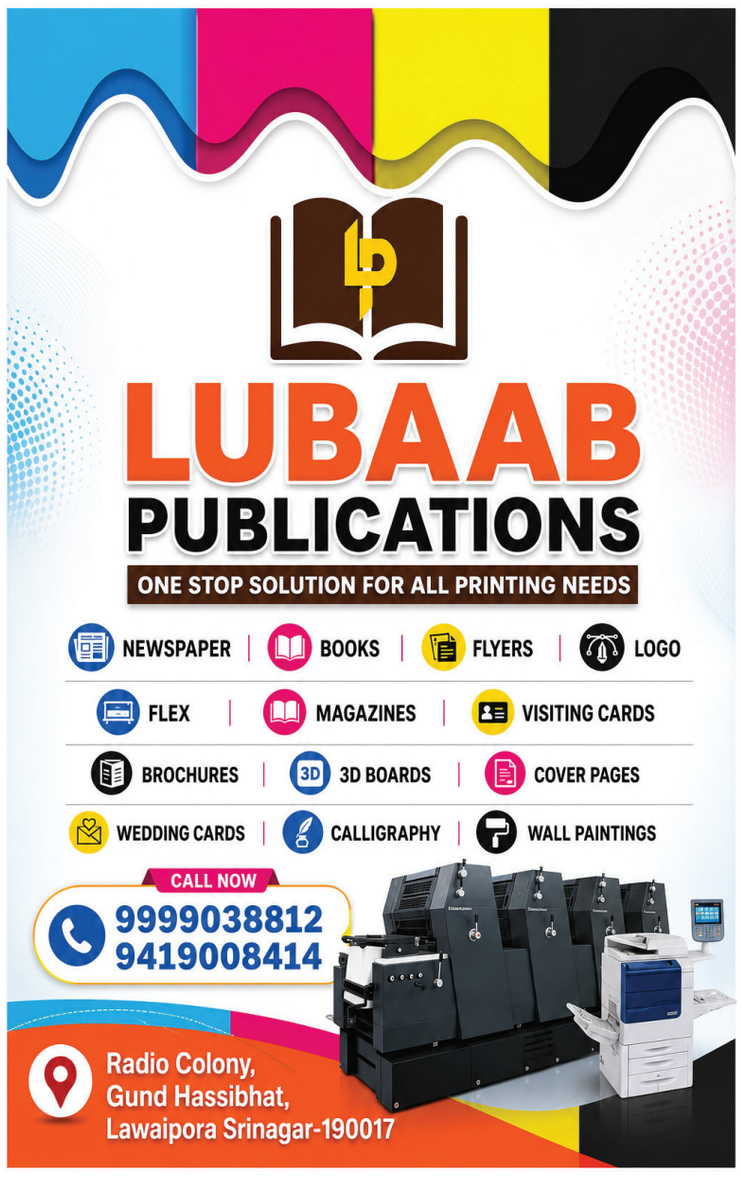
NEW DELHI, NOV 21 : Former Australia openers Usman Khawaja and David Warner have been dropped from Fox Cricket's commentary roster as the controversy surrounding the 2018 ball-tampering scandal continues to escalate.

Fox Sports said both commentators would be rested from broadcasts over the next few weeks to spare them the pressure of responding to the growing row. However, no date has been confirmed for their return. Australia began their five-match T20I series against England at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Saturday.

"In light of recent events, both Usman and Davey will be rested from our broadcasts over the next few weeks. While we always support all members of our commentary team and welcome a diversity of views which is a feature of our summer of cricket we also understand the pressure they are under to respond to each and every new comment.

"We think it is increasingly difficult to focus on the game while the situation continues to unfold and think it is unfair on both commentators to put them in that position. Our focus remains on providing our viewers with the best broadcast of Australia's summer of cricket. We will continue to monitor the situation." Fox Sports managing director Steve Crawley was quoted as saying by CODE Sports.







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