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We Must Dismantle Entire Terrorist-Separatist Ecosystem: LG Sinha



KA NEWS DESK

Jammu, November 20: Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha today chaired a high-level meeting with Deputy Commissioners, SSPs, and senior officials to review the security scenario, winter readiness, and key infrastructure projects across Jammu Division.

The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Dr. Sajjan Singh Yadav; DGP Shri Nalin Prabhat; Additional Chief Secretary Home Department Shri Chandraker Bharti; Special DG Coordination PHQ Shri S.J.M. Gillani; Commissioner Secretary GAD Shri M. Raju; Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor Shri Govind Jaiswal; IGP Jammu Shri Terjinder Singh; Divisional Commissioner Jammu Shri Vikas Kundal; Range DIGs, DCs, SSPs, and other senior officers.

During the meeting, the discussion focussed on strengthening security frameworks and implementing actionable roadmaps to ensure lasting peace and accelerate development process in the region.

Lauding the Administration and J&K Police for the peaceful conduct of the 'Nasha

■ See on Pg. 10

Cultural connections strongest guarantee of global peace: PM Modi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



New Delhi, Nov 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said cultural connections are the strongest guarantee of global peace, and cultural and civilisational cooperation among member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) can further strengthen these ties.

Inaugurating the first SCO Civilisational Dialogue Forum here, Modi also said that empires have certainly changed the map of the world but civilisational dialogues have changed the way the world thinks, and that is why the SCO civilisational summit is not merely a ceremonial platform but can become a forum for giving the world direction.

"At a time when discussions about war and unrest dominate the world, we in India are engaging in initiatives on civilisational dialogue and connectivity. This is also important because cultural connections are the strongest guarantee of global peace. This makes this event all the more significant," he said at the forum attended by delegates from various SCO member countries, including Pakistan minister Musadik Malik.

The prime minister

■ See on Pg. 10

Bhupender Singh takes over as IG BSF



KA NEWS DESK

Srinagar, Nov 20: Bhupender Singh on Friday took over as the Inspector General (IG) of the Border Security Force (BSF), Kashmir Frontier, from Ashok Yadav.

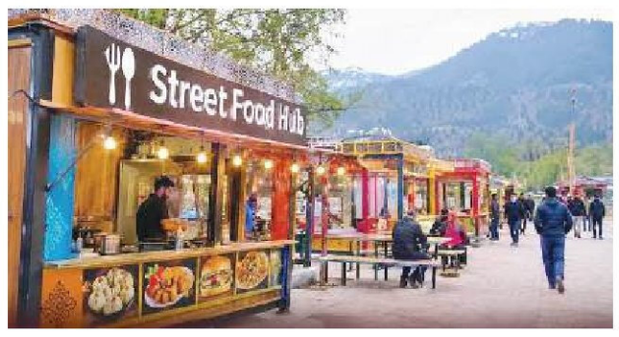
According to the BSF, Bhupender Singh is a highly decorated officer with vast operational and administrative experience.

Singh, who has an experience of over 30 years, is widely recognised for his exemplary leadership, professional competence, and significant

■ See on Pg. 10

Govt accords Rs 9.85 crore approval for Street Food Hubs at Tangmarg, Lakhanpur

KA NEWS DESK



Jammu, November 20: In a significant initiative to strengthen local livelihoods, promote tourism and improve public amenities, the Jammu and Kashmir Government, led by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, has accorded administrative approval for the construction of two Street Food Hubs at Tangmarg and Lakhanpur at a combined cost of Rs 9.85 crore.

The projects assume special significance in view of the strategic and tourism importance of the two locations. Lakhanpur, the gateway to Jammu and Kashmir and J&K's first town for visitors entering from Punjab, serves as the first point of entry for a large number of tourists, pilgrims and travellers. Similarly, Tangmarg is the first major tourist destination on the route to the world-famous ski resort of Gulmarg, welcoming visitors heading towards the popular tourist resort.

The projects include construction of a Street Food Hub at Tangmarg at an approved cost of Rs 3.81 crore and a Clean Street Food Hub at Lakhanpur, near the State Tax Office Building and the bus stand, at a cost of Rs 6.04 crore. The funding will be provided under PM SVANidhi and the Capex Budget (MRDA Sector).

The initiative aims to provide organised, hygienic and well-equipped spaces for street vendors, improve public amenities and ensure access to safe and quality food for residents, tourists and other visitors.

The development of these facilities is expected to enhance the overall visitor experience at two important entry and tourism points of Jammu and Kashmir, while providing

■ See on Pg. 10

'Excellence in Promoting Sports'

J&K wins prestigious India Sports Award

KA NEWS SERVICE



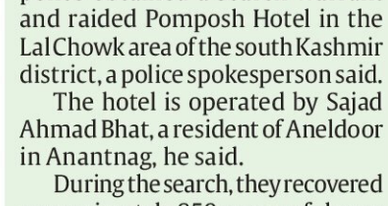
New Delhi, November 20: In a moment of immense pride and recognition, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir has been selected for the prestigious India Sports Award 2026 under the category "Best State/UT Promoting Sports" by the FICCI India Sports Awards Jury.

The recognition acknowledges the Government's sustained efforts towards strengthening the sports ecosystem, promoting sporting culture and creating opportunities for young talent across Jammu & Kashmir.

The award is a testament to the Government's commitment to nurture sporting excellence through development of sports infrastructure, strengthening grassroots sports initiatives, encouraging youth participation and providing

■ See on Pg. 10

EOW files chargesheet against property dealer in land fraud case



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Nov 20: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Crime Branch Jammu has filed a chargesheet against a property dealer for allegedly cheating a woman of Rs 6.5 lakh by fraudulently selling her a piece of land in the Kot Bhalwal area in the district, officials said.

The chargesheet has been filed before the court of the electricity magistrate, Jammu, in connection with a case registered under Section 420 RPC at the police station crime branch (EOW) in 2023, they said.

The case originated from a complaint lodged by Nishu Kumari, who alleged that the accused, Rakesh Kumar, son of Ravi Kumar and a resident of Canal Road in Jammu, induced her to purchase a five-marla plot at Kot Bhalwal village by misrepresenting his ownership rights, they said. According

■ See on Pg. 10

DyCM says NC's stand on dialogue vindicated

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Jammu, Nov 20: Jammu and Kashmir Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary on Friday said the National Conference's consistent stand on dialogue with Pakistan has been vindicated, and challenged the BJP to explain its position on engagement with the neighbouring country.

Pakistan's Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Musadik Masood Malik, arrived in Delhi on Friday for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) civilisational dialogue forum.

"When Farooq Abdullah Sahib advocated talks with Pakistan, the BJP used to call our leaders Pakistani. Today, the situation has come full circle. My leader was right then and he is right even today," he told reporters here.

He said the NC's position was in line with former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's observation that while friends could be changed, neighbours could not, and relations with neighbouring countries should remain cordial.

"If a Pakistani minister is visiting India today, it must be on an invitation. Whose stand has proved

■ See on Pg. 10

Resident doctors at GMS go on strike

KA NEWS DESK

Srinagar, Nov 20: Postgraduate and senior resident doctors at the Government Medical College here began an indefinite strike on Friday, demanding a stipend hike and parity with other states and Union Territories.

The protesting doctors urged the government to address their demands immediately.

"The government must address the long-pending stipend grievances without further delay," All India Medical Students' Association (AIMSA) vice president, Dr Mohit Choudhary, a PG resident at Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar, said.

■ See on Pg. 10

Illicit liquor, charas seized from hotel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Nov 20: A substantial quantity of illicit liquor and contraband substance was recovered from a hotel in Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag district, police said on Friday.

Acting on credible information, police obtained a search warrant and raided Pomposh Hotel in the Lal Chowk area of the south Kashmir district, a police spokesperson said.

The hotel is operated by Sajad Ahmad Bhat, a resident of Aneldoor in Anantnag, he said.

During the search, they recovered approximately 850 grams of charas powder and

■ See on Pg. 10

SC Seeks Centre's Response On Law Against Close-Kin Marriages

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



New Delhi, Nov 20: Saying it did not want to direct but only sensitise the government, the Supreme Court on Friday asked the Centre for its response on the "desirability" of bringing in legislation on marriages between those who are closely related by blood.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana also noted that the court can't regulate such 'consanguineous marriages'.

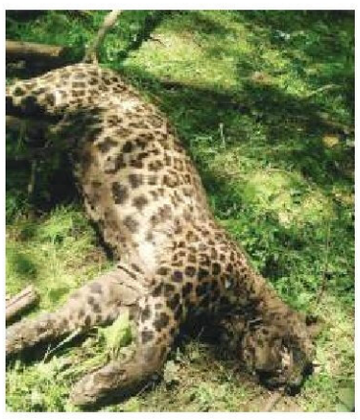
It observed that regulating such marriages through social reform legislation falls exclusively within the domain of the legislature.

The top court was hearing a plea filed by Charvi S, a law student residing in Bengaluru, who urged it to consider whether the law should continue to permit a practice that exposes children to foreseeable and avoidable genetic harm simply because it is customary.

■ See on Pg. 10

3 leopards die within 24 hours in Gulmarg area; poisoning suspected

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA



Srinagar, Nov 20: Three leopards, including two cubs, were found dead in Waripora Kunzer in north Kashmir's Baramulla district within 24 hours, prompting wildlife officials to suspect poisoning and seek forensic examination to establish the cause of death.

The carcasses of the two cubs, aged around eight to nine months, were recovered on November 17 after the wildlife control room received a call around 4.30 pm. The animals were found lying barely two to three feet apart, with no visible external injuries or bruises, officials said.

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FDA intensifies Food Safety Enforcement

Conducts 157 Inspections, lifts 53 samples

Kashmir Age News



SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 20: Food and Drugs Administration (FDA), J&K, continues its enforcement activities to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and its regulations.

During enforcement activities, the Food Safety teams conducted 157 inspections of restaurants, Hotels, Cafes and similar other establishments and lifted 53 food samples for analysis to assess their conformity with prescribed food safety and quality standards. As part of the enforcement action, five cases were compounded under Section 69 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, with a total fine of 5,000 imposed.

Further, five cases were initiated under Section 56 of the Act for violations pertaining to sanitary and hygienic requirements, which carry a penalty of up to 1 lakh. Additionally, three cases were initiated under Section 58 of the Act in connection with the use of non-food-grade utensils, which attract a penalty of up to 2 lakh.

The FDA, J&K reiterated that regular inspections, random sampling and enforcement proceedings form an integral part of its efforts to strengthen food safety compliance

across Jammu and Kashmir. Food Business Operators have been advised to maintain prescribed hygiene and sanitation standards, use food-grade utensils and equipment, and ensure strict adherence to the statutory provisions governing food safety.

Consumers are also urged to remain vigilant and report any instance of the sale or distribution of unsafe or adulterated food through the official email at cfsjandk.fnd@jk.gov.in.

DDC Ganderbal takes stock of developmental works under RDD

Kashmir Age News

GANDERBAL, NOVEMBER 20: District Development Commissioner (DDC) Ganderbal, Shreya Singhal, today chaired a meeting in the VC Room, Mini Secretariat Complex, Ganderbal, to review the overall functioning of the Rural Development Department (RDD), with a focus on the physical and financial progress of various schemes and developmental works across the district.

The meeting reviewed the progress and implementation status of various schemes and initiatives, including VB-G RAM G, Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G), Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) and Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA).

The meeting was attended by the Additional District Development Commissioner, Chief Planning Officer,

ACD, District Treasury Officer, representatives of REW Ganderbal, Block Development Officers, and other concerned officers of the district.

During the meeting, the ACD apprised the chair of the progress achieved under various schemes, highlighting block-wise targets, achievements and expenditure status. While reviewing VB-G RAM G for the current financial year, the DDC took stock of the number of registered workers and person days generated and stressed the need for timely wage disbursement.

The DDC also reviewed the progress under SBM-G and took stock of the physical and financial status of various components, including Community Sanitary Complexes, soakage pits, compost pits and waste segregation sheds.

The execution of developmental works under various infrastructure and funding initiatives was also reviewed, including the construction of Panchayat Ghars under RGSA, works under District Capex and Constituency Development Fund (CDF).

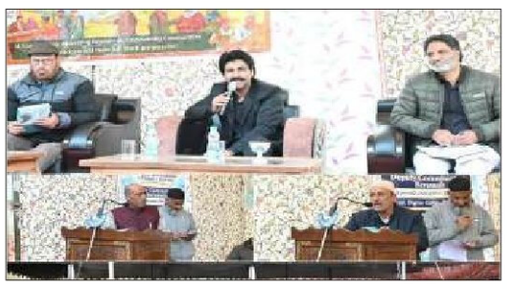
Emphasizing timely completion of works and optimal utilization of public funds, the DDC directed the concerned officers to improve the pace of expenditure against available allocations. She further directed them to expedite the tendering, allotment and execution of pending works and address implementation bottlenecks, particularly those relating to land availability, NOCs and forest clearances.

DC Baramulla presides over Block Diwas at Dangiwacha

Directs Officers to ensure time-bound redressal of public issues; Stresses uninterrupted essential services ahead of Winter

Kashmir Age News

BARAMULLA, NOVEMBER 20: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Baramulla, S.F. Hamid today presided over a Block



Diwas programme at Degree College Dangiwacha, to address public grievances at grassroots-level.

The programme witnessed active participation from public representatives, civil society members, and a large number of local residents from across Block Dangiwacha, who projected various issues and demands pertaining to their areas.

During the interaction, several key issues were raised by the participants including issuance of ration cards to eligible families, macadamisation of the road leading to Hamam Markote, improvement of transport facilities up to Chatoosa, widening of roads connecting Dangiwacha to Yarbugh, Dangiwacha to Laiser, and Cherdaji to Pazalpora.

Other key demands included posting of a Tehsildar in Dangiwacha, adequate water supply to various villages of Dangiwacha block and availability of proper sanitation facilities.

The DC gave a patient hearing to all the grievances raised during the programme, resolving several issues on the spot, and assured the participants that all other genuine demands would be taken up with the concerned departments for prompt and time-bound redressal.

Responding to the issues raised, S.F. Hamid issued strict directions to the concerned departments that there should be no compromise in the delivery of essential public services, particularly revenue-related services, issuance of ration cards to eligible families, availability of safe drinking water and uninterrupted power supply.

Chief Justice visits District Court Complex Budgam

Emphasizes collective efforts to strengthen Justice System, cautious use of AI



Kashmir Age News

BUDGAM, NOVEMBER 20: Dr. Justice Pushpendra Singh Bhati, Chief Justice, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, accompanied by Justice Sindhu Sharma, Administrative Judge for District Budgam today visited District Court Complex, Budgam.

Chief Justice was accorded a ceremonial Guard of Honour and was warmly welcomed by the Principal District and Sessions Judge, Budgam, O.P. Bhagat.

Deputy Commissioner Budgam Jatin Kishore, Senior Superintendent of Police Budgam Hariprasad KK, along with other Judicial and administrative officers were present on the occasion.

Judges from the Registry, M.K Sharma, Registrar General, Haq Nawaz Zargar, Principal Secretary to Chief Justice, members of the District Judiciary, court staff, officials of the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) and Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs) were also present.

Chief Justice, in his address, emphasised the collective responsibility of the Bar, Bench and administration in strengthening the justice delivery system and upholding public trust. He highlighted the importance of adopting emerging technologies particularly Artificial Intelligence with due caution to enhance transparency, efficiency and speedy delivery of justice. Dr. Justice Pushpendra Singh Bhati stressed the need to strengthen the Bar and Bench, promote better facilities and opportunities for women lawyers and uphold the highest standards of professionalism and judicial accountability. Referring to the forthcoming centenary celebrations of the judicial institution on 28th March 2027,

Food Safety Department issues clarification over 'misleading' news report on Hatrick Rajbagh

Kashmir Age News

SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 20: The Food Safety Department, Srinagar, clarified that the news report circulated by some media organisations regarding the alleged seizure of rotten meat from the premises of M/s Hatrick, Rajbagh, Srinagar, is factually incorrect and does not reflect the actual circumstances of the enforcement action undertaken by the department.



The department clarified that during a routine inspection, the Food Safety team had sealed only the dry storage area of the food business establishment due to certain infrastructural and operational non-compliances. These included inadequate storage space, absence of proper tiling in the storage area, inadequate ventilation and non-maintenance of the First-In-First-Out (FIFO) inventory management system.

The department further stated that the actual facts regarding the inspection and sealing of the dry storage area had already been brought into the public domain through print and electronic media on November 18, 2026. The clarification has been issued to dispel misinformation and ensure that the public is apprised of the factual position regarding the enforcement action. The department has also urged media organisations and social media operators to exercise due diligence and verify facts with the concerned authorities before disseminating information, particularly in matters concerning regulatory enforcement.

District-level essay writing, quiz competitions held in Anantnag

Kashmir Age News

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.

Haj-2027: First phase of orientation programme for selected pilgrims from November 23

Kashmir Age News



SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 20: The J&K Haj Committee has announced the schedule for the first phase of the Orientation/Training Programme for selected Haj pilgrims of Kashmir Division, aimed at familiarising them with the Manasik-e-Haj (rituals and practices of Haj).

All selected pilgrims have been advised to attend the compulsory training programme at their respective designated venues as per the prescribed schedule.

The training programme for the pilgrims of Ganderbal will be held on November 23, 2026, at 10:30 AM at Markazia Hanfia Jamia Masjid, Beehama.

Similarly, the training programme for the pilgrims from Rajpora, Shahoora Litter, Pulwama and Kakapora will be held on November 23, 2026, at 10:30 AM at Jamia Masjid Chattpora, Pulwama. Likewise, for the Pilgrims from Pampore, Awantipora, Tral and Aripal will be held on November 25, 2026, at 10:30 AM at Jamia Masjid, Awantipora.

The training programme for the pilgrims from Drugmulla, Trehgam, Kralpora, Keran, Machil, Sogam, Lalpora and Karnah will be held on November 25, 2026, at 10:00 AM at Markazi Jamia Masjid, Kupwara. Likewise, for the pilgrims from Handwara, Langate, Kralgund, Qaziabad, Vilgam, Zachaldara, Qalamabad and Ramhall, the training will be held on November 28, 2026, at Jamia Masjid Jadeed, Handwara.

SWD Budgam organises awareness programme at Shamasabad school

Kashmir Age News

SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 20: Social Welfare Department (SWD), Budgam, through SANKALP–Hub for Empowerment of Women (HEW), under Mission Shakti, organised an Awareness-cum-Outreach Programme at Government High School, Shamasabad, Khansahib, with the objective of promoting awareness about various government welfare initiatives and strengthening community participation in women empowerment and social welfare.

The programme witnessed active participation from members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) associated with the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), along with students and staff members of the school. The participants were sensitised about various government welfare schemes, women-centric initiatives, child protection measures, legal rights and other social welfare programmes aimed at ensuring the safety, dignity and overall development of women and children.

Special emphasis was laid on creating awareness about the importance of women empowerment, financial independence, livelihood opportunities and the role of community-based institutions in facilitating access to government benefits. The participants were also encouraged to actively engage



with available support mechanisms and avail themselves of the benefits of various schemes designed for their welfare and socio-economic upliftment.

The programme further highlighted the role of SANKALP–HEW in facilitating handholding support, awareness generation, inter-departmental convergence, scheme linkages

, capacity building and grievance redressal for women. The initiative aims to bridge the gap between eligible beneficiaries and government services by ensuring that information and assistance reach women at the grassroots level.

KVK-Anantnag, SKUAST-K organises Multi-Sectoral Farmers' outreach programme

Kashmir Age News

ANANTNAG, NOVEMBER 20: In a significant initiative towards strengthening agricultural and livestock-based livelihoods, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK)-Anantnag, SKUAST-Kashmir, organised a comprehensive farmers' outreach programme under the ongoing Khet Bachao Abhiyan (Rabi-2026).

The programme featured Animal Clinical Camp and distribution of veterinary medicines, distribution of improved IFodder oat seed under HADP Project 28, and FLD programme benefiting around 1000 farmers and livestock owners.

The programme was graced by MLA Anantnag East (Shangus), Adv. Riyaz Ahmad Khan, as the Chief Guest, while Director Extension, SKUAST-Kashmir, Prof. Raihana H. Kanth, attended as the Guest of Honour. Representatives from the Institute of Seed Science, Breeding and Innovations (ISSBI), SKUAST-Kashmir, along with experts from the Veterinary Department, also participated in the programme.

The MLA appreciated the efforts of SKUAST-Kashmir and KVK-Anantnag in reaching the farming community at the grassroots level. He emphasised the importance of strengthening farmer-oriented initiatives, ensuring timely availability of quality agricultural inputs and extending institutional support to farming households for improving their economic well-being.



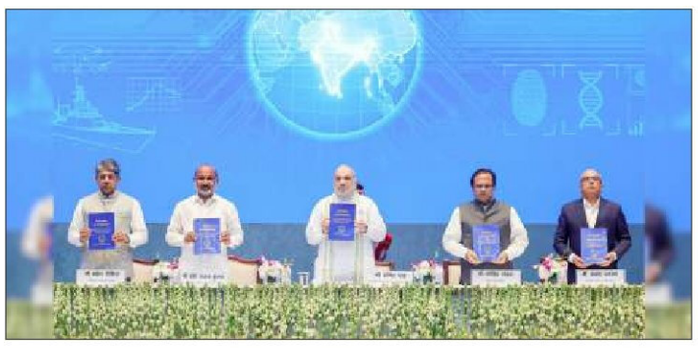
Director Extension, SKUAST-Kashmir, highlighted the importance of scientific interventions, improved fodder varieties and integrated livestock management in enhancing farm productivity and profitability. She appreciated the outreach activities of KVK-Anantnag and stressed the need for sustained farmer-scientist interaction to ensure wider dissemination and adoption of university-recommended technologies. Dr. Ishtiyaq A. Khan, Head, KVK-Anantnag, highlighted the pivotal role being played by the Kendra in transforming the agricultural landscape of district Anantnag through need-based technological interventions, frontline demonstrations, capacity building and effective implementation of farmer-centric programmes.

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Terror, organised crime, drugs must be eliminated: Amit Shah at NIA Conference

Kashmir News Observer



SRINAGAR, NOV 20 :Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday called for strengthening state Anti-Terrorism Squads (ATS) and integrating police stations into the country's counter-terror framework, stressing the need for coordinated action against cross-border terrorism and the wider terror ecosystem.

Addressing the two-day 6th Anti-Terror Conference organised by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in New Delhi, Shah said terror networks, organised crime syndicates and drug trafficking operations must be tackled in a coordinated manner. He also credited security forces and investigative agencies for improving the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir, claiming the Valley was now free of locally recruited terrorists.

The conference, held on November 19 and 20, brought together senior police officials, heads of central and state agencies, investigators and security experts to discuss emerging security challenges.

Shah said counter-terror investigations must focus on dismantling entire networks, including handlers, financiers, organised crime links and local facilitators. He stressed that central and state agencies should work towards shared objectives with clearly defined responsibilities and accountability.

He also emphasised the need for strengthening financial investigations in terror cases and targeting the full chain of terror funding.

Calling for enhanced cyber capabilities, Shah urged states to strengthen ATS units on the prescribed model and establish specialised cyber cells to counter the growing use of technology by terrorist organisations.

He also advocated structural and operational uniformity under PRAHAAR, the national counter-terrorism framework, to improve coordination among agencies. Reiterating the government's stand on fugitives operating from abroad, Shah said every fugitive involved in terrorism, organised crime or narcotics offences would be brought back to face trial. He noted that 303 fugitives had been returned to India from 36 countries since 2019. The conference deliberated on issues such as the organised crime-terror nexus, online radicalisation, cross-border smuggling of arms and narcotics, hawala transactions, trade-based money laundering, drone threats and the use of digital platforms.

DC Srinagar reviews status, disposal of various public welfare-related services



Kashmir Age News

SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 20: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, on Friday chaired a meeting of senior Officers at the Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex, to review the status and progress of various public welfare-related cases to ensure their prompt and effective disposal.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Imtiyaz Ul Aziz, Additional Deputy Commissioner Aadil Fareed, SDM West, Seerat Baji, IAS Probationer, Aakash Garg, SDM East, Zubair Ahmad, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Umar Gulzar, all Tehsildars, representative of ADGP CID and R&B Department. The meeting reviewed the status of various cases of public welfare nature including SRO-43, financial assistance under the Red Cross Fund, immediate relief to fire victims, compensation to road accident victims, rent assessment, and other related services.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner stressed the need for time-bound processing and efficient disposal of all pending cases, emphasising that unnecessary delays should not cause inconvenience to the public. He directed the concerned Officers to take necessary measures to expedite the disposal of pending cases and ensure that eligible beneficiaries receive assistance and benefits without undue delay. The DC particularly emphasised the importance of extending timely relief to fire-affected families, providing compensation to road accident victims and facilitating eligible persons seeking assistance under the Red Cross Fund and SRO-43.

NIT Srinagar to host 11th International conference on NBL next year

Kashmir Age News

SRINAGAR, NOV 20: The National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar will host the 11th International Conference on Nanotechnology for Better Living (NBL–2027) from September 7 to 11, 2027, bringing together scientists, researchers, academicians and industry experts to deliberate on emerging developments in nanotechnology and its applications across key sectors.

The five-day international conference to be jointly organised by NIT Srinagar and IIT Ropar, in collaboration with Amity University, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, SKUAST-Kashmir and Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), under the aegis of the Materials Research Society of India.

General Chair of NBL–2027 and Dean Alumni and International Affairs, Prof. M.A. Shah will lead the academic initiative. Prof. Shah is associated with the Institute's Laboratory for Multifunctional Nanomaterials and has extensive research experience in nanoscience, nanomaterials and their applications in energy, environment, agriculture and medical sciences.

Speaking about the conference, Prof. Shah said, "NBL–2027 aims to strengthen the interface between scientific research, engineering and industry. Nanotechnology has enormous potential to address contemporary challenges in healthcare, clean energy, environmental protection, agriculture and advanced materials. "The conference will provide an important platform for researchers to present their findings, discuss practical challenges and explore collaborative opportunities that can translate scientific discoveries into meaningful societal applications," he said. The conference will provide an interdisciplinary platform for scientists, engineers, academicians, industry professionals and young researchers to present their research findings, exchange ideas and explore emerging technological developments.

Sakeena Itoo calls for district-level action plan to combat drug abuse

Addresses National Social Justice Summit 'Samaveshi Niti Sankalp' at New Delhi



Kashmir Age News

NEW DELHI: Minister for Health & Medical Education and Social Welfare, Sakeena Itoo, has called for transforming the fight against drug abuse from a largely awareness-driven campaign into a comprehensive, measurable and outcome-oriented national mission, emphasising the need for coordinated action at the district, institutional and individual levels to effectively tackle the growing menace of substance abuse.

The Minister said this while addressing the second day of National Social Justice Summit 'Samaveshi Niti Sankalp' at Sushma Swaraj Bhawan here today.

While putting forth a practical framework for strengthening the national campaign against drug abuse, the Minister advocated an integrated model based on the principles of "One District, One Action Plan; One School, One Prevention Programme; One Patient, One Recovery Plan; and One Year of Follow-up".

She stressed that the proposed framework could be adopted by every district across the country to ensure effective prevention, early identification, timely medical intervention, sustained rehabilitation and long-term recovery of individuals affected by substance abuse.

Elaborating on the proposed approach, Sakeena Itoo said that every district must formulate a dedicated action plan after identifying vulnerable areas and high-risk groups, with close coordination among the Health, Education and Police Departments to ensure timely intervention and effective implementation of preventive measures.

She further emphasised that schools and colleges must emerge as important centres of prevention,

with trained nodal teachers entrusted with the responsibility of educating students about the harmful consequences of drug abuse, identifying early warning signs and facilitating confidential counselling and professional support wherever required.

Highlighting the need to place individuals at the centre of the rehabilitation process, the Minister said that every person struggling with addiction must be provided an individualised recovery plan rather than limiting the intervention to admission in a de-addiction facility.

JKSSB reaffirms integrity of Accounts Assistant Examination; appreciates swift action by J&K Police

Kashmir Age News

SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 20: The Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) clarifies that the Accounts Assistant examination conducted on November 15, 2026, was successfully held across all 20 districts of the Union Territory and that the isolated incident involving an attempt to use unfair means did not compromise the examination process.

The Examination was spread over 493 Examination Centres in which 1,61,946 candidates were scheduled to appear for selection against 600 posts.

The Board appreciated J&K Police for their swift, professional and decisive action in identifying and apprehending the elements allegedly involved in the nefarious attempt to undermine the sanctity of the examination. The Board acknowledged the integral role of J&K Police as a key component of the overall examination management and security apparatus, working in close coordination with JKSSB, District Administrations and other stakeholder agencies to ensure the secure and orderly conduct of examinations. The timely intervention of the Police, complemented by the multi-layered security arrangements put in place by the Government, ensured that the suspected elements could not compromise the examination process.

The Board recognized that every recruitment examination represents years of preparation, aspiration and hard work on the part of candidates. The protection of their interests and preservation of a level playing field is an administrative responsibility as well as an institutional obligation. Every candidate must have the assurance that selection is determined solely by merit and prescribed eligibility and selection criteria, without any unfair advantage or extraneous consideration. JKSSB remains firmly committed to safeguarding the interests of genuine candidates and ensuring equal opportunity to all eligible aspirants.

JKSSB has put in place a comprehensive, multi-layered examination-security framework encompassing technological surveillance, identity authentication, access control and administrative supervision.

DLSA Budgam organises awareness programme on Child Rights & Protection under "Surakshit Bachpan Abhiyan"

Kashmir Age News



BUDGAM, NOVEMBER 20: District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Budgam, in collaboration with the Education Department, Budgam, today organised an awareness programme on Child Rights and Protection, with special emphasis on the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 at Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Budgam, under the banner of "Surakshit Bachpan Abhiyan."

The programme was the second programme of the series of programmes being held by DLSA under the campaign.

The programme was organised under the directions of Chairman DLSA O.P Bhagat and under the guidance of Secretary, DLSA Budgam, Tabasum Qadir Parray, with the objective of sensitising students and the teaching fraternity about child rights, child protection mechanisms, and the legal safeguards available to children under the POCSO Act, 2012.

During the programme, Advocate Zahoor Ahmad Malik, Panel Lawyer Advocate Feroz Ahmad Khan and Advocate Showkat Ahmad, Resource Persons, deliberated on various aspects of child rights and POCSO Act, 2012 .

Srinagar climbs above freezing point, dry weather likely till Nov 30

Kashmir News Observer



SRINAGAR, NOV 20 :Night temperatures improved marginally across most parts of Jammu and Kashmir, bringing slight relief from the prevailing cold conditions, with Srinagar recording a minimum temperature of 0.2 degrees Celsius and moving above the freezing point after several days. A weather department official said that Srinagar recorded a low of 0.2 degrees Celsius against minus 0.2 degrees Celsius on the previous night. Tourist resort Pahalgam in south Kashmir recorded a minimum temperature of minus 2.2 degrees Celsius, up from minus 2.8 degrees Celsius a day earlier, while Gulmarg recorded minus 0.4 degrees Celsius against minus 1.0 degrees Celsius.

Kupwara in north Kashmir registered a minimum of minus 1.1 degrees Celsius compared to minus 1.3 degrees Celsius the previous night.

Qazigund recorded minus 0.8 degrees Celsius, unchanged from the previous night, while Kokernag registered 0.7 degrees Celsius against 1.0 degrees Celsius a day earlier. In the Jammu division, Jammu city recorded a minimum temperature of 11.7 degrees Celsius against 10.8 degrees Celsius the previous night. Katra recorded 11.0 degrees Celsius, Banihal 9.4 degrees Celsius, Batote 7.2 degrees Celsius and Bhaderwah 3.2 degrees Celsius.

Jhelum, tributaries record low water levels across Kashmir

Kashmir News Observer

SRINAGAR, NOV 20 :Water levels in the Jhelum and its major tributaries remained low across Kashmir on Friday, with gauge readings showing the river flowing significantly below reference levels at all monitoring stations.

According to data the Jhelum was flowing at minus 0.64 feet at Sangam against the reference mark of 21 feet. At Munshi Bagh in Srinagar, the level was recorded at 3.81 feet against 18 feet, while at Asham it stood at 1.30 feet against 14 feet.

At Pampore, the river level was recorded at 1.01 metres, compared to the reference mark of 4.5 metres. Wular Lake's water level stood at 1,573.90 metres, which is 4.10 metres below its reference level of 1,578 metres.

AQI.in ranks Srinagar world's most polluted city; CPCB reading much lower

354 on AQI.in, 59 in Central Pollution Control Board data

Kashmir News Observer

SRINAGAR, NOV 20 : Srinagar figured at the top of a global list of the most polluted cities on Friday, with its Air Quality Index (AQI) touching 354 on a real-time pollution tracking platform, even as official data recorded a significantly lower reading of 59.

According to AQI.in, Srinagar recorded an AQI of 354 at around 2:51 pm, placing it in the severe category and ahead of several Indian cities facing high pollution levels.

The platform's rankings placed Hisar in Haryana second with an AQI of 328, followed by Ludhiana at 309 and Amritsar at 302. Delhi, which frequently records high pollution levels during winter, stood ninth with an AQI of 277, while Gurugram recorded 240.

However, data from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) presented a contrasting picture, placing Srinagar's AQI at 59, categorised as satisfactory.

The significant difference between the two readings has brought into focus the variations in air quality measurements reported by different monitoring platforms, making it important to distinguish between third-party real-time estimates and official monitoring data.

AQI.in's dashboard also showed elevated concentrations of particulate matter, with PM2.5 recorded at 191

micrograms per cubic metre and PM10 at 248 micrograms per cubic metre.

PM2.5 particles are considered particularly harmful as their small size allows them to penetrate deep into the respiratory system and potentially enter the bloodstream, increasing the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses.

The deterioration in air quality comes as Kashmir enters the winter season, when low temperatures, weaker winds and atmospheric conditions can contribute to the accumulation of pollutants.

Srinagar's geographical setting, surrounded by mountains, can also restrict the movement of air during certain weather conditions. Temperature inversion, a phenomenon in which warmer air above prevents cooler air near the ground from rising, can further trap pollutants close to the surface.

The CPCB's revised action plan for Srinagar identifies vehicular emissions as a major contributor to the city's pollution burden. Road dust, construction activities, traffic congestion, biomass and municipal waste burning, diesel generators and fuel combustion are among the other sources.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified to the general public that my father's name (parentage) has been wrongly mentioned in my Driving Licence as GULAM HASSAN BHAT instead of GHULAM HASSAN BHAT. The said Driving Licence bears No. JK09 20090061707. Now, I intend to get the aforesaid discrepancy rectified in the records of the concerned authority. In this regard, any person having any objection regarding the proposed correction may submit the same before the ARTO Kupwara within a period of seven (07) days from the date of publication of this notice. After the expiry of the stipulated period, no objection shall be entertained.

MAQSOOD AHMAD BHAT
S/O: GHULAM HASSAN BHAT
R/O: GULGAM, KUPWARA
(Tahir War)

PUBLIC NOTICE

Mr. Mubashir Ahmad Bhat and Mr. Zahid Ahmad Bhat, residents of Karsu, Rajbagh, hereby inform the general public that we intend to transfer/register the electricity connections in our respective names, with the consent and approval of our father, Mr. Mohammad Subhan Bhat.Therefore, if any person has any objection or complaint regarding the said matter, they are requested to contact the Sub-Division Power Department, Rajbagh, within seven (7) days from the date of publication of this notice. Any objection or complaint received after the stipulated period shall not be entertained.

Mubashir Ahmad Bhat
Zahid Ahmad Bhat
Residents of Karsu, Rajbagh
(AA)

NORTHERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

Tender Notice No: 433_Sig_JAT_44_26_27 Date: 20/11/2026
Closing Date/Time: 11/12/2026 15:00

Sr. DSTE/JAT acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders on **https://www.ireps.gov.in** against Tender Notice no. **433_Sig_JAT_44_26_27** Closing Date/Time **11/12/2026 15:00 Hrs.** Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like Net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

NIT HEADER

Contract Type	Works		
Name of Work : Comprehensive Annual Maintenance contract of HBL make Integrated Power Supply (IPS) systems installed at 4 No's of station- {RH-1-BBMN, RH-2-BBMN, IBS(JAT-BBMN) & IBS(SMBX-VJPJ) & 02 No of L-Xing -LC-B2-58(TDO-CGH) & LC-36(DHW-CHN)} over Jammu division for three (03) years			
Tender closing Date Time	11/12/2026 15:00	**Date Time of Uploading Tender**	19/11/2026 17:12
Advertised Value (Rs.)	3155481.36	**Bidding Start Date as per IREPS**	27/11/2026
Earnest Money (Rs.)	63100.00	**Period of Completion**	36 Months

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 4049/2026

KVK Pulwama organizes crop seminar under Khet Bachao Abhiyan



KASHMIR PRESS SERVICE

Pulwama: Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Pulwama, in collaboration with IFFCO, successfully organized a One-Day Crop Seminar under Khet Bachao Abhiyan – Reforms Utsav 2026, with the objective of creating awareness among farmers about soil health, balanced nutrient management and sustainable agricultural practices.

The programme was graced by Prof. Rihana Habib Kant, Director Extension Education, SKUAST-Kashmir, as the Chief Guest. Prof. Javeed Ahmad Mugloo, Dean Students Welfare, SKUAST-Kashmir, and Dr. D. K. Singh, State Head, IFFCO, were also present on the occasion.

The seminar focused on the importance of the 4R Principle of Nutrient Management, highlighting the Right Source, Right Dose, Right Time and Right Application of fertilizers to improve soil fertility, enhance crop productivity and ensure efficient utilization of nutrients.

During the programme, emphasis was laid on the judicious use of fertilizers, maintenance of soil health and adoption of scientific crop management practices for sustainable agricultural development. The experts highlighted the importance of responsible fertilizer application and informed farmers about the need to adopt environmentally sustainable agricultural practices.

As part of the programme, Nano Urea was also distributed among the participating farmers to promote awareness and encourage the adoption of advanced fertilizer technologies.

AL-MUSTAFA EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE

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LIST OF MANAGING BODY

S.No	Name	Parentage	Address	Qualification	Designation	Occupation
01	Dr.Urfan Ahmad	Ab. Rashid Dar	Sumbal Inderkote, Sonawari	M.A, M.Ed, Ph.D	Chairman	Business
02	Tahir Hussain Dar	Gh. Mohammad Dar	Jawahar Pora, Narbal, Budgam	M.A Political Science & Diploma in Tourism	Principal	Pvt. Teacher
03	Sabeeka Akhter	Mohd Yousuf	Trikolbal, Pattan	B.Sc	Organizer	Pvt. Teacher
04	Nayeema Ahmad	Gh. Ahmad Sofi	Baliharan, Singhpora	M.Sc, B.Ed	Staff Representative	Pvt. Teacher
05	Sana Snowber	Gh. Mohammad Dar	Gund Ibrahim, Pattan	B.Sc	Teacher / Member	Pvt. Teacher
06	Shahbaaz Hussain	Mohd. Qasim Bhat	Gund Ibrahim, Pattan	10+2	Member/Parent	Business
07	Ali Mohammad Bhat	Mohd Hussain Bhat	Gund Ibrahim, Pattan	10+2	Member/Parent	Business

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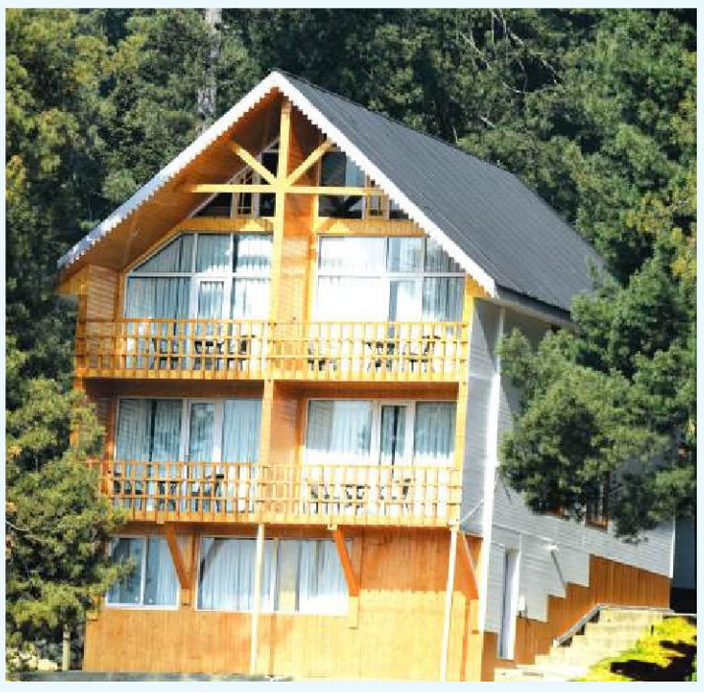
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DC Kupwara reviews farmer ID generation, directs strict monitoring

Kashmir Age News

KUPWARA, NOVEMBER 20: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Abhishek Sharma, today reviewed the progress of Farmer ID generation under AgriStack and directed all concerned departments to ensure achievement of assigned targets within the stipulated timeframe.

The DC directed ADCs, SDMs and Tehsildars to ensure daily targets, with any shortfall carried forward to the next day. He stressed strict monitoring of field teams and warned of action against officials failing to meet assigned targets. He also directed the organisation of special enrolment camps, adequate publicity and timely resolution of record-related discrepancies.

The DC appreciated Tehsildars for achieving 100% saturation under AgriStack and SVAMITVA and urged all concerned to ensure complete coverage of eligible farmers under Farmer ID generation.

The meeting was attended by ADC Kupwara, ACR and Chief Agriculture Officer, while ADC Handwara, SDMs and concerned Tehsildars participated virtually.

Major Suresh Suri's bust unveiled at Aragam

Veer Mata travels from Hyderabad to honour her son's supreme sacrifice

Kashmir Press Service



BANDIPORA: In a moving tribute to the extraordinary courage and supreme sacrifice of an Indian Army officer, the bust of Kirti Chakra awardee Major Suresh Suri was unveiled at Major Suresh Suri Army Goodwill School in Aragam, Bandipora, on Friday. The emotional ceremony witnessed his mother, Veer Mata Mrs Girija Kumary Suri, travelling all the way from Hyderabad to pay homage to her brave son.

The bust was unveiled by Veer Mata Girija Kumary Suri in the presence of Indian Army officers and personnel, school staff and students. The occasion served as a powerful reminder of the courage, dedication and selfless service of those who make the ultimate sacrifice in the service of the nation.

Major Suresh Suri laid down his life on September 22, 2009, while leading an operation against terrorists in Bandipora district. Despite suffering grievous injuries during the encounter, he continued fighting with exceptional determination, eliminated one terrorist and ensured the safe evacuation of his injured comrades before succumbing to his injuries.

Recognising his conspicuous gallantry and exceptional bravery, the nation honoured him with the Kirti Chakra posthumously on January 26, 2010.

The ceremony was further enriched by patriotic and Kashmiri songs presented by students, reflecting their admiration for the fallen officer and the Indian Armed Forces.

On the occasion, Veer Mata Girija Kumary Suri was also felicitated in recognition of her son's extraordinary sacrifice for the country. The school reiterated its commitment to keeping Major Suresh Suri's legacy alive, inspiring young minds with his values of courage, patriotism, discipline and selfless service to the nation.

15th Bn, JKAP IR celebrates Raising Day, ADGP Nitesh Kumar attends as Chief Guest



Kashmir Press Service

JAMMU: The 15th Bn, JKAP IR celebrated its Raising Day with great enthusiasm at its Headquarters, GG Jammu. ADGP Armed J&K Shri Nitesh Kumar (IPS), attended the function as the Chief Guest. The occasion was also attended by IGP Armed IRP Zone Jammu Abdul Shri Jabbar (IPS) and DIG Armed Range Jammu Shri Zahid Manhas. On their arrival the Chief Guest was warmly welcomed by Commandant of the 15th Bn, JKAP IR SSP Shri Dushyant Sharma and other senior officers. A ceremonial Guard of Honour was also presented. As part of the celebrations a plantation drive was organised in which the ADGP and other senior officers planted saplings. Colourful balloons were also released to mark the occasion. Addressing the gathering, CO 15th Bn JKAP IR Bn, SSP Shri Dushyant Sharm highlighted the professional achievements and notable performance of the Battalion, l while appreciating the dedication, hard work and commitment of its officers and officials.

The celebrations featured colourful cultural performances by the J&K Armed Police Cultural Team. Other attractions included a tug-of-war competition among women police personnel, a blindfolded weapon-handling demonstration by trained personnel and an impressive Kalaripayattu martial arts performance.

ADGP Armed Shri Nitesh Kumar appreciated the discipline, professionalism and dedication of the Battalion's Officials and urged them to continue performing their duties with the same commitment and enthusiasm. A community lunch was also organised to promote camaraderie, mutual interaction and brotherhood among officers and officials. The visit and encouragement by senior officers boosted the morale of all ranks and made the Raising Day celebrations memorable.

EJAC urges Govt to resolve recruitment rules issue of employees of newly established GMCs

Kashmir Press Service

SRINAGAR: The Employees Joint Action Committee (EJAC) Jammu and Kashmir has expressed its serious concern in a meeting held under the Presidentship of its President Mr Fayaz Ahmad Shabnam over the ongoing strike of the non-gazetted employees of the five newly established Government Medical Colleges (GMCs) across Jammu and Kashmir, and has urged the government to intervene immediately and resolve the issue amicably on priority. The Senior Trade Union leader and EJAC President Fayaz Ahmad Shabnam said that the continued strike by the employees of GMCs Rajouri, Kathua, Udhampur, Anantnag and Handwara reflect the genuine resentment prevailing among the employees and workforce over the prolonged delay in issuance of the notification of their recruitment rules.

Reportedly the issue has been pending for nearly seven years. Shabnam said that the employees have repeatedly raised their legitimate demands and concerns and have been awaiting for the fulfilment of the government's assurances. Keeping an important service-related issue unresolved for such a long period is unfortunate which has created uncertainty and insecurity among the employees said Shabnam. The EJAC President Shabnam urged the Government and the concerned authorities to take immediate cognisance of the matter and ensure that the pending recruitment rules are formally notified without any further delay. Shabnam further stressed that the employees are an essential component of the healthcare system and their genuine grievances deserve sympathetic and timely consideration. At the same time, the ongoing strike has been adversely affecting the healthcare services and causing inconvenience to patients. Shabnam stated that the government should come forward with a concrete and time-bound solution rather than allowing the situation to escalate further.

KU to formally launch Business Club lecture series



Kashmir Press Service

SRINAGAR: The Department of Management Studies DMS, University of Kashmir is formally going to launch "Business Club Lecture Series: An industry-Academia Interface-2026" for MBA, MBA FM and IMBA students on Wednesday, November 25, 2026 11.am at Gandhi Bhawan, University of Kashmir. Under this lecture series, DMS is inviting distinguished professionals from various Industries, Civil Services, Academia, the Department's Alumni and former Faculty who interact with students, share their practical experiences and demonstrate the real-world application of management concepts.

According to the organisers, the purpose of Industry Academia Interface is bridging the gap between theories we teach in the classrooms and the real-world practices. With the advent of Industry 4.0, technological advancements like digital transformation and artificial intelligence are reshaping industries, demanding a workforce equipped with knowledge enhancement, upskilling, continuous learning and retraining. To navigate this evolving environment, fostering closer collaboration between academia and industry is crucially the need of the hour.

According to Prof. Mushtaq Ahmad Siddiqi, Head of the Department, Management Studies, University of Kashmir, "industry academia interface is instrumental in bringing a positive impact on management education and application. It is an interactive and collaborative arrangement that will work closely with various industries and Departments to strive towards preparing the students for industry readiness leading to internship and final placements as well. It will also facilitate the faculty in identifying potential industries for short visits, curriculum modernisation, start up and innovation culture, direct pathways to employment and collaborations.

The Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, University of Kashmir Prof. Nilofer Khan will grace the occasion as the Chief Guest at the formal launch ceremony, while the Dean Academic Affairs Prof. Shariefuddin Pirzada, Registrar, University of Kashmir Prof. Naseer Iqbal, Dean School of Business Studies Prof. Mushtaq Ahmad Darzi are joining as Guests of Honour. The event will witness officials from University of Kashmir Administration and young budding students of IMBA, MBA and MBA FM courses.

ICDS Bandipora holds AMC meetings

Kashmir Age News

BANDIPORA, NOVEMBER 20: On the directions of Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, ICDS Bandipora today organised Anganwadi Management Committee (AMC) and Panchayat Mahila Samiti meetings at Anganwadi Centres across the district.

The meetings focused on strengthening community participation in combating malnutrition, monitoring service delivery, improving hygiene and ensuring holistic development of children aged 0–6 years. Discussions covered growth monitoring, supplementary nutrition, early childhood education, VHSND activities, Poshan Tracker updates and identification and referral of malnourished children.

Emphasis was laid on monthly conduct of VHSND and ECCE Day, active participation in Poshan Maah and Poshan Pakhwada,.

Kupwara journalist fraternity delegation meets DIO



Kashmir Press Service

KUPWARA: An important meeting of the Kupwara Journalist Fraternity was held today under the chairmanship of its President, Yahya Sultan, with the participation of its office-bearers and members.

The office-bearers present on the occasion included Chairman Sahil Shameem, Vice President Suhail Yousuf Shah, General Secretary Mushtaq wani and Irshad Wani, spokesperson peerzada shakir ,Coordinator Butt Muzaffar, and Treasurer Zahid Javeed ,sharfat manzoor

Following the meeting, a delegation of journalists called on District Information Officer (DIO) Kupwara, Adil Manzoor Wani, to discuss various issues and challenges faced by the media fraternity.

During the interaction, the delegation highlighted several concerns related to the working environment of journalists and urged the DIO to take effective steps for their timely redressal.

DIO Adil Manzoor Wani gave a patient hearing to the concerns raised by the journalists and assured them that all genuine issues of the media fraternity would be addressed on priority. He also assured full support and cooperation in resolving their concerns.

Media Coordinator, District Information Office Kupwara, Tariq Ahmad Mir, was also present during the meeting.

The delegation included senior journalists Sahil Shameem, Suhail Yousuf Shah, Irshad Wani, Nisar Shaheen, Sharafat Manzoor, Raja Manzoor, Zahid Javeed, Butt Muzaffar, Butt Altaf, Mohammad Iqbal Mir, Azhar Shaheen, Shagufta Parveen, Imtiyaz Ahmad Khan, Mohammad Altaf Butt, Nasir Iqbal and several other journalists.

The journalists expressed hope that better coordination between the administration and the media fraternity would help resolve their professional issues and strengthen mutual cooperation.

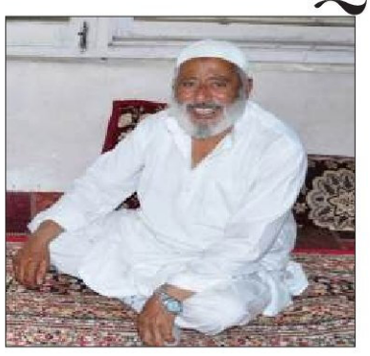
Electoral literacy: District-level essay writing, quiz competitions held at GBHS Bagh Bandipora

Kashmir Age News

BANDIPORA: On the directions of the District Election Officer (Deputy Commissioner), Bandipora, a District-Level Essay Writing and Quiz Competition was organised today at Government Boys High School, Bagh, Bandipora, with enthusiastic participation from students representing all three Assembly Constituencies (ACs) of the district. The essay writing competition centred on the themes "Importance of Voting" and "Importance of Pure Electoral Rolls," providing students an opportunity to express their views on the significance of democratic participation and the integrity of electoral rolls. The quiz competition covered a wide range of topics related to the electoral process, including Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT), various stages of the election process and counting of votes.

KTMF leadership mourns passing of Ghulam Qadir Gul

Kashmir Press Service



SRINAGAR: The Kashmir Traders and Manufacturers Federation (KTMF) has expressed heartfelt grief and profound sorrow over the demise of Ghulam Qadir Gul, fondly remembered as Uncle Ji, originally from Maisuma and presently residing at Pantha Chowk, who passed away today following a brief illness.

The Federation's Chairman, Haji Mushtaq Ahmad Darial, along with General Secretary and Media & Publicity Head M Altafdar Rajbagh, and senior trade leaders Farooq Ahmed Batqoo, Showkat Ahmad Bhat, Bashir Ahmad Siraj, Hilal Ahmed Wani, S.A. Rashid, Sheikh Hilal Ahmed, Haji Altaf Hussain Dar, Ghulam Rasool Shah, Haji Nissar

Ahmad, Surjeet Singh and other members of the senior leadership, expressed their deep condolences and solidarity with the bereaved family.

Remembering the deceased with affection and respect, the KTMF leadership described him as a humble, compassionate and warm-hearted individual whose kindness, cheerful disposition and affection earned him a special place in the hearts of those who knew him.

M Altafdar Rajbagh, while recalling his personal association with Uncle Ji through his dear friend Sajjad Gul and his family, said that his passing was a deeply painful loss. He described him as much more than an elder – a mentor, a well-wisher and a constant source of warmth, encouragement and happiness. His memorable personality and noble values will continue to inspire and remain cherished by everyone whose lives he touched.

The Federation conveyed its deepest sympathies to Sajjad Gul and all members of the bereaved family, praying that Almighty Allah forgives the departed soul, grants him the highest place in Jannat-ul-Firdous and blesses the family with patience, courage and strength to overcome this difficult time.

DC Bandipora reviews functioning of District Hospital

Kashmir Age News

BANDIPORA, NOVEMBER 20: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib today reviewed the functioning of District Hospital Bandipora and took stock of the healthcare facilities, existing manpower, infrastructure and service delivery mechanisms.

During the review meeting, the Deputy Commissioner took feedback from the CMO and Medical Superintendent regarding the existing staff strength and infrastructure of the hospital. The requirement of additional manpower, including a Consultant Surgeon, CT Technician, OT Technician and Anaesthesia Technician, was also highlighted.

Emphasising the need for efficient patient services, the Deputy Commissioner stressed the establishment of a proper grievance redressal mechanism to address public concerns and ensure timely resolution of complaints.



The meeting also discussed ensuring the availability of free medicines within the hospital premises and strengthening the system for maintaining medicine inventory and records through digitalisation.

The Deputy Commissioner further stressed the need to digitise hospital records, including medical staff details, staff records, medical records and drug store inventories, to improve transparency, accountability and administrative efficiency.

Emphasis was also laid on maintaining proper records of patient referrals and ensuring their regular monitoring. The need for better coordination between hospital administration and the district administration was also underscored.

Among others, Programme Officer ICDS, Chief Planning Officer, Chief Medical Officer, District Information Officer, District Informatics Officer, MS DH Bandipora, Drug Inspector Bandipora besides other concerned were also present during the meeting.

Editorial

Drug abuse

Drug abuse has emerged as one of the gravest social and public health challenges facing society, demanding an approach that goes beyond awareness campaigns and occasional enforcement drives. While rallies, seminars and public outreach programmes play an important role in sensitising people, the real measure of success must lie in preventing addiction, ensuring effective treatment and helping affected individuals rebuild their lives. The need of the hour is to transform the fight against drugs into a sustained, measurable and people-centric movement.

The framework proposed by the Jammu and Kashmir Health and Social Welfare Minister at the National Social Justice Summit in New Delhi offers a practical direction in this regard. Her emphasis on the principles of "One District, One Action Plan; One School, One Prevention Programme; One Patient, One Recovery Plan; and One Year of Follow-up" deserves serious consideration. It recognises that drug addiction cannot be tackled through isolated interventions but requires coordinated efforts involving government departments, educational institutions, healthcare professionals, families and civil society.

The proposal to prepare district-specific action plans is particularly significant. Every district has its own vulnerabilities, geographical challenges and social realities. Identifying high-risk areas and groups, strengthening coordination between health, education and police departments, and ensuring timely intervention can make preventive efforts more effective. Educational institutions, meanwhile, must become active centres of prevention, with trained teachers capable of identifying early warning signs and facilitating confidential counselling.

Equally important is the recognition that sending an individual to a de-addiction centre cannot mark the end of institutional responsibility. Addiction is a complex condition requiring medical treatment, psychological counselling, family involvement, skill development and livelihood opportunities. Rehabilitation must be viewed as a continuous process aimed at restoring dignity, confidence and social acceptance. A structured one-year follow-up mechanism can help prevent relapse and ensure that recovered individuals remain connected to support systems.

At the same time, compassion towards victims must go hand in hand with uncompromising action against drug traffickers and peddlers. Intelligence-led enforcement and strict implementation of the law are essential to dismantle the networks that exploit vulnerable sections, particularly young people.

The Minister's emphasis on measuring recoveries rather than counting awareness programmes is also noteworthy. The success of the Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyan should be reflected in lives saved, families restored and young people reintegrated into society.

The summit's discussions on scholarship accessibility and the difficulties faced by students in remote areas of Jammu and Kashmir also underline the wider responsibility of social justice institutions. Drug prevention, education, rehabilitation and equal access to welfare schemes are interconnected priorities.

Ultimately, defeating the drug menace requires sustained political will, accountable institutions and active community participation. Nasha Mukt Bharat must evolve from a government initiative into a genuine people's movement.

Kashmir Age
"Truth we say...come what may"

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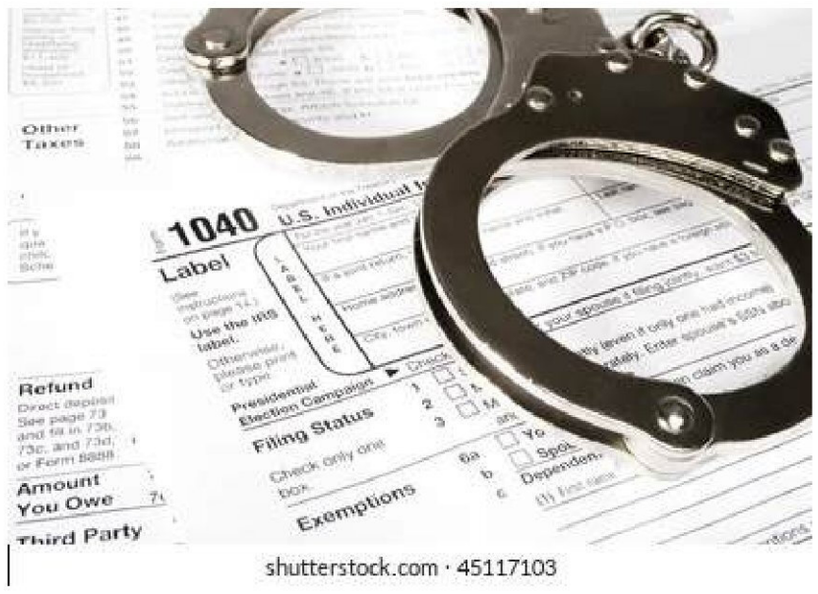
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Taking the Handcuffs Out of Tax

The 57th GST Council's decision to drop arrest powers rests on a simple idea: a tax officer should collect revenue, not police the taxpayer



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AIJAZ HUSSAIN MALIK

When the GST Council met on October 8 for its 57th meeting, it did not change a single tax rate. Yet it may have taken one of its most consequential decisions since GST was launched in 2017: it recommended withdrawing the power of GST officers to arrest, by omitting Section 69 of the CGST Act altogether. Alongside, the threshold for prosecution goes up from Rs 1 crore to Rs 5 crore, the minimum jail term is dropped, and the choice between fine and imprisonment is left to the courts.

What is the thinking behind this shift?

Tax is, at heart, a civil obligation; a shortfall is ordinarily recovered with interest and penalty, not punished with custody. Section 69 blurred this line by letting a Commissioner order an arrest merely on "reasons to believe". The Finance Minister summed up the new approach plainly: arrest has been taken out of the tax officer's hands, and the department must first build its prosecution case before the law steps in. Liberty, in other words, is to be curtailed only through a judicial process, not an administrative one.

Industry has long complained that the threat of custody was used to push businesses into paying disputed demands rather than contesting them. The deterrent was thin anyway: central GST formations recorded 887 arrests across 72,393 offence cases between 2021-22 and 2024-25, and most of those arrested eventually secured bail. A power that frightens honest firms more than it convicts fraudsters fails its own test. The Supreme Court, in Radhika Agarwal (2025), had already cautioned against extracting payments under the shadow of arrest.

In 2017, arrest was introduced as a deterrent against fake invoicing at a time when matching a seller's invoice against a buyer's claim was difficult. Today, invoice matching and data analytics on the GST Network can flag bogus credit close to its source, before it travels down the supply chain. The philosophy shifts from fear-led deterrence to detection-led enforcement.

Even before GST was rolled out, Maharashtra and West Bengal told the fifth Council meeting in December 2016 that arrest powers sat uneasily with ease of doing business and with VAT practice, under which tax officers had no power of administrative arrest. The decision also fits the wider decriminalisation drive, from the Jan Vishwas Act to the removal of arrest and detention from income-tax recovery rules earlier this year.

None of this is an amnesty. Deliberate fraud above the threshold can still be prosecuted; where custody is warranted, it must now come through the general criminal law and the courts; and recovery of tax, interest and penalty continues as before. The Finance Minister has been explicit that criminal prosecution survives.

The real test lies ahead. Fake-invoice syndicates are often fly-by-night operators who vanish once detected. Without the option of a quick arrest, tax departments will need sharper analytics, faster provisional attachment of property and closer coordination with the police. Parliament and the state legislatures must also translate the recommendation into law.

Still, the direction is right. A mature tax system presumes the taxpayer honest, reserves the criminal law for the genuinely criminal, and lets data, not handcuffs, do the policing. The 57th Council has taken GST a decisive step towards that ideal.

The author is a JKAS Officer presently serving as State Taxes Officer, Circle Budgam. Views expressed are personal.

The Green Renaissance: How SKUAST-Kashmir is Rewriting the Rural Bioeconomy of J&K

From high-altitude seed networks to crore-turnover student startups, how an agricultural university in Srinagar traded ivory-tower research for a grassroots rural revolution

PROF FARAHANAZ RASOOL

Agriculture in Jammu and Kashmir has undergone a historic structural shift, breaking free from the shackles of low-yield subsistence farming. Today, the region stands as a beacon for a high-value, climate-resilient circular bioeconomy—a transformation meticulously engineered by the Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-Kashmir).

Under the visionary leadership of Vice-Chancellor Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai, the university has moved away from traditional top-down academic lecturing. In its place stands a decentralized, powerhouse model fueled by grassroots entrepreneurship, cutting-edge technology, and intensive field deployment.

Bridging the 'Lab-to-Land' Chasm

For decades, agricultural research across the subcontinent suffered from a persistent disconnect: groundbreaking scientific discoveries remained locked away in academic journals or university test plots. SKUAST-Kashmir successfully shattered this barrier by harmonizing two massive funding and execution pipelines: the government's Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)-funded J&K Competitiveness Improvement Programme (JKCIP).

By turning its Directorate of Extension and district Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) into agile regional agribusiness accelerators, the university's registered patents skyrocketed from a modest four to an astonishing 152 over five years.

The Human Capital Engine: Students on the Frontlines

The crown jewel of this structural overhaul is the Student Rural Exploration Programme (SREP). Deployed under HADP Project 20, the initiative has mobilized more than 3,000 multidisciplinary students and 300 expert mentors across 300 university-adopted villages. Equipped with Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) surveys, these student cohorts map soil degradation, water scarcity, and localized crop diseases in real time, feeding data directly back to university labs to find immediate solutions.

Empowering the Tribal population

Under the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), SKUAST-K has targeted high-vulnerability, border-adjacent pockets such as Machil (Kupwara), Gurez (Bandipora), and Budgam. By deploying high-yielding vegetable seeds, veterinary toolkits, and robust backyard poultry strains, the university has directly upskilled and diversified the livelihoods of roughly 3476 tribal farmers, establishing year-round food self-sufficiency.

Further up the mountains, SKUAST-K eliminated reliance on unpredictable external seed suppliers by establishing a high-altitude seed revitalization network in Gurez and Machil. The result? A massive harvest of 10,000 quintals of disease-free potato seeds, slashing transport costs and opening high-margin trade networks for isolated mountain cultivators.

Turning Apple Waste into Gourmet Gold

SKUAST-K has successfully transferred 87 commercially viable technologies from laboratories directly to commercial fields. Most notable is a patented exotic mushroom technology that breathes life into agricultural waste. Using discarded apple-orchard pruning trimmings, local growers now cultivate premium gourmet varieties such as Shiitake, King Oyster, and Enoki. This single innovation has reduced seasonal agricultural pollution while dramatically increasing grower revenues, from 150/kg for standard button mushrooms to 2,000– 4,000/kg for gourmet crops.

On the varietal front, the university's KVK network introduced eight improved crops and advanced thirteen more for regional adaptation. These include:

Shalimar Sugandh: A premium aromatic rice variety.

Shalimar Rice-4: A climate-resilient rice variant built to withstand unpredictable weather.

Shalimar Wheat-3 (SW-3): An iron- and zinc-biofortified wheat boasting a 12% protein profile, with over 70 quintals of foundation seed already deployed to Gurez Valley.

CH-HPH-1: A high-performing chilli hybrid approved for national release.

In a parallel ecological triumph, the university established modern, high-density orchard demonstration blocks across Baramulla, Shopian, and Pulwama. This culminated in a historic breakthrough, producing pesticide-free apples. By deploying Trichoderma bio-fungicides mass-cultured from invasive aquatic weeds cleared from Dal Lake, commercial orchards produced fruit free of 55 standard chemical residues.

AI Diagnostics, Big Data, and 'Khet Bachao'

Moving beyond traditional paper leaflets, SKUAST-K has fully digitized its advisory framework through three next-generation digital pillars. The first is the automated, AI-driven e-Plant Health Clinic, a mobile cloud interface that lets farmers upload smartphone photos of diseased crops and receive instant diagnostics matched against an enterprise database of plant pathogens.

Backing this digital infrastructure is the RuDRA Synergy, a Center of Excellence established in partnership with IIT Bombay that has trained more than 140 students and faculty in Power BI, data visualization, and GIS mapping to dynamically track, map, and predict regional pest outbreaks before they escalate. Finally, to ensure these digital warnings translate into on-the-ground action, the university deploys the Khet Bachao Abhiyaan (Save the Field Campaign)—a fleet of rapid-response mobile diagnostic units that travel directly to village clusters to conduct on-the-spot soil health tests, nutrient audits, and immediate pest treatments.

A Multi-Million Rupee Startup Incubator

Through a massive tripartite synergy with the Union Ministry of MSME, MANAGE Hyderabad, SAMETI, and various national boards, SKUAST-K has built India's premier university-led agritech capacity-building model. The numbers speak for themselves: over 35,000 direct beneficiaries trained and 115 commercial startups launched (with roughly 90 being student-led).

The university's specialized SKIIE Center (SKUAST-K Innovation, Incubation & Entrepreneurship) was recently crowned "Incubator of the Year" at the J&K Startup Mela and walked away with a 50 Lakh capital seed fund. At least seven campus-born ventures have already crossed the coveted annual turnover threshold of 1 Crore (10 Million).

Elite Agripreneur Highlights:

Jan Arbina Rouf: A student-turned-floral-leader whose commercial chrysanthemum nursery scaled to an annual turnover of 1.1 Crore.

Khalida Rasool (K.R. Mushroom): Successfully utilized patented waste-to-wealth substrate technology to launch a highly profitable enterprise specializing in medicinal plants and exotic mushrooms.

Naaz (National Bio-Entrepreneurship Laureate): Won the prestigious National Bio-Entrepreneurship Competition (NBEC) and a 1 Lakh cash award for her high-potential translational research on plant-based meat analogues.

Power in Numbers: Collective Farming Leverage

To address land fragmentation, SKUAST-K deployed the IFAD-funded JKCIP framework to organize smallholders into corporate Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs). The university has upskilled 2,517 leaders, CEOs, and directors through 62 programs, teaching them to manage market buy-back logistics, navigate corporate legal requirements, and secure institutional banking credit.

This has led to the corporate monitoring of four major Farmer Producer Companies in North Kashmir (Langate, Qaziabad, Mawar, and Nutnoosa), directly benefiting over 400 smallholder families by slashing collective input costs. Similarly, the Kokernag Mobilisation Unit has pooled over 200 pastoralists into a dairy FPO, linking rural breeders directly with cold chains, processing units, and institutional buyers.

A Nationwide Model of Excellence

The hard data solidifies SKUAST-Kashmir's standing on the national stage. Driven by its rapid lab-to-land speed, the university has climbed to an impressive 7th place among all 78 Agricultural Universities in India, secured the 3rd spot nationwide among State Agricultural Universities (SAUs), and clinched the 4th rank nationwide in the prestigious IIRF University Rankings.

Through an intricate web of digital advisories, decentralized district "Gongul" Kisan Melas, multi-channel educational radio broadcasts, and structural funding support from ICAR, HADP, MSME, and NABARD, SKUAST-Kashmir has successfully transitioned its academic mandate. It is no longer merely an institution of learning; it is an active, unstoppable engine for regional wealth creation, environmental sustainability, and agricultural dignity.

(Author is Deputy Director Extension Directorate of Extension SKUAST Kashmir)

PhD Factories: Degrees Without Quality



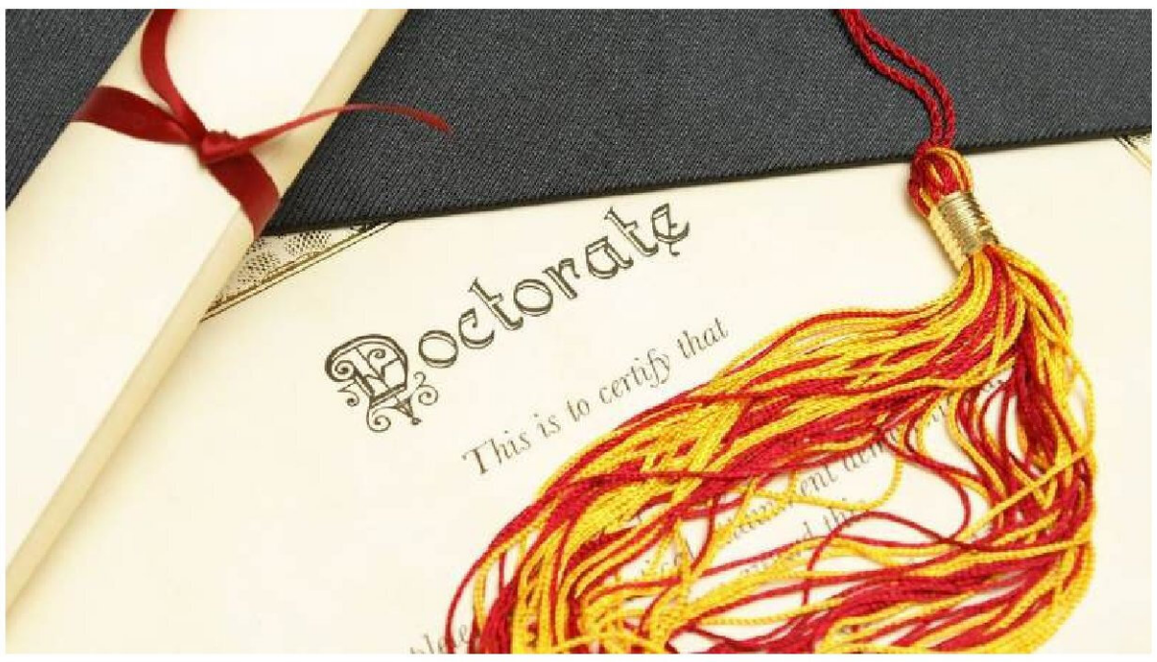
DR. R. K. UPPAL, PHD, D.LITT.

The expansion of higher education in India has created significant opportunities for students to pursue advanced academic qualifications. However, beneath this expansion lies a growing concern about the declining quality of doctoral research, particularly in some private universities. A PhD, traditionally regarded as the highest academic qualification, is expected to represent intellectual excellence, originality, independent investigation and a meaningful contribution to knowledge. Unfortunately, the increasing commercialization of doctoral education raises an uncomfortable question: Are some Indian private universities becoming PhD factories, producing degrees rather than developing genuine researchers?

A doctoral degree is not an ordinary academic certificate that can be obtained simply by completing formal procedures. It requires years of dedicated research, critical thinking, methodological understanding, extensive literature reviews, data analysis and the development of original ideas. A genuine PhD scholar is expected to identify an important research problem, investigate it scientifically and contribute something valuable to the existing body of knowledge. However, when institutional priorities shift towards admissions, fee collection and the rapid completion of doctoral programs, the fundamental purpose of research begins to suffer.

One of the major concerns is the commercialization of doctoral education. Some private universities appear to view PhD programs as an additional source of institutional revenue. Attractive admission campaigns, frequent advertisements and aggressive efforts to increase research enrolment can sometimes overshadow the actual academic requirements of doctoral education. The problem is not the existence of private universities or fee-based education itself, but the possibility that financial interests may take precedence over academic standards. A university's reputation should be determined by the quality of its research, not simply by the number of doctoral degrees it awards.

Another serious concern is the quality of research supervision. A PhD supervisor has an important responsibility to guide, mentor, encourage and intellectually develop research scholars. Effective supervision requires academic competence, research experience, regular interaction and a genuine commitment to scholarly development. Unfortunately, inadequate supervision, excessive workloads, limited research engagement and poor mentoring can negatively affect doctoral research. In certain cases, scholars are left to complete their dissertations with insufficient academic guidance. Toxic supervision, unnecessary pressure and the exploitation of research scholars further damage the academic environment. A university cannot claim research excellence when meaningful mentorship is missing.



Another disturbing issue is the repetition of research topics with little originality or practical relevance. Numerous doctoral studies appear to investigate familiar subjects through minor modifications, without generating significant new knowledge. Research should not become an exercise in reproducing previously established findings. India needs doctoral research that addresses important national and international challenges, including artificial intelligence, climate change, agriculture, healthcare, industrial development, unemployment, education and technological innovation. Producing thousands of doctoral degrees without generating meaningful solutions will not strengthen India's research ecosystem.

The plight of research scholars deserves equal attention. Many scholars invest several years of their lives and substantial financial resources in doctoral education, expecting better academic and professional opportunities. However, after completing their PhDs, they frequently encounter limited employment opportunities, temporary appointments, low salaries and intense competition. The irony is that institutions may benefit financially from doctoral enrolments, while scholars themselves continue to face professional and economic uncertainty. Research scholars should be treated as contributors to knowledge creation, not merely as fee-paying students.

Private universities must also recognize that academic reputation cannot be built through aggressive marketing or the rapid production of doctoral graduates. Their credibility depends on qualified faculty members, research infrastructure, scholarly publications, innovation, academic collaborations and the social relevance of their research. They should establish stronger internal quality-assurance mechanisms, encourage interdisciplinary research and ensure that every doctoral scholar receives adequate supervision and academic support.

India's ambition to become a global knowledge economy cannot be achieved through the expansion of doctoral enrolments alone. The country needs researchers who can develop new technologies, challenge conventional thinking, generate original knowledge and provide solutions to complex problems. A PhD should be a symbol of intellectual achievement and research excellence, not simply an additional qualification for career advancement.

Ultimately, the challenge is not to reduce the number of PhD programs but to improve their academic standards. Private universities have an important role in strengthening India's research ecosystem, provided they place academic integrity above commercial interests. The time has come to move away from a degree-production mindset and embrace a research-driven academic culture. India does not need more PhD factories; it needs genuine research institutions that produce original thinkers, innovators and problem-solvers. The real measure of a university is not how many PhDs it awards, but how much new knowledge its researchers create and how meaningfully that knowledge contributes to society.

AN APOLOGY DOESN'T UNDO PREJUDICE

The arrogance of cultural stereotyping and the convenience of saying sorry



BY RAJEEV KEJRIWAL

It is remarkably easy to offend someone or demean an entire culture when one is convinced of one's own intellectual or cultural superiority. It is equally convenient to apologise once one realises that one's words may have consequences. Yet, what becomes of the damage already inflicted? Why should those who have been insulted be expected to move on simply because the offender has found the appropriate words to express regret? An apology may acknowledge an offence, but it does not necessarily undo its consequences or erase the prejudice that gave rise to it.

There is something deeply disconcerting about the casual manner in which certain individuals make derogatory, racially insensitive or culturally prejudiced remarks about societies they scarcely understand. They frequently mistake loudness for confidence, boisterousness for sophistication and cultural ignorance for intellectual superiority. This, of course, does not characterise any particular nationality or community. There are countless individuals across the world who are gracious, cultured, well-informed and genuinely respectful of other societies. Nevertheless, a section of society appears remarkably comfortable passing sweeping judgements on cultures and communities beyond its immediate experience. More disturbing, however, is the familiar sequence that follows: a derogatory remark is made, an objection is raised, and an apology promptly appears. It seems some individuals have perfected the art of apologising without necessarily reconsidering the prejudice behind their words.

But what happens when nobody objects? Silence is often mistaken for acceptance, allowing prejudice to masquerade as humour or casual conversation. The damage extends beyond the person directly insulted. Such remarks reinforce existing stereotypes, influence the perceptions of those who hear them and embolden others to reproduce similar attitudes. What begins as an isolated instance of insensitivity can gradually acquire social legitimacy through repetition and indifference. Prejudice does not always manifest itself through overt hostility; sometimes, it advances through seemingly innocuous remarks that remain unchallenged.

This tendency becomes particularly evident when entire cultures are reduced to convenient stereotypes. Indian traditions, customs and educational practices, for instance, are often judged through superficial assumptions. Consider the expression 'rote learning', frequently invoked to suggest that Indian education encourages memorisation at the expense of intelligence and understanding. Such a sweeping judgement betrays a limited understanding of the learning process itself. The Vedas and Upanishads were preserved across generations through extraordinarily disciplined oral traditions, demanding exceptional powers of memory, precision and intellectual engagement. Does memorisation necessarily imply an absence of understanding? Children memorise multiplication tables before progressing to complex mathematical reasoning. Memorisation, comprehension and application are complementary rather than contradictory faculties. This is certainly not to suggest that our education system is beyond criticism; it has its shortcomings. However, criticism must be informed by understanding rather than caricature. No culture should be reduced to a stereotype simply because doing so is convenient or amusing to the person making the observation.

Equally revealing is the familiar ritual that follows when such remarks are challenged. Suddenly, the speaker expresses regret, claiming that the words were taken out of context, that no offence was intended or that the observation was merely a joke. Yet, the words have already been spoken, the stereotype reinforced and the insult delivered. More importantly, an expression of regret does not necessarily signify a transformation of the mindset responsible for the remark. There is a fundamental distinction between regretting an act of prejudice and regretting the fact that one's prejudice has been exposed. The former requires introspection and intellectual honesty; the latter may amount to little more than damage control. If someone makes a derogatory remark only to retreat behind an apology when confronted, what assurance is there that the underlying attitude has changed? An apology may acknowledge wrongdoing, but it cannot retrospectively alter the impressions created in the minds of those who heard the remark or entirely undo the injury suffered by those targeted. Regret becomes meaningful only when accompanied by reflection and a genuine willingness to change.

This is not about demanding immunity from criticism for any individual, nation or community, nor is it about restricting humour, freedom of expression or honest debate. It is about recognising that freedom of expression carries an equally important responsibility. We must be willing to challenge prejudice whether it is directed at us or at someone else. It is intellectually inconsistent to condemn stereotyping when we are its victims and indulge in it when others are targeted. Every community deserves dignity, and no civilisation has a monopoly on intelligence, morality or cultural sophistication. The real danger lies in the gradual normalisation of prejudice, whereby one unchallenged remark makes the next appear progressively less offensive. That is how intolerance survives, not always through open hostility, but through indifference and silence. Respect must precede the remark, not follow the protest. (The writer is a bilingual author with five published titles to his credit.)

Femtosecond Laser, Advanced Lenses Bring New Precision To Cataract Surgery



DR VINOD C. MEHTA

Cataracts are among the most common causes of vision impairment, particularly among older adults. The condition develops when the natural lens of the eye becomes cloudy, making everyday activities such as reading, driving, recognising faces and navigating unfamiliar surroundings increasingly difficult. While cataract surgery has long been an effective treatment, advances in surgical technology and intraocular lenses (IOLs) have made it possible to offer more personalised vision correction. Femtosecond laser-assisted cataract surgery and advanced IOLs are helping ophthalmologists address both cataract removal and patients' visual requirements after surgery.

A cataract typically develops gradually as proteins in the natural lens break down and clump together, reducing the passage of light to the retina. Ageing is the most common cause, although diabetes, certain medications, eye injuries and prolonged exposure to ultraviolet radiation may also contribute. In the early stages, changes in spectacles or improved lighting may help manage symptoms. However, when cataracts begin to interfere with daily activities, surgery is generally the only effective way to restore clarity. Timely evaluation by an ophthalmologist helps determine when intervention is appropriate.

Femtosecond laser-assisted cataract surgery, commonly known as Femto cataract surgery, represents an advancement in the way certain steps of the procedure are performed. Instead of relying entirely on manual instruments, the surgeon uses a computer-guided femtosecond laser to create precise corneal incisions, make a circular opening in the lens capsule and soften or fragment the cataract before its removal. These steps can improve consistency and reduce the amount of ultrasound energy required in selected cases. However, the laser does not perform the entire surgery independently. The surgeon remains responsible for removing the cataract, implanting the artificial lens and managing the procedure. The choice between laser-assisted and conventional phacoemulsification depends on the patient's eye condition, clinical requirements, available technology and the surgeon's assessment.

Another important development is the availability of advanced intraocular lenses, which replace the eye's cloudy natural lens during cataract surgery. The choice of IOL can significantly influence the patient's visual experience after the procedure. Monofocal lenses generally provide clear vision at one selected distance, with spectacles often required for other distances. Toric IOLs are designed to correct suitable levels of corneal astigmatism, potentially reducing dependence on glasses for distance vision. Multifocal and trifocal lenses distribute light across different focal points to support near, intermediate and distance vision, while extended depth-of-focus lenses aim to provide a broader range of functional vision. Each option has specific benefits and limitations, including the possibility of glare, halos or reduced contrast in some patients.



The selection of an appropriate IOL requires careful consideration of eye measurements, corneal health, retinal function, existing eye conditions, lifestyle and visual expectations. For example, a person who frequently reads, uses digital screens or drives at night may have different priorities from someone who mainly seeks clear distance vision. Patients with certain retinal conditions, glaucoma or irregular corneas may require a more cautious approach when considering premium lenses.

Ultimately, successful cataract surgery involves more than removing a cloudy lens. It requires choosing the right surgical technique, selecting an appropriate IOL and setting realistic expectations. Femto cataract technology and advanced IOLs have expanded the options available to patients, but no single approach is ideal for everyone. A comprehensive preoperative assessment, an informed discussion with the ophthalmologist and regular postoperative follow-up remain essential to achieving safe, satisfactory and lasting visual outcomes.

With new technology Cataracts can be safely removed at any stage. No need to wait for it to ripe, waiting also means one has to live with compromised vision. Today people with Presbyopia need not struggle with glasses & can have early cataract surgery to be spectacles free.

Author is Director & Chief Ophthalmologist, Centre For Sight, Mumbai

The selection of an appropriate IOL requires careful consideration of eye measurements, corneal health, retinal function, existing eye conditions, lifestyle and visual expectations. For example, a person who frequently reads, uses digital screens or drives at night may have different priorities from someone who mainly seeks clear distance vision.

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Rupee regains above 93 per US dollar level for first time in over 7 months

Press Trust Of India



MUMBAI, Nov 20: The rupee climbed up to 50 paise during the intraday session on Friday, moving above the 93-a-dollar mark for the first time since April 10, aided by robust buying in domestic equity markets and an uninterrupted inflow of overseas funds.

The rupee is gaining strength from an unabated chase of higher returns by foreign institutional investors amid a weaker American currency and receding AI-related stock rallies in the US and other markets like Taiwan and South Korea, forex analysts said.

According to data, foreign portfolio investors have pumped more than Rs 84,000 crore in Indian stocks during the past two weeks.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 93.25 and extended its rally to touch the intraday high of 92.82, climbing above the 93 level for the first time since April 10, when it closed at 92.83 against the US dollar.

The Indian currency settled 9 paise higher at 93.32 against the US dollar on Thursday. With the ongoing session's gains of 50 paise, the unit has logged a sharp appreciation of nearly 1.4 per cent in the past five back-to-back sessions since the closing level of 94.19 against the greenback recorded on November 13. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was at 103.68, lower by 0.15 per cent.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.68 per cent higher at USD 92.61 per barrel in futures trade. The Indian currency settled 9 paise higher at 93.32 against the US dollar on Thursday. With the ongoing session's gains of 50 paise, the unit has logged a sharp appreciation of nearly 1.4 per cent in the past five back-to-back sessions since the closing level of 94.19 against the greenback recorded on November 13. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was at 103.68, lower by 0.15 per cent. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.68 per cent higher at USD 92.61 per barrel in futures trade. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex surged 723.01 points or 0.87 per cent to 83,744.76 in afternoon trade, while Nifty went up 218.65 points or 0.86 per cent to 25,732.40. Both the indices ended over 1 per cent up in the preceding session. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 7,411.41 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. (PTI)

Change in Flipkart's festive sales timing drags Walmart's Q3 topline growth down by 100 basis points

Press Trust Of India



NEW DELHI, NOV 20: US-based retail giant Walmart has said it faced a 100-basis-point headwind to its top-line growth in the third quarter as the 'Big Billion Days' sales event of its Indian e-commerce arm Flipkart shifted to the fourth quarter this year.

"Timing of Flipkart's Big Billion Days ("BBD") event negatively affected growth with an expected corresponding benefit to Q4," said Walmart in its earnings statement.

The company saw the impact as Flipkart's 11-day Big Billion Days (BBD) festive sale shifted to a different timing compared with that of the previous year, with its sales contribution shifting to Walmart's fourth-quarter results.

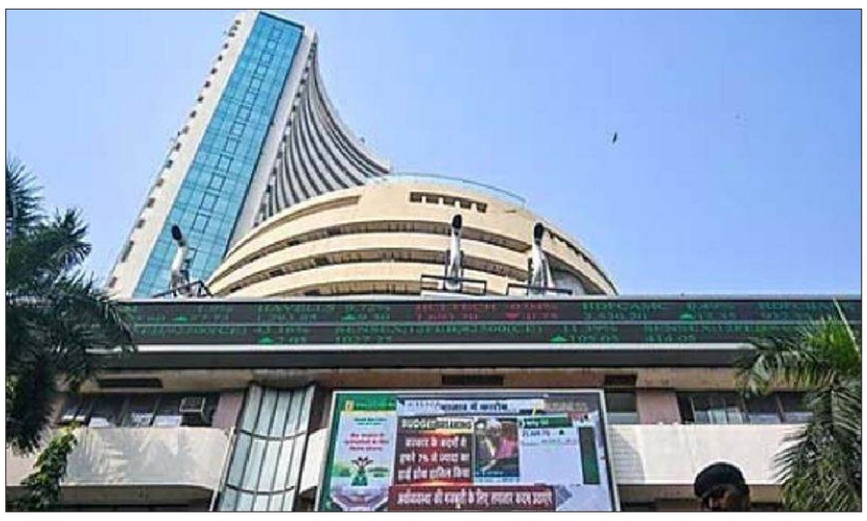
"As we previewed on last quarter's call, we faced a 100-basis-point headwind to top-line growth in Q3 due to the timing of Flipkart's Big Billion Days event, or BBD in India, which will be reported in International's fourth-quarter results this year," said John David Rainey, Executive Vice President & Chief Financial Officer, Walmart Inc.

The 13th edition of Big Billion Days, which opened on October 9, 2026, recorded 20-22 per cent year-on-year growth in orders, units and buyers, according to reports. However, Walmart also said this shift will provide a boost of around 100 basis points to its sales growth in the ongoing fourth quarter. The impact is expected to reverse in the December quarter, when the sales contribution from the event will be reflected in Walmart's international segment.

In the third quarter, Walmart, which follows the February-January fiscal calendar, said, "Timing of BBD negatively affected net sales growth by about 500 bps" in its international business, which operates in 18 countries outside the US, including India.

Stock markets fall in early trade amid profit-taking, weak global trends

Press Trust Of India



MUMBAI, Nov 20: Market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty declined in early trade on Friday amid profit-taking after a sharp rally in the previous session and bearish trend in global equities.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell 211.32 points to 82,797.27 in early trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty declined 80.65 points to 25,439.40.

From the Sensex pack, Titan, Tata Steel, Axis Bank, NTPC, Hindustan Unilever and Eternal were among the major laggards.

Tech Mahindra, HCL Tech, Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services were among the winners.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi tumbled nearly 5 per cent, Japan's Nikkei 225 index fell over 4 per cent, while Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index quoted nearly 2 per cent lower.

The US equity markets ended significantly lower on Thursday. The Nasdaq Composite dropped 2.25 per cent, Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 2.19 per cent and S&P 500 fell 2.02 per cent.

"Weakening of the AI trade continues with another 2.25 per cent cut in Nasdaq yesterday, and this is dragging other AI-related markets like South Korea, Taiwan and Japan down. Nifty is the only high performing market in the world this month with a 10.7 per cent surge in just 14 trading days. Profit booking is happening in the market but the FII buying is so sustained and aggressive that the bulls are calling the shots," said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited.

Despite occasional dips, the market is likely to remain resilient on the back of massive FII flows assisted by impressive corporate earnings, he added. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded 0.78 per cent higher at USD 92.70 per barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 7,411.41 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. In the previous session, the Sensex jumped 989.94 points, or 1.21 per cent, to close at 83,021.75. The Nifty climbed 286.35 points, or 1.14 per cent, to end at 25,514.30. (PTI)

Vedanta Aluminium Metal ramps up green energy use by 63% in FY26

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI, NOV 20: Vedanta Aluminium Metal Ltd (VAML) on Friday said it ramped up its use of green energy by 63 per cent in FY26 while continuing to improve energy efficiency across operations in Jharsuguda and Lanjigarh in Odisha and BALCO in Chhattisgarh.

During the year, the company consumed 2,562.81 million units of renewable energy and saved 635,757 MWh of energy through efficiency initiatives. As a result, VAML reduced its emissions intensity by 11.4 per cent compared to its FY21 baseline, bringing it down to 16.57 tonne of CO2 equivalent per tonne of aluminium.

The company also signed agreements for 493 MW round-the-clock renewable power as it works towards its 2030 clean power ambition.

It further said that nearly 16 million tonne of waste has been recycled and reused as VAML expands renewable energy use and lowers emissions.

"Aluminium has a vital role in India's industrial growth and energy transition. Our responsibility is to increase supply while steadily improving how the metal is produced. The progress recorded this year reflects practical changes across our operations, from greater renewable energy use and energy efficiency to stronger recovery of water and materials," VAML CEO Rajesh Kumar said in a statement.

Vedanta Aluminium Metal Ltd is one of the world's leading producers of aluminium. It caters to customers across more than 60 countries. (PTI)

Premium flagship smartphone prices likely to go up by over 30 pc by year-end: Counterpoint

Press Trust Of India



NEW DELHI, NOV 20: Prices of premium flagship smartphones are expected to go up by 30 per cent to over Rs 1 lakh apiece across most of the brands by end of the year due to a sharp rise in memory chip cost, market research firm Counterpoint said on Friday.

Along with the increase in prices of the devices, consumer expectations are also rising, and consumers are looking for meaningful specifications that can match the desired experience across processing speed of the mobile phones, camera, battery, durability, after-sales service, etc.

"A few years ago, a Rs 1-lakh smartphone was a rarity in India. Today, as flagship prices keep rising, this price point is becoming increasingly common. Prices of premium flagship devices are expected to rise by more than 30 per cent by the end of 2026 compared with 2025," Counterpoint Research said in a report.

Memory prices are expected to account for 43 per cent of the total phone cost by year-end compared to 13 per cent in the first quarter of 2025, as per the report.

"Rising DRAM (temporary storage) and NAND costs, driven by AI data centre demand, have pushed memory's share of smartphone BOM (bill of materials) from about 13 per cent in early 2025 to over 40 per cent, prompting smartphone manufacturers to reassess specifications, components and product strategies to manage costs," said Tarun Pathak, Research Director, Counterpoint Research.

According to the report, Oppo flagship devices have seen the highest jump in the range of 82-87 per cent on a year-over-year (YoY) basis.

Stock markets defy global rout; Sensex jumps 898 points, Nifty climbs to 25,800



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MUMBAI, NOV 20: Benchmark equity indices ended sharply higher on Friday bucking a weak trend in the global markets, with the Sensex rallying 898 points and the Nifty surging to 25,800.60, on buying in bank stocks, uninterrupted foreign fund inflows and moderation in crude oil prices. Rising for the second day, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 897.96 points, or 1.08 per cent, to settle at 83,919.71. During the day, it surged 1,016.21 points, or 1.22 per cent, to 84,037.96. The 50-share NSE Nifty rallied 286.30 points, or 1.12 per cent, to end at 25,800.60.

So far this month, the Sensex has gained 9,460.18 points, or 12.70 per cent, and the Nifty climbed 2,747.5 points, or 11.91 per cent.

From the Sensex pack, Kotak Mahindra Bank climbed 3.08 per cent, HDFC Bank 3.02 per cent, Maruti 2.88 per cent, UltraTech Cement 2.75 per cent, Bajaj Finance 2.47 per cent and ICICI Bank 2.22 per cent.

Titan, Tata Steel, NTPC, Hindustan Unilever were among the laggards.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, declined 1.89 per cent to USD 90.24 per barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 7,411.41 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi tumbled 5.21 per cent, Japan's Nikkei 225 index fell 5.06 per cent, Hong Kong's Hang Seng index was down 1.89 per cent and Shanghai's SSE Composite index declined 1.22 per cent.

Markets in Europe also were trading lower.

The US equity markets ended significantly lower on Thursday. The Nasdaq Composite dropped 2.25 per cent, Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 2.19 per cent and S&P 500 fell 2.02 per cent.

SEBI plans consultation paper to remove FPI constraints absent in other markets

Press Trust Of India



MUMBAI, NOV 20: Markets regulator SEBI will soon issue a consultation paper, proposing further simplification of regulations governing foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), including removal of certain restrictions that are absent in other countries, its Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey said on Friday.

The proposed move aims to reduce compliance requirements, making India's regulatory framework more competitive globally and attracting a wider pool of international capital.

"Very soon, we will also release a consultation paper to further simplify FPI operations in India by suggesting removal of some of the other constraints that other countries don't have, but we do have," Pandey said while addressing the CII Financing Summit 2026, here.

FPIs had been pulling out money for much of this year, but have been very active off-late with increasing their investments in India.

Pandey said SEBI is working to reduce the time taken for FPI onboarding to as little as five business days. Some investors registered under the SWAGAT-FI framework have already been onboarded within this timeframe.

Around 740 FPIs have registered under the SWAGAT-FI framework, accounting for 17 per cent of FPI assets under custody.

The regulator has also digitised powers of attorney for FPIs and enabled net settlement to reduce funding costs. From December 1, KYC (know your customer) review cycles for applicable FPIs will increase from one and three years to two and eight years, respectively, reducing repetitive compliance requirements.

SEBI has also simplified digital onboarding for non-resident Indians, overseas citizens of India and foreign nationals. Eligible investors can now complete KYC and re-KYC without visiting India.

Pandey said domestic savings provide a strong foundation for capital markets, while foreign investment brings additional capital.

During the first seven months of the current financial year, capital raising has reached around Rs 9 lakh crore. India's equity market capitalisation has crossed USD 5 trillion, while more than 15 crore unique investors participate in the securities market.

Further, Pandey said that the market should aim for at least 2,000 listings in the next few years from small and medium sectors.

"And we should aim to have at least about additional 2,000 listings in the next few years, at least from the small and medium sector," he said. Pandey urged industry associations, including CII, to identify promising enterprises, adopt clusters and help businesses prepare to access public capital. SEBI is also undertaking a comprehensive review of its Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements (ICDR) framework, covering IPOs, follow-on public offers,

preferential issues and qualified institutional placements. The regulator is separately reviewing the SME IPO framework and the Innovators Growth Platform.

Kashmir Age
"Truth we say..... come what may"
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SC dismisses Karnataka govt's plea against HC order lifting ban on bike taxis

Press Trust Of India



New Delhi, Nov 20 (PTI) The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed a Karnataka government plea challenging the high court's unbanning bike taxis and paving the way for their return to state roads.

A bench of Justices Satish Chandra Sharma and N Kotiswar Singh, after hearing the arguments of different parties, including the cab aggregators, dismissed the appeal filed against the January 23 order of the high court.

While pronouncing the decision of the bench, Justice Sharma recalled a conversation he had with some women in his office who used bike taxis.

"I asked them, 'How do you come to my office?' They said on a motorbike because they do not have the money to hire a cab. I asked them, 'Why don't you take an auto?' They said, 'Sir, it is five times (the fare)'," Justice Sharma told the lawyers appearing in the matter.

A bike taxi is safer for young girls as it has GPS, he said.

"It is better to regulate it than ban it. Bike taxis are already there in 25 states of the country," he added.

During the hearing, the top court questioned the state's concern over traffic congestion, noting that motorcycles occupy less road space than cars.

The counsel, appearing for the state government, contended that motorcycles and motor cabs were separately defined under the Motor Vehicles Act and that its aggregator rules did not envisage bike taxis.

He said that aggregators had no inherent right to operate such services, citing a 2019 expert committee report that examined safety, congestion and pollution concerns.

The state government expressed willingness to consider permitting bike taxis elsewhere in Karnataka, but refused to allow their operation in Bengaluru.

Bike taxi aggregators submitted that nearly 4.5 lakh passengers benefited from their services in Karnataka and relied on an earlier unchallenged high court ruling and central government notifications issued in 2004 and 2024.

The Centre submitted that motorcycles could be used as taxis under its notifications.

After considering the submissions of different parties, the bench dismissed the state's appeal.

The state government was represented by senior advocates Vikas Singh and Parag Tripathi.

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi represented Uber.

The Karnataka government had challenged the high court's January order, citing passenger safety, insurance coverage and the absence of safeguards for bike taxi riders. Several auto and taxi driver associations also challenged the high court ruling, contending that permitting bike taxis without comparable regulatory obligations would adversely affect existing transport operators. On January 23, while lifting the ban on bike taxis, the high court directed the state government to register motorcycles as transport vehicles and issue carriage permits to them. It passed the order on appeals filed by ANI Technologies, Uber India, and Roppen Transportation Services against the single-judge bench order prohibiting the bike taxis.

Two arrested in UP's Baghpat for smuggling liquor meant for sale in Chandigarh



Press Trust Of India

BAGHPAT (UP), NOV 20 :Two alleged liquor traffickers were arrested here and a large consignment of alcohol marked for sale exclusively in Chandigarh was seized from their vehicle, police said on Friday.

The arrests were made by the Chandinagar police and SWAT team during a joint checking operation near Khaspur crossing on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday, Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Praveen Singh Chauhan said.

Police recovered 80 cartons of Old Habit whisky, containing 3,744 quarter bottles (673.92 litres), and 47 cans of Kingfisher beer (23.5 litres) from a Bolero Max crane, he said.

The liquor was marked for sale in Chandigarh only and was illegally brought here to be sold, according to police.

The vehicle, bearing registration number GJ39TA 2613, was also seized.

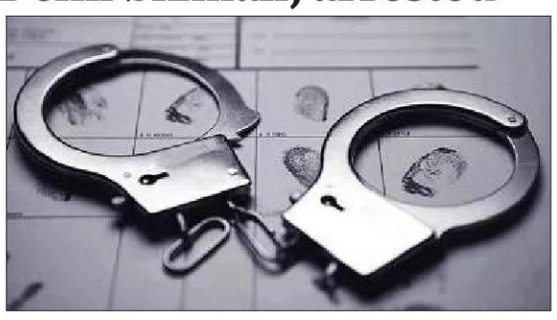
The arrested accused have been identified as Rajesh and Sandeep, both residents of Sonipat district in Haryana, Chauhan said.

A case has been registered at the Chandinagar police station under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Excise Act. Further legal proceedings are underway, police said.

They said Sandeep was booked in another case under the Excise Act at the Khekra police station in 2025.

Man poses as Lawrence Bishnoi's brother, demands Rs 60 lakh from Delhi bizman; arrested

Press Trust Of India



NEW DELHI, NOV 20 :A 27-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly demanding Rs 60 lakh from a Delhi-based businessman by impersonating gangster Anmol Bishnoi, brother of Lawrence Bishnoi, and threatening his family via messages, police said on Friday.

The accused, identified as Ashu Maurya, was arrested in connection with an extortion complaint registered at Janakpuri police station, they said.

The complainant, a businessman residing in Janakpuri, approached police after his family received threatening messages demanding Rs 60 lakh. An envelope containing half of a laminated Rs 10 currency note -- characteristic of hawala transfers -- was also delivered to his residence through a bike taxi rider, police said.

"Teams examined CCTV footage from the complainant's residence and adjoining areas and identified a 22-year-old bike taxi rider, Pankaj Gautam, who had delivered the envelope," a senior officer said.

During questioning, Gautam told police that he had accepted the assignment online and had subsequently picked up the envelope from Manesar in Gurugram and delivered it to the complainant's residence.

Technical investigation led police to a mobile number registered in the name of Maurya, originally from Uttar Pradesh's Rae Bareli. He was subsequently traced and arrested, the officer said.

"During interrogation, Maurya disclosed that he was in need of money and had planned to extort Rs 60 lakh from the complainant. His father had been working as a driver with the complainant for the past 27 years, and he was familiar with the family," the officer said.

He decided to impersonate Anmol Bishnoi, believing that invoking a name linked with the Lawrence Bishnoi gang would frighten the businessman and make him pay up, the official added. Setting the plan in motion, Maurya laminated half a Rs 10 currency note, put it in an envelope and sent it to the complainant via an online delivery service. He subsequently sent threatening messages to the complainant's wife, posing as Anmol Bishnoi, police said. Four mobile phones, a tablet (tab), a SIM card and the remaining half of the laminated currency note have been recovered from him.

4 arrested in Jamtara for duping people with fake cashback offers

Press Trust Of India

JAMTARA, NOV 20 :Four people were arrested in Jharkhand's Jamtara district for allegedly cheating people online by posing as customer care executives and offering cashback on UPI payments, police said on Friday.

The arrests were made following raids at three locations on Thursday, they said.

The accused allegedly targeted people with fake cashback offers on PhonePe and tricked them into downloading malware under the pretext of updating their account details, Superintendent of Police Shambhu Kumar Singh said.

Police seized eight mobile phones and 13 fake SIM cards from their possession, he said.

Two of those arrested had previously been jailed in similar cases, the SP said, adding that a detailed investigation was underway to identify and dismantle the wider network. During questioning, Gautam told police that he had accepted the assignment online and had subsequently picked up the envelope from Manesar in Gurugram and delivered it to the complainant's residence. Technical investigation led police to a mobile number registered in the name of Maurya, originally from Uttar Pradesh's Rae Bareli. He was subsequently traced and arrested, the officer said. "During interrogation, Maurya disclosed that he was in need of money and had planned to extort Rs 60 lakh from the complainant. His father had been working as a driver with the complainant for the past 27 years, and he was familiar with the family," the officer said. He decided to impersonate Anmol Bishnoi, believing that invoking a name linked with the Lawrence Bishnoi gang would frighten the businessman and make him pay up, the official added. Setting the plan in motion.

Seven-year-old girl raped by acquaintance in Thane district

Press Trust Of India



THANE, NOV 20 :A seven-year-old girl was allegedly raped by an acquaintance after he lured her with snacks in Maharashtra's Thane district, police said on Friday.

The incident came to light earlier this week when the child complained of abdominal pain and confided in her mother, prompting the family to approach the Shahapur police, who launched a search to nab the absconding accused, an official said.

According to the police, the accused lived in the same locality as the survivor and was a frequent visitor to her house.

The child's mother, in her complaint, stated that the girl disclosed that the assault had occurred a few months earlier, alleging that the accused lured her with snacks and raped her.

The Shahapur police have registered a case under section 64 (rape) and other relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, the official said. The incident came to light earlier this week when the child complained of abdominal pain and confided in her mother, prompting the family to approach the Shahapur police, who launched a search to nab the absconding accused, an official said.

Nine arrested in Telangana for supplying bank accounts in Rs 74 lakh online investment fraud

Press Trust Of India



HYDERABAD, NOV 20 :Telangana Police have arrested nine people for allegedly supplying bank accounts used to route money in an online investment fraud that cheated a man of Rs 74 lakh through unsolicited WhatsApp groups and fake stock market advice.

Police are searching for two men from Maharashtra, who are the alleged masterminds of the racket.

On June 8, the complainant, identified as Saleem, was added to a WhatsApp group without his consent.

The group was allegedly administered by several people using different mobile numbers, some posing as financial experts, police said.

A second group, styled as a customer service channel of a securities firm, was also used to communicate with him.

"The group administrators regularly shared stock-market tips, buy/sell recommendations and block-trading plans, claiming returns ranging from 5 per cent to 50 per cent, thereby gaining the complainant's confidence," police said.

Another person posing as a group member claimed to be regularly withdrawing profits.

The complainant was instructed to register on a trading application using his mobile number. He then transferred money as directed and later realised he had been cheated, losing Rs 74 lakh in all.

During the probe, the investigating officer examined bank statements and KYC/AOF details and found that the money had been transferred through a bank account.

"The investigation revealed that the accused arranged bank accounts for receiving and transferring the cheated money in return for commissions. Account holders were allegedly offered 20 per cent commission on transactions, while account intermediaries were to receive 5 per cent," police said.

The accused collected bank account credentials and forwarded them to the masterminds, police added.

One of the arrested, a Hyderabad resident, allegedly arranged accounts from unsuspecting people and commission agents to receive the fraud proceeds in return for a commission.

"Malkajgiri cyber crime police bust online investment fraud. Nine accused arrested. Property seized, nine mobile phones along with SIM cards," according to a police press release. The nine accused are being produced before a local court for judicial remand, police said. During the probe, the investigating officer examined bank statements and KYC/AOF details and found that the money had been transferred through a bank account. "The investigation revealed that the accused arranged bank accounts for receiving and transferring the cheated money in return for commissions.

Account holders were allegedly offered 20 per cent commission on transactions.

Kerala HC allows Mayilpeeli young scholarship exam, bars publication of results



Press Trust Of India

KOCHI, NOV 20 :The Kerala High Court on Friday allowed the district-level Mayilpeeli Young Scholar examination to be held, but restrained the organisers from publishing its results. The court passed the interim order on a petition filed by the general secretary of the National Teachers' Union (NTU), challenging the government's decision to withdraw permission for the examination.

The court said the permission could not have been withdrawn without issuing notice to the organisers, as doing so would violate the principles of natural justice.

However, the court made it clear that the results of the competition should not be published and that no further examinations should be conducted.

The government had withdrawn permission for the Young Scholar Exam 2026 last week following criticism over the alleged involvement of a right-

\wing organisation.

The examination, organised by the NTU in association with 'Mayilpeeli' magazine, was intended for students from upper primary to higher secondary classes.

The NTU is a teachers' organisation affiliated with the Sangh Parivar, while Mayilpeeli magazine is published by Balagokulam, another Sangh Parivar organisation known for organising Sree Krishna Jayanti celebrations in the state.

Appearing for the government, Additional Advocate General Mohammed Shah argued that the permission had been granted illegally and that allowing political and religious organisations to conduct such examinations was against the government's policy.

He said Mayilpeeli was associated with an organisation involved in religious studies and that the government had conducted an inquiry after receiving a complaint. He argued that the competition should not be allowed to proceed.

However, the petitioner's counsel argued that withdrawing permission without issuing notice was against the principles of natural justice. After considering the arguments, the court allowed the district-level examination to be held on Sunday, subject to the restrictions on publishing the results and conducting further examinations.

Gujarat man bludgeons two relatives to death over property dispute

Press Trust Of India

RAJKOT, NOV 20 :A 35-year-old man allegedly bludgeoned his cousin and the latter's wife to death and injured two other family members over a property dispute in Gujarat's Rajkot district, police said on Friday.

The police have arrested the accused, Ashok Ghodakiya, in connection with the brutal attack that occurred in Jangvad village of Jasdan taluka on Thursday, an official said.

Ashok Ghodakiya allegedly assaulted his relatives with a heavy wooden log, killing his cousin Prakash Ghodakiya and his wife Vilas, Rajkot Superintendent of Police Vijay Singh Gurjar said.

While Vilas succumbed to her head injuries the same day, Prakash died during treatment on Friday, he said.

According to a first information report, the accused came to the victims' house in Jangvad armed with a large log and began hurling abuses and threatened to kill them.

Ashok allegedly attacked one of his female relatives first, and proceeded to bludgeon the victims when they intervened, police said.

A case was registered under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for murder, attempt to murder and criminal intimidation, and the Gujarat Police Act, Gurjar said.

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CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....

LG Sinha

Mukt J&K Abhiyan,' the Lieutenant Governor stressed that the anti-drug drive must continue with the same intensity.

The Lieutenant Governor directed officials to look beyond traditional policing and work towards completely dismantling the terror and separatist ecosystem. He called for intensified winter surveillance, security preparedness and complete operational control.

"Our goal cannot stop at neutralising terrorists. We must tear down the entire terrorist, separatist ecosystem that sustains them," Lieutenant Governor directed the police official.

He instructed Deputy Commissioners and SSPs to appoint dedicated nodal officers and set district-specific targets for the seizure and forfeiture of properties linked to anti-national elements.

"Attaching and forfeiting properties linked to terrorist and separatist elements must be treated as a top priority," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor asked the officers to make sure that grievances of common man are heard.

"Ensuring that citizens' grievances receive a fair hearing is a core duty, requiring a dedicated institutional mechanism for grievance redressal with zero tolerance for negligence at any level," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor further directed for strict vigilance against encroachments along the Line of Control and the International Border (IB). He directed for crackdown against illegal mining, drugs and bovine smuggling and establishing joint social media cells to counter fake news.

"Operations against narco-terrorists must continue relentlessly. We must aim to completely dismantle the narco-terror ecosystem," he said.

The meeting also reviewed the progress achieved under the Vibrant Villages Programme across Jammu Division.

On Thursday last, Sinha said the security grid, along with road and communication infrastructure in Kiyar and adjoining remote areas of Kishtwar district, would be strengthened to ensure the safety and well-being of local residents.

The bullet-riddled bodies of Special Police Officers (SPOs) Babi Chand and Rashpal Kumar, both residents of Kiyar village, were recovered from Dachhan forest on November 12, a day after they went missing from the remote forest area.

"The security grid, along with road and communication infrastructure in Kiyar and adjoining remote areas, will be strengthened for the safety and well-being of the local residents," the LG said while interacting with a public delegation from Kiyar in Dachhan at Lok Bhavan.

Sinha paid homage to the two SPOs and assured all possible assistance to their bereaved families.

Reaffirming his firm resolve against terrorism, Sinha reiterated the administration's unwavering commitment to dismantling the terror ecosystem through decisive action.

He also reiterated the commitment to provide compensation, government employment and comprehensive support to the next of kin of the SPOs who laid down their lives in the line of duty.

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PM Modi

said there is much discussion in the world about international collaboration and people-to-people connections, and this is an approach that the ancestors nurtured for centuries.

He said around 5,000 years ago, there were trade relations between the Indus Valley Civilisation and Mesopotamia, while later, other trade routes expanded that network of connections.

"India, China, Central Asia and many regions of Eurasia were connected through these ancient trade networks. Scholars and Buddhist monks travelled these routes alongside traders. These journeys led to an exchange of ideas, languages and traditions," he said.

Modi said the 21st-century technology has created new possibilities for cultural connectivity around the world, and the places where the ancestors once had to travel for months, people in those same countries can now connect with one another in just a few seconds.

"Digital platforms have made knowledge sharing, cultural exchange and international collaboration easier than ever before. SCO countries should take full advantage of these new possibilities," he said.

Modi said the museums, libraries and archives in the nations safeguard a priceless heritage spanning thousands of years. Ancient manuscripts, rare texts, historical documents and artworks reveal many facets of the interconnectedness, he added.

"Today, technology offers tremendous opportunities to bring this heritage to the next generation," he said.

The prime minister said a couple of months ago, the SCO marked its 25th anniversary and over the years, it has expanded cooperation in security, economy and connectivity.

"Cultural and civilisational cooperation among member countries can further strengthen these ties. I am confident that this forum will encourage new ideas and create fresh opportunities for cultural cooperation.

"Our shared civilisational experiences can also play an important role in bringing the world closer together," he said.

Referring to the venue of the forum, Delhi's Purana Qila, Modi said the historic fort is an extraordinary part of India's cultural heritage and its history is as captivating as the fascinating tales associated with it.

According to scholars, he said, the history of this fort dates back thousands of years to the Mahabharata era.

"At such an ancient site, there were magnificent cultural performances, the powerful chanting of Vedic mantras, presentations on Buddhist philosophy and a journey of Lord Hanuman... These offered glimpses of India's culture and also conveyed a message of love and unity for humanity.

"These emotions, these ideas, these teachings are as universal as they are ancient. Beyond geopolitical boundaries, they naturally connect us with one another. This is the purpose of this summit, and it is also what the times demand," he said.

Prior to the inauguration ceremony, Modi visited the exhibition, the 'Mahabharat Scroll Pavilion -- Anant: A Rare 18th Century Mahabharata Scroll', which showcased an illustrated scroll reflecting India's rich epic and artistic traditions.

He later also visited the exhibition, titled 'Astitva -- The Essence of our Existence', which offers an immersive account of Delhi's history through archaeological evidence dating from 1,200 BC to 1200 CE, including excavated remains, artefacts, architectural fragments and other significant discoveries.

The three-day event is being hosted by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of External Affairs from November 20-22.

The SCO was founded at a summit in Shanghai in 2001 by the presidents of Russia, China, the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

India and Pakistan became its permanent members in 2017. Iran became a member in 2023.

The three-day forum will bring together scholars, academics, experts and cultural representatives to explore the "shared civilisational heritage of SCO countries".

The initiative builds upon the proposal made by PM Modi at the SCO Summit in Tianjin, China, in 2025 to establish a dedicated platform for civilisational dialogue under the SCO framework.

The proposal was subsequently welcomed in the Bishkek Declaration of the SCO.

Sports

a platform for aspiring athletes to showcase their talent at national and international levels. Over the years, Jammu & Kashmir has witnessed a renewed momentum in the sports sector, with focused interventions aimed at making sports an integral part of youth development, discipline, confidence-building and nation-building.

The recognition assumes particular significance as it places Jammu and Kashmir among the leading states/UTs in the country in terms of promoting sports and institutionalising a vibrant sporting culture.

The India Sports Awards 2026 ceremony was held today, at FICCI Federation House, New Delhi, as part of FICCI TURF 2026, the 16th Global Sports Summit. The award stands as an encouragement to the sporting fraternity, young athletes, coaches, sports administrators and all stakeholders who have contributed to the growth of sports in the Union Territory of J&K.

This prestigious honour is not merely an award but a recognition of Jammu and Kashmir's growing sporting aspirations and its commitment to building a healthier, stronger and more empowered generation through sports.

Naila Zahoor, Director Finance, Youth Services & Sports Department J&K, received the prestigious award on behalf of the Government of Jammu and Kashmir.

Bhupinder

contributions in the fields of internal security, border management, and sensitive operations

He succeeds Ashok Yadav, who has been appointed as Additional Director General of BSF.

Tangmarg

better livelihood opportunities to street vendors and giving a boost to local economic activity.

The projects reflect Chief Minister Omar Abdullah-led Government's focus on creating cleaner, better-organised and more visitor-friendly public spaces, reinforcing the importance of Lakhanpur and Tangmarg in the J&K's tourism and economic landscape.

EOW

to the investigation, the complainant paid Rs 6.5 lakh in cash to the accused against an agreement to sell executed between them.

However, subsequent verification from the Revenue department revealed that the land in question was never recorded in the name of the accused, establishing that he had allegedly misrepresented his ownership rights from the beginning of the transaction, they said.

Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) experts also verified the signatures on the agreement to sell, strengthening the prosecution's case, the officials said.

The investigation, led by Dy SP Goldy Sharma, collected oral, documentary and scientific evidence before the chargesheet was filed for judicial determination.

Meanwhile, SSP Crime Branch EOW Jammu has advised people to remain vigilant against economic frauds and report such incidents to the Crime Branch.

Dy CM

right now -- that of Atal Bihari Vajpayee sahib and Dr Farooq Abdullah sahib?" he asked, challenging the BJP's Jammu and Kashmir leadership to explain its position.

However, Choudhary asserted that dialogue and terrorism could not go together, and said Pakistan must stop supporting terrorism and dismantle terror camps operating from its territory if it wanted better relations with India and Jammu and Kashmir.

He said Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and National Conference president Farooq Abdullah had consistently maintained that Pakistan could not pursue dialogue while continuing to support terrorism.

"Vajpayee sahib had also said that two things cannot go together -- terrorism and dialogue. If Pakistan wants good relations with India and Jammu and Kashmir, it will have to end terrorism and dismantle terror camps," he said.

The deputy chief minister also questioned claims that no local Kashmiri militants remained in J-K.

"If it is being claimed that no local Kashmiri terrorist remains, I leave this question to you. You are journalists - please investigate whether this is actually the case. The DGP had said two years ago that there was not a single militant. Then where did the militant killed in Pulwama come from? And what about the incident in Kishtwar?" he asked.

He also challenged the BJP leaders who claimed that terrorism has ended in the region to explain the recent militant incidents.

Choudhary said shortage of funds was affecting the functioning of the government, and that it was difficult to even pay the previous month's salaries to permanent employees.

"We are working within the Union territory and making every effort to fulfil our responsibilities. The only problem we are facing is a shortage of funds," he said.

He urged journalists to independently examine the funds being made available and their utilisation, saying the financial constraints should be highlighted rather than portrayed as an excuse for non-performance.

On the issue of daily wagers, the deputy chief minister said the government's responsibility was not confined to workers in the Public Health Engineering Department but extended to all daily wagers working in different departments.

"It is our responsibility to regularise every daily wager working in any department, and we will fulfil it," he said.

He said the government would work out an alternative arrangement to facilitate payments due to employees in connection with the bank-related issue, adding that the concerned minister had given an assurance on the matter in the assembly.

"The minister concerned has himself given an assurance. He has made a statement in the assembly, and it is on record, that an alternative mechanism will be formulated for them. But please give us some time," he said.

On controversy on not shaking hands with his party MLA during a media panel discussion, Choudhary said he held MP Mian Altaf and his MLA son Mian Mehar Ali in the highest regard and maintained that the tradition of respecting them had continued for centuries.

"These shrines are deeply revered by us, and we will always respect them," he said, adding that the ongoing works relating to the shrines were being undertaken under the leadership of Omar Abdullah with the cooperation of Mian Altaf.

Without naming any media outlet concerned, Choudhary said he did not want to create another controversy but advised those involved to exercise restraint in their language.

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Resident

AIMSA's key demands include immediate stipend enhancement and parity for postgraduate, senior resident, DNB and MDS doctors across Jammu and Kashmir, besides implementation of maternity leave benefits in accordance with applicable high court directions.

The doctors sought Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha's personal intervention in the matter.

They also urged the principal of GMC Srinagar to facilitate the formation of a recognised Resident Doctors' Association (RDA) to ensure proper representation of resident doctors.

Liquor

120 bottles of Old Adventure Rum, which were seized as per procedure, the spokesperson said.

A case has been registered at Saddar Anantnag police station, and further investigation is underway to ascertain the source and intended recipients of the recovered contraband, he added.

SC

"We are issuing notice for the limited purpose of impressing upon the Union of India to consider the desirability of bringing a suitable legislation, or to ensure wide publicity through different channels, including a proper curriculum...," the bench said.

"We can issue notice for the limited purpose of impressing upon the Union of India to consider the need for a suitable legislation. We will not direct them. We will only sensitise them," the bench observed.

The plea, filed through advocate Anjuman Tripathy, said recent medical studies indicate that 'consanguineous marriages' significantly increase homozygosity, which raises the likelihood of recessive genetic conditions, congenital malformations, sensory impairments, developmental disabilities, infant deaths, and other negative outcomes in children.

During the hearing, the counsel appearing for the petitioner said the plea raises inter-generational equity and people should be informed about adverse consequences through wide publicity.

The counsel said certain safeguards should be provided as the practice of 'consanguineous marriages' was increasing.

The counsel argued that such practice occur mostly in the rural areas where people marry their cousins within the family without being aware of the consequences.

The bench said the issues raised in the plea require public awareness as marriage is a matter of personal choice and one should be able to take an informed decision regarding marriage.

Referring to an earlier case concerning marriage involving an HIV positive person, the bench observed the court had said it was a matter of personal choice.

The plea said the petitioner, who is suffering from 40 per cent visual impairment, is an "offspring of a first-cousin marriage, which was conducted in accordance with an age-old traditional practice in her community".

It urged the apex court to "declare or alternatively interpret Section 5(iv) and Section 5(v) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, to emphasise that the exceptions for marriage within prohibited or 'sapinda' relationships should always be carried out with prior public health safeguards".

The plea said these include counselling, risk disclosure, medically advised screening, and certification.

"Without these safeguards, such practices are beyond the authority granted by Articles 14 and 21 of the Indian Constitution," it said.

'Sapinda' relationship extends as far as the third generation (inclusive) in the line of ascent through the mother, and the fifth (inclusive) in the line of ascent through the father, the line being traced upwards in each case from the person concerned who is to be counted as the first generation.

Section 5 of the Act deals with conditions for a Hindu marriage.

Section 5 (iv) says that a marriage may be solemnized between any two Hindus if the parties are not within the degrees of prohibited relationship unless the custom or usage governing each of them permits of a marriage between the two.

Section 5(v) says marriage may be solemnized between any two Hindus if the parties are not 'sapindas' of each other, unless the custom or usage governing each of them permits of a marriage between the two.

"The issue is not about criticising specific community practices or devaluing people with disabilities. It reflects the State's constitutional responsibility to prevent foreseeable, serious, and avoidable harm to children," the plea said.

Seeking a direction to the Centre to re-examine existing provisions allowing 'consanguineal marriages', the plea said they be suitably amended so as to either enforce safeguards or a comprehensive statutory prohibition on such marriages, in furtherance of public health, social reform, and the best interests of children under Article 15 of the Constitution.

It said pending such statutory revision, the Centre be directed to take immediate and phased interim measures aimed at gradual and systematic elimination or curtailment of 'consanguineous marriages' from society.

The plea also sought a direction to the authorities to frame and implement interim guidelines mandating premarital genetic counselling and voluntary genetic screening in districts and regions identified as having a high prevalence of 'consanguineous marriages', with a view to safeguard the health and welfare of prospective spouses and offspring, and to prevent avoidable genetic disorders.

The plea urged the apex court to clarify that these directions were meant to be preventive and regulatory, and were not designed to criminalise existing marriages or retrospectively unsettle their legal status.

Leopards

The carcasses were shifted to the wildlife control room and sent for post-mortem examination the following morning. On November 18, officials received another call from Kunzer police station about an adult leopard found dead in the same area, around 40-50 metres from where the cubs were found. The male leopard was estimated to be eight to nine years old.

Tissue samples from all three animals have been collected in duplicate and preserved in formalin and saline for forensic analysis. The post-mortem reports are awaited.

"We found three leopard carcasses in the same area, which raised suspicion. The initial examination by doctors also pointed towards poisoning. We want to get the samples analysed to establish the actual cause of death," Range Officer Wildlife Gulmarg Shahid Sultan said.

"They may have consumed something, or someone may have placed poisoned bait. It could also be an infection or some illness. We want a thorough investigation. Three leopards dying in the same area cannot be dismissed as a coincidence," he added.

Sultan said the department had approached Kunzer police to register an FIR against unknown persons. The FIR has been lodged under relevant provisions of wildlife protection law, and the police investigation is underway.

He said that the department had not received any leopard-sighting complaints from the area in the preceding one to two months.

The incident comes amid growing concerns over human-wildlife conflict in north Kashmir. A six-year-old boy was recently killed in a leopard attack at Kalatra Payeen in Baramulla district.

Kashmir Age
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Phillips expects spinners to come into play as Basin Reserve pitch slows

United News Of India



NEW DELHI, NOV 20 :New Zealand all-rounder Glenn Phillips expects spinners to have a greater say in the ongoing first Test against India, with the Basin Reserve pitch showing signs of slowing down after two days of play.

Phillips, who struck his maiden Test century with a 118 to help New Zealand post 368 in their first innings, feels his own role as an off-spinner, along with those of Rachin Ravindra and India's Washington Sundar, to grow in the coming days.

"Probably (the Test is) evenly poised. India made great use of the new ball but we will take 368. Great partnership by Indian openers. Pitch is getting slow and low," Phillips said in Wellington on Friday during the post-day press meet.

New Zealand have traditionally relied on seamers at the Basin Reserve, a venue known for its pace and bounce. However, Phillips feels the changing nature of the surface could bring the spinners into the contest.

"As the Test goes on, myself, Rachin and Washy will have a bigger role to play. Basin has a bad reputation of being seamer-friendly but I have picked up five-for in the Plunket Shield."

He believes getting more revolutions on the ball could help generate bounce, even if the conditions are not traditionally associated with spin.

"We have seen if you put revs on the ball you can get bounce. Not saying it is going to happen but we can hope it happens," he said.

The conditions at the Basin Reserve also bring the wind into the equation, often making life difficult for bowlers running into it. Phillips expects to take on that responsibility if required, allowing New Zealand's faster bowlers to make the most of the wind at their backs.

"My role will be to hold on one end against the wind and let the fast guys bowl with the wind," he said.

Phillips also identified Jasprit Bumrah as the biggest threat, acknowledging the difficulty of facing a bowler who can generate movement both in the air and off the surface.

"Bumrah is incredible and the biggest threat. You do get scoring opportunities from other guys. His snappy action makes you feel you are late on the ball. Also the ball moves in the air and off the pitch," he said.

The New Zealand batter believes the key to negotiating Bumrah's threat is to spend time at the crease rather than take unnecessary risks.

"So to nullify him, you need to bat long periods and wait for scoring opportunities. Maybe we got bit more width and scoring opportunities from other guys," he added.

Phillips, who has also faced India's Prasidh Krishna in the IPL while playing for Gujarat Titans, said he has worked on developing greater trust in his defensive game. Earlier, he tended to respond to defensive situations by looking to attack, but he now feels more comfortable allowing the ball to come to him.

"I have started trusting my defence a lot. Earlier my mode of defence was to attack. But I feel more trust in defence as I don't feel I have to just hit out. Try and let the ball come to me," he said. conditions are not traditionally associated with spin.

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Lungi Ngidi returns in South Africa's squad for Bangladesh series

United News Of India



CAPE TOWN, NOV 20: South Africa have announced their squads for their three-match ODI and three-match T20I series against Bangladesh next month, with fast bowler Lungi Ngidi returning following his recovery from injury.

Ngidi is joined by fellow fast bowler Anrich Nortje in the ODI squad. Nortje returns to the format for the first time since featuring against Australia in September 2023.

Wicketkeeper-batter Sinethemba Qeshile has earned a place in the T20I squad after an impressive run in the domestic circuit.

Keshav Maharaj will lead the ODI team in the series, which runs from December 1 to 7, while Bjorn Fortuin has been named captain of the T20I side for the matches scheduled from December 10 to 13. South Africa squads to face Bangladesh

Proteas Men's head coach Shukri Conrad explained that the two series would provide an opportunity to manage the workload of multi-format players following a busy period of Test cricket against Australia and Bangladesh, while also assessing combinations ahead of next year's ICC Men's Cricket World Cup.

"We have opted to rest a number of our multi-format players off the back of what's been a busy period of Test cricket against Australia and Bangladesh, as we manage their workload ahead of the England tour.

Raunil Kukar overcomes back-nine wobble to clinch maiden PGTI title

United News Of India



DIGBOI (ASSAM), NOV 20 :Bengaluru's Raunil Kukar overcame a tense back-nine fightback by his rivals to script a maiden title triumph, winning the 26th IndianOil SERVO Masters Golf by two shots here on Friday.

The 28-year-old produced a five-under 67 in the final round to finish at 16-under 272, sealing his breakthrough victory at the season-opening event of the 2026-27 DP World Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI).

Kukar, who began the final round in a three-way tie for the lead with Yuvraj Singh of Kapurthala and Mhow's Om Prakash Chouhan, collected the winner's cheque of Rs 15 lakh from the tournament's total prize purse of Rs 1 crore.

His victory was anything but straightforward. After opening up a commanding four-shot advantage with four successive birdies from the sixth to the ninth, Kukar appeared firmly in control. But a missed short par putt on the 10th triggered a difficult phase, with three bogeys in four holes allowing the chasing pack to threaten his lead.

With the title suddenly up for grabs, Kukar showed the composure required of a champion, responding with crucial birdies on the 14th, 15th and 17th holes to shut the door on his challengers.

The biggest challenge came from 22-year-old Anshul Kabthiyal, who produced the lowest round of the tournament, an eight-under 64, to finish runner-up at 14-under 274. His round featured nine birdies and just one bogey, lifting him from overnight tied seventh to second place.

Akash Deep credits Gambhir's support during injury layoff for Test comeback

United News Of India



NEW DELHI, NOV 20 :Making his first Test appearance in over a year, pacer Akash Deep played a crucial part in India's fightback against New Zealand, taking three wickets to help wrap up the innings at 368. He later revealed how head coach Gautam Gambhir's regular follow-ups during his recovery provided the motivation to work towards a return.

The 29-year-old, who last played a Test in July 2025, spoke about the challenges of being away from the game and the effort required to regain full fitness. He credited the India head coach for keeping in touch during that difficult period and encouraging him to focus on getting stronger.

"Our coach, GG [Gautam Gambhir] sir, used to follow up with me at that time. He used to ask me how I was doing, what was going on, and how I had to get stronger. So, I had a little motivation.

"It was a positive thing for me. And during my injury period, I tried to work on myself more," he told reporters after the day's play.

Akash admitted that recovering from an injury and preparing for a return can be particularly demanding for a fast bowler.

"It is very difficult to get injured as a fast bowler. And then think about the comeback. It is very challenging," he said.

The right-arm pacer finished with figures of 3/53 from 23 overs, accounting for centurion Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra and Kyle Jamieson.

His most significant breakthrough came when he ended Phillips' resistance, bringing an end to a marathon 216-run sixth-wicket partnership that had put New Zealand in a commanding position.

Jayawardene appointed DC director of cricket

United News Of India

NEW DELHI, NOV 20 :Former Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene has been appointed Director of Cricket of the Delhi Capitals women's team ahead of the 2027 Women's Premier League (WPL) season.

The franchise confirmed the appointment, with Jayawardene set to take charge of all cricket-related operations. His responsibilities will include team planning, identifying new talent and overseeing the development of players and coaching staff.

The appointment marks Jayawardene's return to the Delhi franchise after more than 13 years. He represented the team, then known as Delhi Daredevils, in the 2012 and 2013 IPL seasons and also led the side as captain in 2013.

Jayawardene most recently served as head coach of Mumbai Indians in the IPL, guiding them to three titles in 2017, 2019 and 2020 before parting ways with the franchise.

"Delhi Capitals has a strong identity and an exciting vision for the future of women's cricket. I am delighted to take on the role of Director of Cricket for the WPL team," Jayawardene said."The competition has enormous potential to shape the future of the women's game, and I look forward to working with an established group of talented players and an experienced support team. My focus will be on building on the team's existing strengths, bringing greater consistency to performances and ensuring we continue to evolve and compete for the title. I am excited about hat we can achieve together."

Injury setback for Australia ahead of England T20Is



United News Of India

MELBOURNE, NOV 20 :Australia's pace attack suffered a significant setback with Mahli Beardman and Xavier Bartlett ruled out of the upcoming T20I series against England.

Beardman has a low-grade quadriceps strain in his left leg, while Bartlett has a left knee injury. Billy Stanlake has been added to the squad as a replacement. While Beardman is expected to return to play in Australia's Big Bash League, Bartlett's return will be subject to further assessment.

With Nathan Ellis already out of the T20Is, Australia's pace attack stands further dented.

Beardman made a sensational start to his career in international cricket, bagging a six-wicket haul on debut in Perth to stun England in the opening game of the summer.

However, the tourists fought back to take the ODI leg of the tour 2-1. Beardman had one more outing in the series, going wicketless while giving away 54 runs, according to ICC. The T20I leg of the tour begins in Melbourne tomorrow on November 21, with the sides all set to play five games till December 2.

Assam needs 10 golf courses, Rs 1,000-cr investment to unlock Northeast's golfing potential: Amandeep Johl

United News Of India



DIGBOI (ASSAM), NOV 20 :Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI) CEO Amandeep Johl has called for a major investment in golf infrastructure in Assam, proposing the development of at least 10 golf courses at an estimated cost of Rs 1,000 crore to unlock the Northeast's sporting and tourism potential and position the region as a major golfing destination.

Arguing that Assam has the natural advantages, geographical potential and an existing golfing culture to support the expansion of the sport, Johl said the state government needed to formulate a concrete plan to develop golf infrastructure, attract investment and create opportunities for local talent.

"We are trying to tell the Chief Minister (Himanta Biswa Sarma) that they need to build eight to 10 golf courses in Assam. It is such an amazing state. It has the golfing culture, tea gardens and all of that. I think it can be done, but the state government needs to come up with a plan," Johl told UNI after completion the 26th IndianOil SERVO Masters here.

Making an economic case for the proposed infrastructure expansion, he said building 10 golf courses would require an investment of around Rs 1,000 crore, while the potential economic activity generated through golf tourism and associated investments could be substantially higher.

"If you build 10 golf courses, it would cost around Rs 1,000 crore, and the investment potential is about Rs 1 lakh crore. Every golf course brings about Rs 10,000 crore into the economy. The potential is huge," he said.

Johl stressed that golf should not be viewed merely as an elite sporting activity but as an avenue for attracting tourism, investment and economic activity.

He said the perception that golf was an elitist game should not discourage governments from developing facilities.

"People say it is an elitist game. If that is the concern, then why build five-star hotels? Those are also elitist. Golf has enormous potential, and the government should seriously think about it," he said.

He said Assam had the potential to accommodate at least 10 golf courses and that the proposed infrastructure could help create a wider ecosystem around the sport, including tourism, professional tournaments and talent development.

Highlighting the infrastructure challenges in the region, Johl said Digboi Golf Links, one of India's oldest golf courses, needed improvements in its playing conditions and greater accessibility to encourage more people to take up the sport.

He pointed out that the course, located within the IndianOil complex, appeared to have limited access for outside players and suggested that IndianOil consider establishing a golf academy there.

The PGTI would be willing to extend technical assistance and expertise to establish such an academy and improve the facility, but the funding would have to be provided by IndianOil or the concerned authorities, he said.

"We can easily help them establish an academy. We can assist, but we cannot fund it. They will have to fund it," Johl clarified.

He also stressed that the development of professional golf in the Northeast would require sustained grassroots initiatives rather than depending on isolated tournaments.

"The only way to grow the game is at the local level. More events need to be organised. We are willing to help in every possible way, but the initiative has to come from the local authorities," he said.Johl expressed confidence that Assam could produce national and international-level golfers within five years if the government and local institutions committed themselves to a structured talent-development programme.

He said identifying young players, providing access to facilities and creating regular competitive opportunities would be crucial to building a strong pool of professional golfers from the region.

"Any sport can produce a golfer in five years. You just have to get on to it. If there is intent, you can set a target of producing 15 national players or international players in five years. There is no problem," he said.

On the possibility of the PGTI conducting more tournaments in the Northeast, Johl said the availability of quality golf courses remained the biggest constraint.

He pointed out that Digboi was virtually the only established golf facility available for professional competition in the region and that even this course required improvements to meet the desired standards.

"Where are the golf courses? There is only one golf course, in Digboi, and even that is difficult to play because it is not up to the mark.

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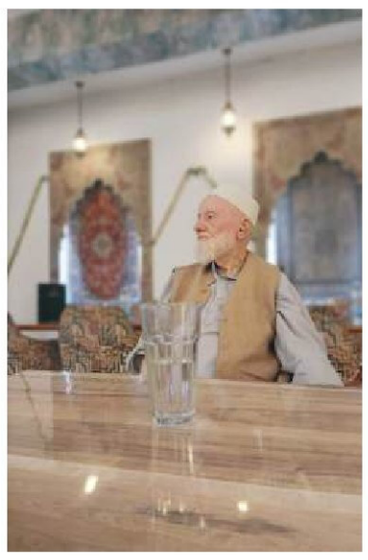
Patient dies at District Hospital Baramulla; family alleges medical negligence

KASHMIR PRESS SERVICE

Srinagar: A patient died at District Hospital Baramulla after being admitted with chest pain, with his family alleging medical negligence and calling for a high-level probe into the circumstances surrounding his death.

According to the deceased's relatives, Haji Mohammad Maqbool Moon, a resident of Baramulla, was brought to the hospital after he complained of chest pain. The family said that he was admitted for treatment and was initially administered two to four injections by the attending medical staff.

However, the relatives alleged that after the initial treatment, the



patient was not properly monitored and that no doctor attended to him for a considerable period despite his condition, according to the family, requiring continued medical attention.

They claimed that the patient's condition subsequently deteriorated inside the hospital and that timely medical intervention was allegedly not provided. The patient later succumbed to his condition, the family said.

Deceased's relatives have accused the hospital staff of negligence, alleging that inadequate monitoring and an alleged delay in medical intervention contributed to the death.

Demanding an impartial and high-level inquiry, family urged the authorities to ascertain the exact cause and circumstances of the death and determine whether any lapse occurred during the patient's treatment and monitoring.

Relatives also demanded that patient's medical records, treatment history and duty roster of the concerned medical staff be examined as part of the inquiry. They said that if any negligence or dereliction of duty is established, strict action should be taken against those found responsible.

The family further appealed to the health authorities to strengthen patient monitoring and emergency response mechanisms at government hospitals to ensure that patients, particularly those admitted with serious complaints, receive timely medical attention.

Mufti Qazi Tariq Rehmani, Saleem Farooq express concern over rotten meat issue



Kashmir Press Service

Pattan: Mufti Qazi Tariq-ur-Rehmani, Coordinator Muslim Personal Law Board, North Kashmir, and Saleem Farooq, Chairman Civil Society Forum Pattan, have raised serious concerns over the alleged sale of rotten meat and other unsafe food items in the market.

They questioned the role of the Food safety Department, asking where the concerned officials are on the ground and why regular inspections are not being conducted to ensure the quality and safety of food items being sold to the public.

They urged the concerned authorities to take immediate action, conduct market inspections, check meat shops and other food outlets, and ensure that no one is allowed to compromise with public health.

They also appealed to the administration to make the Food Department accountable and ensure strict monitoring so that consumers are provided with fresh, hygienic and safe food items.

Civic Reforms Forum urges construction of river protection wall at Kursoo, Rajbagh



KASHMIR PRESS SERVICE

Srinagar: The Civic Reforms Forum Rajbagh–Zero Bridge has urged the concerned authorities to prioritise the construction of a River Protection Wall along the vulnerable stretch of the Jhelum riverbank at Kursoo, Rajbagh, in the larger public interest.

The Forum has specifically highlighted the need for a protective wall starting from the house of Parvez Ahmed Pandith (left side), extending up to the residence of Mohammad Shafi Dar (behind Muslim Public School, Farooq Ahmad Dar), further towards the residence of Late Mohammad Akbar Wani and onwards at Kursoo, Rajbagh.

The proposed construction is important for strengthening the riverbank, preventing soil erosion, reducing the risk of flooding and protecting nearby residential houses, public infrastructure and the safety of local residents.

The Forum emphasised that timely intervention by the concerned departments would help prevent potential damage and provide long-term protection to the affected stretch. It has appealed to the Irrigation and Flood Control Department and other concerned authorities to conduct an on-site assessment and take necessary measures for the early execution of the work.

The Forum believes that preventive measures and timely infrastructure development are essential to protect public property and ensure the safety and well-being of residents.

Winter hardships must not be worsened by power cuts: AIP



Kashmir Press Service

Srinagar: With Kashmir's electricity demand expected to touch 2,400 MW during peak winter, the Awami Itihaad Party (AIP) has questioned the government's preparedness to tackle the widening power deficit, warning against leaving households to face prolonged outages during the harsh winter months.

AIP Chief Spokesperson Inam Un Nabi said Kashmir's electricity demand touched 1,764 MW on November 19, while average winter availability remains around 1,300 MW against an estimated average demand of 1,700 MW. Across Jammu and Kashmir, the projected peak winter shortage could reach 800 to 1,000 MW.

Inam Un Nabi said declining hydropower generation was adding to the challenge. J&K-owned hydropower projects, with an installed capacity of approximately 1,197 MW, are currently generating only around 250-280 MW, increasing dependence on power purchases from outside the Union Territory.

Traffic Police crackdown on stunt biking on NH-44



Kashmir Press Service

Kulgam, Nov. 20: In a strict action against dangerous stunt biking, Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) Traffic Qazigund-Kulgam, Mohd Aslam, today took legal action against a motorcyclist found performing dangerous stunts on National Highway-44 in the Levdoora area of Qazigund.

The action was taken under relevant provisions of law to discourage reckless riding and prevent potential accidents on the busy highway. The motorcycle involved was also seized to ensure that such dangerous practices are not repeated.

DySP Traffic Mohd Aslam urged the general public, particularly youngsters, to refrain from stunt riding and other reckless driving practices, warning that such activities endanger not only the lives of riders but also those of other road users.

He also appealed to parents to guide and counsel their children against indulging in dangerous riding practices and ensure that they follow traffic rules.

The Traffic Police officer warned that anyone found engaging in such unlawful activities would face strict legal action. He stressed that road safety is a collective responsibility and appealed to all motorists to prioritise human lives over dangerous thrills.

KVK Srinagar extends 'Khet Bachao Abhiyan' to Dal Lake interiors

Explores potential hotspots for commercial vegetable production

Kashmir Press Service

Srinagar: In a significant step towards expanding agricultural extension outreach beyond conventional farming areas, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Srinagar, SKUAST-Kashmir, extended its Khet Bachao Abhiyan to the peri-urban areas and interior settlements of Dal Lake on November 19, 2026, to explore their untapped potential for commercial vegetable cultivation and the development of a sustainable vegetable production hub.

Under the leadership of Prof. & Head, Dr Shamim A. Simnani, KVK Srinagar has been undertaking sustained extension interventions in the inner Dal areas since July 2026. These include a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) on August 13 to identify local agricultural challenges and livelihood opportunities, distribution of exotic and promising high-yielding vegetable seed kits on September 3, and distribution of Shalimar Pea-1 seed kits on October 24 to promote pulse cultivation and crop diversification. The latest outreach on November 19 involved an extensive field survey to identify potential



commercial vegetable-growing hotspots.

During the programme, the KVK team comprising Dr Rukhsar A. Dar and Dr Owais Bashir interacted with Dal-dwelling communities and sensitized them about improved agricultural technologies and various opportunities under HADP and JKCIP. The outreach also highlighted the transformative potential of HADP, being implemented under the visionary and farm-centric leadership of Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, SKUAST-Kashmir, Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai, who envisions transforming Jammu and Kashmir into a model bioeconomy for the nation.

The preliminary PRA and field interactions covered Meer Bahri, Latti Mohalla, Saida Kadal, Gadda Mohalla, Ching Mohalla, Karpora and Amirabag, focusing on assessing available resources, existing farming practices, local constraints and livelihood opportunities.

Network failure brings Qazigund Post Office operations to standstill



Kashmir Press Service

Qazigund, Nov. 20: The functioning of the Post Office at Qazigund has been severely affected due to a persistent network failure over the past several days, leaving consumers in distress and disrupting routine postal services.

According to reports, the absence of network connectivity has hampered several essential services, including financial transactions, cash deposits and withdrawals, and other postal operations. As a result, people visiting the post office for urgent work are reportedly being forced to return without getting their tasks completed.

Local residents said that the continued disruption has caused considerable inconvenience to ordinary consumers, particularly elderly people, women and those travelling from far-flung areas to avail postal services.

The people have urged the concerned postal authorities to take immediate cognizance of the issue and ensure restoration of network connectivity at the earliest so that normal functioning of the post office can resume without further delay.

J&K Bank opens branch at Pallanwala in Jammu



KASHMIR PRESS SERVICE

Jammu, Nov 20: Bringing banking services closer to residents and businesses in Pallanwala and adjoining areas near the Indo-Pak border, J&K Bank today opened a branch at Thanger Chowk.

MLA Chhamb Satish Sharma inaugurated the branch in the presence of General Manager & Divisional Head (Jammu) Ashok Gupta, Deputy General Manager Chandrika Parihar, Cluster Head Nidhi Jamwal, Sub-Divisional Magistrate Satish Sharma amid a gathering of valuable customers, senior citizens and local traders.

Speaking on the occasion, MLA Satish Sharma complimented the Bank's leadership for expanding its reach and lauded the Bank's contribution to the economic development of Jammu and Kashmir.

Dissemination of Awliya's, Sufi teachings our paramount objectives: Allama Dr Hami

Ulama and Huffaz honoured with traditional turban investitures at the Azmat-E-Mustafa conference in Shah Gund, Sonawari



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Srinagar: Ideological extremism, intellectual insularity and estrangement from knowledge, enlightenment and sound understanding constitute grave impediments to the moral integrity, social cohesion and collective well-being of human civilization. Just as divine revelations, celestial scriptures and sacred knowledge historically served as indispensable instruments of spiritual enlightenment, moral rectitude and divine guidance for preceding nations, the perpetual guidance and ultimate salvation of the Ummah of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), both in this temporal existence and in the Hereafter, remain intrinsically anchored in the Holy Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah. Their conscientious observance, faithful implementation and comprehensive dissemination constitute an inalienable responsibility of contemporary Islamic scholarship. In this regard, the most authoritative, authentic and intellectually profound expositions of Quranic injunctions and Prophetic traditions are preserved in the scholarly pronouncements, spiritual legacies and exemplary lives of the illustrious predecessors of the Ummah, particularly the righteous Awliya and eminent Sufi luminaries.