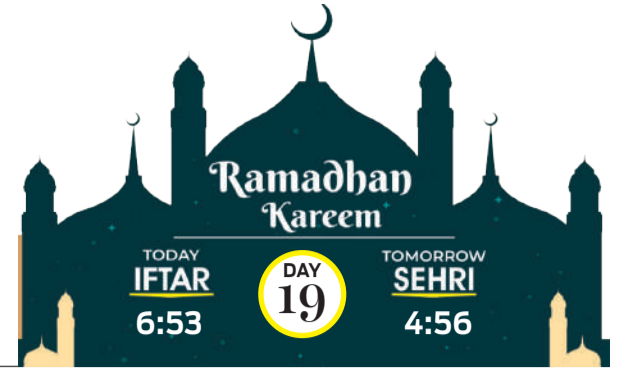


# Good Morning Kashmir

15th Year Of Publication



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### Mercury Drops As Rains Drench Kashmir

**SRINAGAR:** Rains drenched most parts of Jammu and Kashmir with Srinagar receiving highest rainfall in the last 24 hours even as temperature recorded a drop on Friday.

A meteorological department official said Srinagar received 25.2mm of rain during the time till 0830 hours followed by Banihal (20.4mm), Pahalgam (17.8mm), Gulmarg (17.6mm), Qazigund (13.0mm), Koker-nag (11.0mm), Kupwara (8.9mm), Bhandarwah (8.6mm), Batote •P-06

## Education Powerful Instrument Of Social Transformation: LG

Interacts With Members Of JATF



**GMK NEWS NETWORK**

**SRINAGAR:** Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Friday said education is the most powerful instrument of social transformation and nation's progress.

Interacting with the members of JATF, LG Sinha said, "Education is powerful instrument of social transformation and nation's progress. For peaceful, harmonious and progressive society, more organizations like JATF must come forward to create an educated, responsible and skilled generation that can contribute to nation-building and inclusive development of all sections of society."

The Lt Governor appreciated the group for helping students to achieve their dreams through its various coaching and mentoring projects across the country.

"JATF is guided by the noble ideals of Lord Mahavir and it is committed to give back to the society. JATF's project for competitive exam is creating a human resource that will take advantage of new opportunities for development and contribute to growth of the nation," the Lt Governor said.

He called upon all stakeholders to make collaborative efforts to promote holistic education which is essential for development of society.

Since its inception, JATF is continuously striving to shape the future of the youth, guiding and assisting them to prepare for the Civil & Judicial Services, IIT and Banking sector. My best wishes to the foundation for its future endeavours, he said.

Members of JATF •P-06

## Ten Dead As Vehicle Plunges Into Gorge On Ramban Highway

Prez, PM, LG, Political Leaders Express Grief



**UMAISAR GULL GANIE**

**RAMBAN:** At least ten people were killed after a passenger vehicle they were travelling in skidded off the road amid heavy rain and fell into a gorge in Ramban district on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway early on Friday, officials said.

Officials informed that the vehicle, believed to be a Chevrolet Tavera, on its way from Jammu to Srinagar met with an accident and fell into around 300-feet deep gorge near Battery Chashma around 01:15 am.

"At 6:00 am this morning, the rescue operation was started by SDRF, Ramban Police, army and volunteers amidst heavy rain and poor visibility. Ten bodies have been recovered from the rescue operation site," the official said.

The rescue team at the accident site recovered two identity cards belonging to the deceased, identified as Balwan Singh, a driver from Amb Gharota in Jammu district, and Vipin Mukhiya from Bhairagang in West Champaran district of Bihar. The identities of other deceased persons are being ascertained, the official said, adding that the vehicle was carrying mostly non-local residents.

He said the vehicle has not been traced yet, and all the bodies have been shifted to •P-06

**President of India**  
@rashtrapatiibhn

The news of many people getting killed after a vehicle fell into a ditch in Ramban area on Jammu-Srinagar National Highway is very sad. I offer my condolences to the bereaved families.

**PMO India**  
@PMOIndia

PM @narendramodi has expressed grief on the accident in Ramban, Jammu and Kashmir. He extends condolences to the bereaved families and prays for a quick recovery of the injured. An ex-gratia of Rs. 2 lakh from PMNRF would be given to the next of kin of each deceased. The injured would be given Rs. 50,000.

**Office of LG J&K**  
@OfficeOfLGJandK

Deeply shocked to learn of the unfortunate road accident in Ramban in which precious lives have been lost. My heartfelt condolences to bereaved families. I've issued instructions to Dist Admin & Div Com to render all assistance, as provided in the rule, to the kin of victims.

### Avalanche Warning Issued In 4 Districts

**SRINAGAR:** Jammu and Kashmir Disaster Management Authority on Friday issued a medium-danger level avalanche warning for four districts of Kashmir division.

Avalanche with medium danger level is likely to occur above 2400 metres over Kupwara, Bandipora, Baramulla and Ganderbal districts in next 24 hours, reads an advisory.

People living in these areas are advised to take precautions and •P-06

**WHAT A TERRIBLE TRAGEDY AS OUR HIGHWAY** claims more precious lives. We eagerly await the day when the promised 4 lane highway is completed & people are able to undertake this journey with the assurance of greater safety.

## 3 Main Contenders Of Udhampur Seat Crorepatis: Poll Affidavits

**AGENCIES**

**KATHUA:** The three main contenders of the Udhampur Lok Sabha constituency in Jammu and Kashmir going to the polls on April 19 are crorepatis, according to their election affidavits submitted to the Election Commission.

Choudhary Lal Singh, who recently rejoined the Congress and is contesting his fourth Lok Sabha election from the seat, has recorded a multi-fold increase in his wealth over the past one-and-a-half decades, according to his poll affidavits.

He and his wife, former legislator Kanta Andotra, have shown movable and immovable properties worth Rs 1.79 crore and Rs 1.76 crore respectively in their affidavit in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, as compared to their properties worth Rs 7.27 lakh and Rs 10.62 lakh in the 2009 Lok Sabha polls respectively, data in their affidavits revealed.

Choudhary Lal Singh, 65, who is being probed in a money laundering case by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), filed his nomination papers, including the mandatory affidavit, from the Udhampur-Kathua Lok Sabha constituency on Wednesday.

He won the Udhampur seat twice on •P-06

## Ready To Thwart Infiltration Ahead Of Elections: IG CRPF

**AGENCIES**

**SRINAGAR:** Chances of infiltration attempts from across the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir increase as the snow melts and when there is an important event like elections, but security forces are alert and capable enough to foil any such bid, a senior BSF official said here on Friday.

"The BSF is deputed with the Army on the LoC. The election is an important time and we are ready to thwart any infiltration attempts from across. We are conducting area domination exercises," BSF Inspector General (Kashmir Frontier) Ashok Yadav told reporters here.

He said while chances of infiltration attempts along the LoC are always there, "they increase when there is an important event like an election". •P-06

## Ramadan Jamia Records Huge Rush Of Devotees On 3rd Friday

**REHAN QAYOUM MIR**

**SRINAGAR:** Amidst the rainfall in Srinagar, the Jamia Masjid here has witnessed a huge rush of devotees on the third Friday of Ramadhan.

The showers did little to deter worshippers, who gathered in good numbers to observe their religious duties.

The devotees underscored the significance of respecting religious practices and ensuring a peaceful environment during this •P-06

## No One Can Stop Lotus To Bloom In Every House Of J&K: BJP

**GMK NEWS NETWORK**

**SRINAGAR:** BJP national general secretary and party incharge for J&K, Tarun Chugh Thursday welcomed the announcement of Union Home Minister Amit Shah that the Centre was prepared to revoke the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in a phased manner and said that the Opposition leaders like Abdullahs and Muftis should stop trying to politicise it to build a fake narrative.

Chugh said National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah and PDP's Mahbooba Mufti should acknowledge the Modi government's contribution in bringing peace to J&K. The Abdullah and Mufti families have been promoting separatism in J&K for their petty political interests and with the new policies of the Modi government both of them are rattled and frustrated.

He said the Modi government had taken a series of steps including abrogation of Article 370 to take J&K onto the new path of development and progress.

"Since Union Home Minister Amit Shah has AFSPA and withdrawal of troops in Jammu and Kashmir, the regional political parties especially NC seems to be in absolute frustration. Perhaps NC has forgotten its role in its bringing and implementation in J&K," Chugh said.

He said NC has brought AFSPA to J&K in 1978 with an aim to crush their political opponents and to remain in power. This party has made enough destruction to J&K and its institutions with the help of such laws. "Now when BJP took a stand to revisit the law it led NC and its entire leadership into absolute frustration," Chugh added.

"NC during their times pampered terrorism, separatism, and corruption. They made thousands of youth scapegoats for their cheap politics," he held.

Chugh said that the regional parties of Jammu and Kashmir have been rejected by masses, and in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections these leaders will lose their addresses.

"Kashmiris have embraced BJP •P-06

## Avalanche Hits Sonamarg's Hung



**AGENCIES**

**SRINAGAR:** A massive avalanche hit Hung area of Sonamarg in Ganderbal district on Friday afternoon even as two vehicles were rescued while no casualties have been reported in the incident, police said.

An official said that avalanche struck the Hung area of Sonamarg, however, there were no reports of casualties or property damage in the incident.

He said that soon after a police team was dispatched to the scene on the direction of SSP Ganderbal Sandeep Gupta.

"The team successfully rescued two vehicles that were trapped under the snow avalanche. All passengers involved were unharmed. The swift action ensured the safety and well-being of travellers," he said. •P-06

**MOVIES Schedule**  
Saturday 30 March

**INOX CINEMA SHIVPORA SRINAGAR**

**CREW (HINDI)**  
11:15AM, 02:00PM, 04:45PM 07:30PM (U/A)

**GODZILLA X KONG (U/A)**  
01:50PM (HINDI)  
11:15AM, 12:30PM, 4:25PM, 7:00PM (ENG)

**YODHA (HINDI)**  
03:05PM (U/A)

**SHAITAAN (HINDI)**  
06:00PM (U/A)

Call 95416 13868 For assistance with tickets

# J&K Bank lights up 1000 households with solar solutions

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** Extending eco-friendly lighting solutions to scheduled tribe (ST) community of district Ganderbal under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) plan, J&K Bank Friday distributed solar lanterns among one thousand households in collaboration with MOOL Sustainability Research and Training Centre (MSRTC) - a local NGO that works on different developmental projects for building integrative and regenerative communities through capacity building and creative solutions.



The Bank's General Manager Syed Rais Maqbool handed over one solar lantern to each of the family belonging to the ST Community and other marginal sections at a local school in Lar, Ganderbal in presence of senior bank officials and representatives from MSRTC.

After receiving the lanterns, the beneficiaries extended their heartfelt gratitude to the Bank for providing them an eco-friendly and convenient means of lighting their homes. "These lanterns mean a lot to us and our children as we can now carry on our lives happily in case of power failure. For this we thank both the organisations and pray for their success", some of the beneficiaries said.

Speaking on the occasion, Syed Rais Maqbool said, "As a responsible financial institution, we encourage CSR interventions that play a crucial role in supporting the under-privileged sections of our society. And we see provision of these solar lanterns to the ST community not merely as act of philanthropy but an investment in a more inclusive society geared towards an eco-friendly future."

"For such empowering initiatives not only bring ease in the living conditions of these economically weaker sections of the society but contributes to the overall progress and well-being of the inhabitants of this place", he added.

"The idea of this project is to engage with the local communities especially those from economically weaker sections and to encourage them to adapt the sustainable and eco-friendly solutions for their day to day problems through collaboration

with credible NGOs like MSRTC", he stated.

Notably, under the project a few villages around Chountwariwar belt in the upper reaches of Lar Tehsil of Ganderbal district have been adopted for providing them an eco-friendly means of lighting. With a population comprising of about one thousand families, the subgroup of Scheduled Tribe constitutes about 46% of the population of these villages that mainly engages in agriculture, dairy/poultry & livestock farming, horticulture, bee-keeping etc. The project has facilitated eco-friendly lighting to the community in the region.

LOK SABHA POLLS

## Amar Singh College organizes Declamation Event

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** The Electoral Literacy Club (ELC) at Amar Singh College Friday organized a declamation event centred around the theme 'Elector as an Ideal Citizen of the Country.'

The event aimed to promote electoral literacy among students and faculty members, emphasizing the importance of active participation in the democratic process. The students participated in this declamation event.

The event commenced with an insightful address by Principal, Prof. Sheikh Ajaz Bashir, who underscored the significance of exercising the right to vote as a fundamental duty of every citizen. He emphasized that by participating in elections, individuals contribute directly to the functioning of democracy, thereby shaping the future of the nation.

The event is under-



taken on the directions of Election Commission of India and District Election Officer Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat.

Dr. Mushtaq Ahmad Rather, Convenor of the Electoral Literacy Club, provided an overview of the club's various activities and highlighted the responsibility of ELC members in fostering voter participation both within the campus and beyond.

Prof. Rather emphasized the role of students and fac-

ulty members in promoting awareness about electoral processes and encouraging fellow citizens to exercise their franchise.

The event witnessed active participation from a significant number of students and faculty members, demonstrating a keen interest in the subject matter. The diverse audience engaged in discussions and expressed their viewpoints on the theme, reflecting a deep-seated commitment to democratic values.

The declamation event was adjudicated by panel comprising Prof. Isaaq Ahmad, Dr. Zubair Nazeer, Prof. Tawheed Yousuf Dadoo, and Prof. Irfan Yousuf. Students namely Maliha of 1st semester bagged the 1st position, Muskan Javid of 2nd semester was declared runner-up and Imroz Rashid and Salika of 3rd semester got the 3rd position in the Declamation Contest.

## EO Kulgam organizes Orientation programme for NCC, Campus Ambassadors



GMK NEWS NETWORK

**KULGAM:** The District Election Office Kulgam Friday conducted a one-day orientation programme at the Conference Hall of Mini Secretariat, here for NCC/ NSS and campus ambassadors from various Colleges and Higher Secondary Schools of the district regarding conduct of election.

District Level Master trainer, Showkat Ahmad Wani and ALMT, Mushtaq Ahmad briefed the students in detail about the importance of electoral participation of all, especially the young generation.

Student Volunteers were also familiarized regarding various processes of conduct of elections.

The young participants were enthusiastic and posed many questions which were answered by the DLMT and ALMT to their satisfaction.

Dy DEO Kulgam, Bilal Ahmad Kamgar in his address welcomed the young volunteers and exhorted upon them to become ambassadors for enrollment of all eligible voters in the electoral list and take the message of greater participation for stronger democracy to the community.

## EVM, VVPAT Training held in Handwara



GMK NEWS NETWORK

**KUPWARA:** In preparation for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections 2024, a training program was Friday organized for Supervisors/ BLOs of all the polling stations of Tehsil Zachaldara and Drugmulla at Town Hall Handwara.

The training was imparted by District Level Master Trainer, Syed Saqib Geelani. He provided full guidance to the participants on various facets of the electoral process and operations of EVM/VVPAT.

Emphasis was placed on the importance of active participation and adher-

ence to the guidelines outlined by the Election Commission of India to ensure smooth and transparent conduct of the elections.

Addressing the trainees, the Additional Deputy Commissioner Handwara, Aziz Ahmad Rather who is also Assistant Returning Officer (ARO) Handwara-5, stressed upon the concerned to ensure Assured Minimum Facilities at every polling station, PWD voters flagging, Migrant Voters registration and strategy for their voting, provisions for absentee voters etc.

Among others, Tehsil-dars of Zachaldara and Drugmulla also attended the training programme.

## Altaf Bukhari Express Grief Over Ramban Road Accident

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** The Apni Party chief Altaf Bukhari on Friday expressed shock and grief over the loss of lives in a road accident on Jammu-Srinagar highway. "Devastated by the tragic accident near Battery Chashma on national highway, where 10 people are feared dead," he said in a post on X



"Appreciating local heroes like Banihal volunteers, civil QRT volunteers Ramban, and civil QRT volunteers Ramsoo, and other volunteers always available for rescue operations on the national highway.

Sending prayers for strength and healing to all affected families," Bukhari added.(KNS).

## Orientation programme for NCC Cadets held at GGHSS Nishat



GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** On the directions of the District Election Officer (DEO) Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat, an orientation programme aimed at empowering NCC Cadets and NSS Volunteers was successfully conducted at Government Girls Higher Secondary School (GGHSS) Nishat here Friday.

The programme was conducted under the supervision of District Nodal Officer SVEEP/AMF Abdul Hamid Fani as a part of the ongoing Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) campaign.

During this impactful program, both NSS volunteers and NCC cadets were given comprehensive training on how to assist elderly and physically challenged voters from their family or community in reaching polling booths and casting their votes without any difficulties.

The DEO Srinagar regarding the event said that the orientation programme marks a significant step towards fostering an inclusive and accessible voting environment for all

citizens, especially those who face physical challenges or belong to older age groups.

He added that, as the orientation programmes continue to be conducted in schools and educational institutions across the district, it is expected that a greater awareness regarding the significance of voting will be instilled in the minds of the youth, further strengthening the democratic fabric of the nation

During the orientation programme, District Nodal Officer SVEEP/AMF said that these orientation programmes will be conducted in all schools that have NSS and NCC units.

He added that we are organizing various programs in educational institutions to raise awareness among the general public and students about the paramount importance of voting in a vibrant democracy.

The Principal of GGHSS Nishat, Surraya Bano and trainers briefly oriented the participants, providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills to assist voting for all citizens, especially those who face physical challenges or belong to older age.

## Farooq, Omar grieved over loss of lives in Ramban mishap



GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference President Dr. Farooq Abdullah and Vice President Omar Abdullah have expressed profound grief over the loss of lives in Ramban road mishap and impressed upon the administration to reach out to the affected families with adequate relief and compensation.

Expressing grief over the unfortunate accident, Omar Abdullah said, "A terrible tragedy as our highway claims more precious lives. We eagerly await the day when the promised four lane highway is completed and people are able to undertake this journey with the assurance of greater safety. May the souls of the deceased rest in peace."

Expressing anguish over the mishap and the loss of pre-

vious lives there, Dr. Farooq said, "Jammu-Srinagar highway stretch in Ramban has become a death trap. In the last few years, hundreds of people have lost their lives, leaving their families shattered. The concerned authorities must look into both the causes and take serious measures to prevent occurrence of the accidents. Meantime district administration Ramban should reach out to the affected with adequate relief and compensation."

Among others GS Ali Muhammad Sagar, AGS Sheikh Mustafa Kamal, Ajay Kumar Sadhotra, Treasurer Shammi Oberoi, Provincial Presidents Nasir Aslam Wani, Rattan Lal Gupta, party leaders Sajjad Shaheen, Ajiz Jan, Khalid Najeeb Suhawardhy, Sajjad Kichloo have also extended sympathies and condolences with the victim families.

## Sajad Lone Express Grief Over Ramban Road Mishap

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** People's Conference chief Sajad Lone on Friday expressed shock and grief over the loss of lives in a road accident on Jammu-Srinagar highway "Heartfelt condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in a road

accident in Ramban," Sajad Lone said in a post on X.

Earlier, ten people, most of them said to be non-locals, were killed when a Taxi (Tavera) carrying passengers on way to Kashmir from Jammu rolled down about 300 meters deep gorge near Battery Chashma along Jammu-Srinagar highway midnight.

## DEO Rajouri reviews security arrangements

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**RAJOURI:** District Election Officer (DEO), Rajouri, Om Prakash Bhagat Friday convened a meeting with the Army and police authorities to discuss security arrangements for Lok Sabha Elections 2024.

Recognizing the critical importance of maintaining law and order, and to contain any untoward incident during the electoral process, the DEO emphasized the need for robust coordination among all security forces and

law enforcement agencies for smooth execution of elections.

The DEO underscored the significance of border area sanitization to contain all potential security threats and asked for keeping high vigil in border areas, towns and at sensitive locations.

Furthermore, the DEO stressed the importance of maintaining dominance at the ALG Rajouri, underscoring its strategic significance in ensuring the security and integrity of the electoral process.

By fostering collaboration and synergy among the stake-

## Voters Awareness program held in Langate

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**KUPWARA:** A mega Voters Awareness programs under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative was Friday organized at BHSS MH Pora Langate.

The awareness program was aimed to raise awareness about various voting-related activities and promote electoral literacy among citizens, especially first-time voters in the run up to the upcoming Lok Sabha Elections 2024.

The program was attended by Dy. CEO Kupwara,



Manzoor Ahmad Bhat; Dy. SP, Principal, ZEO Mawar and Langate, District Cultural Coordinator, Cluster heads, Teachers and students from different schools, besides, officials from vari-

ous departments, first time voters, community leaders and local artists, besides general public also participated in the awareness program.

On the occasion, the school children and the

artists presented different colourful programmes to educate and inspire active participation in the democratic process.

Pledge taking ceremony under SVEEP was also held where participants took the pledge to vote enthusiastically in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Meanwhile, experts and various other speakers spoke and highlighted the significance of electoral literacy in empowering citizens and urged everyone, especially first-time voters, to exercise their franchise responsibly in the upcoming elections.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir (U T)

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER**  
**MECHANICAL & HOSPITALS DIVISION HANDWARA**  
 MECHANICAL & HOSPITALS ENGINEERING DIRECTORATE, KASHMIR.  
 email: xenmhdhandwara@gmail.com

**CORRIGENDUM 08**

Name of work:- Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of "Programmable Dancing type" fountain cum Aerators with water features inside Wullar Lake in front of Vintage Park near S.K.Payeen District Bandipora.

Reference 1) E-NIT 26 of 2023-24, issued vide M&HDH/TS/1586-89, Dated: -19-01-2024. (Tender ID: 2024\_PWDJK\_243341\_1)  
 2) Pre-bid Meeting Note issued under No.:- SEMK/TS/4672-74 dt: 25/03/2024

Please read i. MOC of jet Nozzles 304 SS & Color: RGB ii. MOC of Jet Nozzles: 304 SS/Brass/Bronze i. MOC of jet Nozzles: 304 SS/Brass/Bronze ii. Color: RGB

All other terms, conditions and specifications shall remain same as laid in the Pre-bid meeting minutes note and original eNIT.

No: SEMK/TS/4712-14 Date: 27-03-2024 DPK-18238-23 DT: 28/03/2024

Sd/- Executive Engineer Mechanical & Hospitals Division

Sd/- Superintending Engineer Mechanical & Hospital Engineering Circle, Kashmir Srinagar

# Chugh hits out at Abdullah, Mufti for politicising HM's remarks on AFSPA

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: BJP national general secretary and party incharge for J&K, Tarun Chugh Thursday welcomed the announcement of Union Home Minister Amit Shah that the Centre was prepared to revoke the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in a phased manner and said that the Opposition leaders like Abdullahs and Muftis should stop trying to politicise it to build a fake narrative.



government both of them are rattled and frustrated.

He said the Modi government had taken a series of steps including abrogation of Article 370 to take J&K onto the new path of development and progress.

"Since Union Home Minister Amit Shah has AFSPA and withdrawal of troops in Jammu and Kashmir, the regional political parties especially NC seems to

stand to revisit the law it led NC and its entire leadership into absolute frustration," Chugh added.

"NC during their times pampered terrorism, separatism, and corruption. They made thousands of youth scapegoats for their cheap politics," he held. Chugh said that the regional parties of Jammu and Kashmir have been rejected by masses, and in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections these leaders will lose their addresses.

be in absolute frustration. Perhaps NC has forgotten its role in its bringing and implementation in J&K," Chugh said.

He said NC has brought AFSPA to J&K in 1978 with an aim to crush their political opponents and to remain in power. This party has made enough destruction to J&K and its institutions with the help of such laws. "Now when BJP took a

stand to revisit the law it led NC and its entire leadership into absolute frustration," Chugh added.

"NC during their times pampered terrorism, separatism, and corruption. They made thousands of youth scapegoats for their cheap politics," he held. Chugh said that the regional parties of Jammu and Kashmir have been rejected by masses, and in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections these leaders will lose their addresses.

"Kashmiris have embraced BJP after August 05, 2019. They are supporting pro-people initiatives of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. March 7 rally at Bakshi Stadium Srinagar is eye opener for regional political parties. No one can stop Lotus to bloom in every house of J&K," Chugh added.

# Sajad Lone criticizes NC's sinister role in Kashmir's tumultuous history

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: J&K Peoples Conference President Sajad Gani Lone Friday strongly condemned National Conference for its malevolent role in the turbulent history of Jammu and Kashmir, which has resulted in widespread despair and suffering among the common people.

In a recent post on the microblogging website "X", he outlined a stark dichotomy that has defined Kashmir over the past three decades, distinguishing between the "Victor" and the "Victim."

"In Kashmir in the last 3 decades there have been two types of people. The Victor & the Victim," setting the stage for his indictment of the erstwhile ruling class," he stated. He asserts that during this period, the entrenched elite, epitomized by the "Victor," wielded power mercilessly and hegemonically.

"The Victor in the last three decades has been the ruling class. They ordered killings, ordered pellet guns to be fired, ordered

"The victors were merciless," Lone continued, expressing the grim reality of their reign. "They jailed even the family members



arrests, ordered encounters, ordered PSAs, rigged elections, then arrested those whose elections were rigged and placed them under PSA and packed them off to far off jails," the post reads.

and Congress had further exacerbated the suffering of Kashmiris. "They teamed up with BJP. They teamed up with Congress. Relentless in their pursuit of the helpless Kashmiri as canon fodder. Today every village has a special graveyard and the victims of the victors rest there," Mr. Lone lamented, highlighting the profound toll of their actions on Kashmiri society.

"The Victim was the common man, the common Kashmiri who was killed, tortured, arrested, blinded, handicapped, widowed & orphaned," he emphasizes, enumerating the atrocities endured by the populace.

Against this backdrop, he exhorted everyone to introspect whether the NC has been the victim or the victor.

"Put your hand on heart, is NC the Victim or the Victor?," he concluded. (KNS)

## TWO MINORS KILLED IN 17 DAYS

# Shoot-at-sight order issued for 'man-eater' leopard in Budgam

NAVEED UL HAQ

BUDGAM: Following another fatal attack on a minor child in the Khansahib area of central Kashmir's Budgam district, the Wildlife Department issued shoot-at-sight orders on Friday to eliminate the "man-eater" leopard.

The Khansahib area has been gripped with fear and anguish after a series of leopard attacks claimed the lives of two minor girls and left a minor boy injured within a span of 17 days.

Toiba Mushtaq, 7, daughter of Mushtaq Ahmad, was taken from the lawns of her home during the evening hours, and her body was later discovered in nearby bushes. Notably, a 9-year-old girl was fatally attacked, while a minor boy sustained injuries in a separate incident involving a leopard in the neighbouring village of Samsan within the past 17 days.

The rise in human-animal conflicts has left vil-

agers living in constant fear, who had appealed for a shoot-at-sight order from the district administration.

Altaf Hussain, Wildlife Warden (Central), informed the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that they have issued the shoot-at-sight order for the "man-eater" leopard.

"Our first priority will be tranquillising or trapping the animal, but if these measures fail, shooting will be considered. After assessing the situation, orders have been issued to hunt down the said animal following the necessary formalities," he said.

Over the past 17 days, the Jammu and Kashmir Wildlife Department has conducted extensive search operations, utilising drones in various areas where the presence of the leopard is suspected.

Officials have advised

residents to stay indoors, especially during morning and evening hours, to avoid further attacks

until the leopard is captured.

Stay indoors: Earlier, Deputy Commissioner Budgam Akshay Labroo asked people in the area to stay indoors, particularly in the morning and evening, and to take extra care of their children by not letting them go outside. Speaking to media persons following his visit to Hariwani where a 7-year-old girl was mauled to death by a leopard, the DC



advised people to exercise extra caution until the operation is over, especially with regard to their children, and to walk in groups to prevent any more unfortunate incidents.

"I urge people to cooperate with the police, wildlife, and revenue departments to make this operation effective. Only then will people be able to heave a sigh of relief when the leopard that has turned into a monster is swiftly apprehended," he said.

"In order for the wildlife team and police to follow up on leads, sightings can also be reported to our SDPO, SHO and police department, who are already at work," the DC said.

Earlier, speaking to the media persons, SDM Khansahib said the administration is keeping a close eye on the leopard. "Cages had already been set up in Samsan village, but unfortunately, the leopard moved and attacked another

child four kilometres away in Hariwani," he said.

He said that under the Deputy Commissioner's direction, a wildlife team has been permanently deployed in the village, and community awareness campaigns have been conducted, advising residents to stay inside during the morning and evening hours and to take extra care of their children until the leopard is apprehended.

Constant fear: Describing the horrific incident, Ajaz Ahmad, a local of Hariwani, said that 7-year-old Toiba Mushtaq was taken away from the lawns of her home in the evening, despite her mother being with her when they stepped outside to use the toilet. Her body was later found in nearby bushes.

"Out of the three brothers, only one brother had a child, and she was that, but the leopard also made her its victim. The Wildlife Department hasn't succeeded in catching it, and

the district administration has remained a silent spectator," he lamented. "No orders are being given by them to kill this leopard even after two killings. We are living in constant fear, and our children are not able to go out of the house, affecting their education."

Javed Ahmad, another local of Hariwani village, said the recent leopard attacks have left them trembling with fear. "We cannot even step out of our homes without worrying about the safety of our children. Yesterday, after killing a minor girl, the leopard attacked another person in the same village, but he luckily managed to escape," he said.

"This man-eating leopard attacks by entering the yards of houses, and fearing that, a person cannot even step outside the houses. The Wildlife Department has very few staff, due to which they are not able to catch the leopard," he added—(KNO)

# Rains inundate Sanat Nagar, locals suffer

REHAN QAYOUM MIR

SRINAGAR: The moderate rainfall in Srinagar has left Sanat Nagar inundated with water, causing inconvenience to the residents and commuters alike.

The rains that continued since yesterday, submerged several streets, exacerbating the long-standing drainage issues in the area.

Local residents voiced their frustration and expressed their concerns. "Every time it rains, our locality turns into a virtual

pool. It's becoming increasingly difficult to navigate through the waterlogged streets," said Zahoor, a local. Another resident also stated that the lack of proper drainage infrastructure aggravates the situation, leading to water logging even with moderate rainfall, as authorities need to address this issue urgently.

Moreover, an official, when contacted, stated, "We have taken cognizance of the matter, and the issue will be sorted at the earliest"—(KNO)

# Fruit growers, buyers suffer losses due to low apple demand

Say rates down by 40 pc compared to last year's main season

JAHANGEER GANAIE

SRINAGAR: The fruit growers and buyers in Kashmir are deeply concerned, saying they face losses due to the low demand for apples.

Growers and buyers expressed their dismay over the current situation, saying there has been a drastic decrease in apple prices compared to the rates during the main apple season in October-November 2023.

Mohamad Ashraf, a fruit grower from Shopian, said he was offered Rs 1,200 per apple box in November last year but opted to store them in a cold store at Lassipora. However, he now finds himself receiving only around Rs 800 per box, much lower than the expected rates of Rs 1,800-2,000.

Similarly, Shakeel Ahmad, an apple trader,

lamented purchasing high-quality apples at Rs 1,000-1,500 per box last November, only to find that the current selling price has dropped to Rs 1,000 per box.

Ahmad said there was anticipation for increased demand in the spring season, which led growers and buyers to store apples in the cold storage. However, the expected surge in demand did not materialise, resulting in substantial financial losses.

Azhar Anjum, the manager of a cold store, confirmed the downward trend in apple prices, saying that rates have plummeted by Rs 300-400 per box. Currently, Kulu boxes are being sold for around Rs 1,000 per box,

while Delicious apples fetch only about Rs 800, he said.

Despite incurring expenses of around Rs 300-400 per box on cold storage charges, growers and buyers are struggling to achieve even the rates attained during the main season last year.

Bashir Ahmad Basheer, chairman of the Kashmir Valley Fruit Growers Cum Dealers Union, expressed concern over the losses faced by buyers due to the lack of demand this year compared to the previous year.

"While growers may not bear as much loss, buyers are grappling with substantial financial setbacks, having purchased apples at higher rates during a period of greater demand," he said—(KNO)



# Farmers Advocate use of Standardized Pesticides to Safeguard Orchards

MUBASHIR AALAM WANI

SRINAGAR: As the valley gears up for crucial spraying schedules, farmers have urged authorities to ensure that only standardized pesticides are made available to protect their orchards from pests and diseases.

With Kashmir's economy heavily reliant on its apple industry, which contributes significantly to the region's GDP, the concerns of apple growers grow over the varieties of pesticides available in the market.

The demand for standardized pesticides stems from a growing apprehension among farmers regarding the efficacy and safety of the pesticides currently available in the market.

President North Kashmir Apple Growers Association Fayaz Ahmad Malik emphasized the critical need for quality control

measures. "Our apples are not just fruits; they are a symbol of Kashmir's identity and livelihood for thousands of families. It is imperative that we safeguard our orchards with pesticides that meet international standards," he said.

The call for standardized pesticides comes amidst reports of farmers experiencing inconsistent results due to the use of substandard chemicals.

"Many farmers have reported losses in previous seasons due to ineffective pest management despite investing heavily in pesticides. The availability of unregulated and counterfeit pesticides poses a significant risk not only to crop yields but also to human health and the environment," Malik said.

The growers said they often get confused with rumours of fake and substandard pesticides avail-

ability in the market.

"For the last few days, social media has been abuzz with the availability of substandard pesticides in the markets. We appeal to the government to launch a massive drive against the substandard pesticide sellers to save our orchards," said Munner Ahmad Khan, an apple grower.

Meanwhile officials at the horticulture department said they conduct regular market drives to root up the menace of substandard pesticides.

"Through our official website, we constantly recommend the growers' spraying. We are also making use of the press and social media to generate awareness about genuine pesticides. Besides, our team conduct surprise drives to initiate action against the substandard pesticide sellers," they said—(KNO)

## UDHAMPUR-DODA LS SEAT

# RO rejects papers of three covering candidates

AMIR TANTRAY

JAMMU: After the scrutiny of nomination papers of candidates for Udhampur-Doda Lok Sabha seat, papers of three covering candidates of different parties were rejected by the returning officer on this parliamentary seat.

These include covering candidates of Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP), Congress and Bahujan Samaj Party.

A total of 15 candidates had filed their nomination papers for the Udhampur-Doda Lok Sabha seat which included big names like BJP candidate Dr. Jitendra Singh, Congress candidate Choudhary Lal Singh and Democratic Progressive Party (DPAP) candidate Ghulam Muhammad Saroori.

Other candidates belonged to smaller parties and independents. The filing of nomination papers

ended on March 27 and on March 28 scrutiny of papers was done during which papers of three candidates, who were covering candidates, were rejected by the RO office. "Those whose papers were rejected included Prem Nath, BJP covering candidate for Dr. Jitendra Singh, Divya Surya Partap Singh, covering candidate for Congress candidate Choudhary Lal Singh and Tilak Raj, covering candidate for BSP candidate Amit

Kumar," an official told KNO.

All the three covering candidates had filed their nomination on their respective party mandate but as the original belonged to main candidates, their forms were rejected by the RO office.

Since the papers of three candidates have been rejected, 12 candidates are still in the fray and till tomorrow evening candidates have the option of withdrawing their papers beyond which there will be

no option to leave the contest.

The Udhampur-Doda Lok Sabha seat which is going for polls on April 19 in the first phase of parliamentary elections in which big guns like Jitendra Singh and Lal Singh will be fighting to get their third term as Member Parliament. DPAP candidate G M Saroori is also in the fray hoping to get maximum votes from his home district Kishtwar and neighbouring districts of Doda and Ramban—(KNO)

## از عدالت ایگز کیٹیو مجسٹریٹ درجہ اول کرناہ

محمد اقبال ولد محمد یعقوب ساکنہ موضع گل غبالہ کرناہ نام رجسٹرار برتھ اینڈ ڈسٹھ اسٹہار بمراد آگاہی ہر خاص و عام درخواست بغرض اندراج تاریخ پیدائش

نام عنایہ اقبال

تاریخ پیدائش: 2021-09-20

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں سائل / سائل کے عدالت ہذا میں درخواست بغرض اندراج

تاریخ پیدائش عنایہ اقبال پیش کی ہے۔ لہذا عوام الناس کو بذریعہ اشتہار مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ نسبت درخواست کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہونے کی صورت میں عزرات اشاعت اشتہار کے اندر سات یوم عدالت ہذا میں آکر پیش کرے۔

تحریر الصدرا ایگز کیٹیو مجسٹریٹ درجہ اول کرناہ

## از عدالت ایگز کیٹیو مجسٹریٹ درجہ اول کرناہ

توفیق احمد ولد محمد فضل ساکنہ موضع گل کرناہ نام رجسٹرار برتھ اینڈ ڈسٹھ اسٹہار بمراد آگاہی ہر خاص و عام درخواست بغرض اندراج تاریخ پیدائش

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تحریر الصدرا ایگز کیٹیو مجسٹریٹ درجہ اول کرناہ

Good Morning Kashmir

EDITORIAL

## Admission Fee

**T**he legal intervention was much needed here. The admission fee was a serious issue. The schools would charge as much admission fee as they wished to leaving them out of reach for a substantial chunk of the population. The courts jumped in and declared any kind of admission/donation fee as illegal. A lot was expected from this decision of court but have things really changed? In the scenario of admissions in the schools of the Valley, admission fee is still sought under various names like school development fund, environmental tour fund, school advancement fund, and whatnot. In short, the admission fee is still in existence. It is just that the nomenclature has changed, the soul has remained the same. It is not just a matter of affordability. It is a matter of being just and unjust. The private school underpay the highly qualified teaching staff. The administration of the majority of the schools have financial interests on mind driven by core capitalistic ideals. The enhancement of the society and the spread of education is the least of their concerns. There are schools in Srinagar which gauges whether the parents are in white collar or not, seek proof of the financial strength of both the parents, and also want to determine to what level the child has learnt mannerism at home from the white collar parents. All this is to determine the financial and educational status of both parents and is regrettably considered a key metric of admissions. This is totally unjust and against the principle of equal opportunities to all as enshrined in the constitution. The Courts must ensure that their orders are followed in letter and spirit and if any deviation is found anywhere a set of punitive measures must be put in place without any adieu.

## Zero Oil Cooking

# Improving Heart Health Through Oil Taxation



DR. BIMAL CHHAJER

**I**n the ongoing battle against heart disease, a novel proposal has emerged from the SAAOL (Science and Art of Living): the implementation of taxes on all cooking oils. This unconventional suggestion draws parallels between the impact of oils on cardiovascular health and the taxation of tobacco products, aiming to stem the tide of the heart attack epidemic. Heart attacks stem from plaque accumulation within arteries, obstructing blood flow and damaging heart muscles. Elevated cholesterol and triglyceride levels contribute significantly to this blockage, posing a serious threat to cardiovascular health. Surprisingly, many cardiologists maintain lenient thresholds for cholesterol and triglyceride levels, allowing them to exceed 180mg/dL and 160mg/dL respectively and overlooking their potential risks. The link between excess body weight and heart ailments further complicates matters, emphasizing the need for intervention before symptoms manifest. Enter the revolutionary concept of zero oil cooking, championed by SAAOL as a formidable weapon against heart disease. Triglycerides, the prime culprits behind coronary blockages, are a



stealthy form of oil that accumulates silently in arteries over time. Every drop of oil added to meals inches closer to compromising heart health. Contrary to the belief that oil adds flavor, oils themselves are tasteless. The true sources of taste lie within the spices and seasonings. In fact, SAAOL boasts a collection of over a thousand oil-free recipes that prove

taste and health need not be mutually exclusive. Natural foods like rice, wheat, pulses, fruits, and vegetables provide essential fats without the added risks of oils. The proposal to tax cooking oils presents a bold solution to the burgeoning health crisis. By recognizing the impact of oils on heart health and advocating for a shift to zero-oil cooking, SAAOL

invites a reevaluation of culinary practices for a future free from heart disease. Innovation is paramount in the battle against heart attacks, and this proposal may offer the bold step needed to save lives and pave the way for healthier generations to come.

The author can be mailed at rkraisamp@gmail.com

## True Essence Of Education

# Beyond Textbooks And Exams



DR. SHIBEN KRISHEN RAINA

**E**ducation, at its core, must prepare individuals not only to excel in their chosen fields but also to contribute meaningfully to society. It must equip them with the skills and values necessary to interact with others, respect diversity, and engage in civic life. As we continue to navigate an ever-changing world, let us remember that the true essence of education lies not in the pages of a textbook but in the hearts and minds of those who strive to make a difference. Let us strive to embody the values of compassion, humility, and service that define true education and shape a brighter future for generations to come.

A little over two decade ago, an extraordinary encounter awaited me at the Alwar railway station in Rajasthan, leaving an indelible mark on my heart and reaffirming the true purpose of education: As my wife and I alighted from the train after a heart-warming visit to Mumbai, a figure of wisdom and grace emerged to assist us. Without a moment's hesitation, the man reached out and took our heavy suitcases from our weary hands. Astonished, I had not even managed to utter a word before this benevolent stranger spoke, "Are you Mr. Raina?" There was a familiarity in his voice, though I could not place it. The stranger continued to carry the heavy suitcases with ease, treading all the way towards the exit-gate. Puzzled, my wife and I exchanged glances, wondering who this mysterious individual could be. Before I could inquire, the stranger politely responded, "You may not remember, but I remember you well, sir. I was your student a long time ago. I later became a lecturer and



recently retired as a principal. I was at the station to bid farewell to someone on the same train you arrived in." Overwhelmed with emotion and curiosity, we boarded an auto-rickshaw arranged by this former student so fondly for us. As the auto-rickshaw navigated the busy streets of Alwar, I pondered over the significance of this unexpected chance-meeting. This former student's act of kindness served as a poignant reminder that true education goes beyond textbooks and exams. True education, as exemplified by this individual, transcends the boundaries of time and continues to shape lives even years after the last

lesson was taught. It instills values of compassion, humility, and service that endure long after formal schooling has ended. In a world where selfishness and negativity can often seem persistent, this encounter offered a beacon of hope, dispelling the notion that there are more "bad" people than "good" in society. The adage, "If you are good, the world is good," resounded in my thoughts, reaffirming my belief that acts of kindness have a ripple effect, inspiring others to follow suit. The former student's gesture not only lightened the physical load of the suitcases but also lifted the weight of

skepticism from my heart. This chance-meeting reminded me that compassion and goodness still persist in our society, often in the most unexpected of places. In the years that followed, the memory of this unforgettable meeting remained imprinted on my mind. I came to the conclusion that the true purpose and essence of education can be found in individuals who, like that venerable figure at the Alwar railway station, make the world a better place through acts of kindness, gentleness, and selflessness. They embody the highest ideals of education, making society proud through their actions.

As already said, education is a transformative journey that transcends the mere acquisition of textbook knowledge. While gaining academic proficiency is undoubtedly important, the true purpose of education is to cultivate well-rounded individuals who are equipped to lead fulfilling and purposeful lives, both personally and as contributing members of society. The real essence of education lies in its ability to shape individuals into virtuous and accomplished human beings. It is a process that nurtures not only intellectual growth but also fosters personal development, ethical reasoning, and a deep sense of social responsibility. Education should ignite a lifelong thirst for knowledge, critical thinking, and a commitment to continuous self-improvement. Moreover, education plays a pivotal role in preparing individuals to actively participate in and contribute to the fabric of society. It should impart the necessary skills to navigate the complexities of human interactions, respect diversity, and engage in civic life. This encompasses developing effective communication abilities, emotional intelligence, teamwork and leadership capabilities, and fostering cultural awareness and empathy. By embracing this holistic approach, education becomes a powerful force that empowers individuals to unlock their full potential, forge meaningful connections with others, and positively impact their communities. It is a catalyst for personal growth, social cohesion, and the advancement of society as a whole. To sum up, the true purpose of education extends far beyond the confines of academic disciplines; it is a transformative journey that equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to lead purposeful and fulfilling lives while actively contributing to the betterment of society.

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Biomass Energy

# What's So Green About Burning Trees?

SAM DAVIS

**R**enewable energy comes from matter that nature produces and replenishes constantly. The power generated through this source does not significantly threaten the environment, especially in comparison with fossil fuels, such as coal, oil, and natural gas, which take more than millions of years to develop and cause severe harm to our planet and climate when burned—fossil fuels "[account] for over 75 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions and nearly 90 percent of all carbon dioxide emissions," according to the United Nations.

Renewable energy derived from wind, solar, geothermal, hydrokinetic, and hydro energy has a much lower environmental impact than fossil fuels. It harnesses the power of readily available elements and does not diminish with use. The production cost of these new technologies has been steadily decreasing. "Technological innovation has continued to help bring down the cost of some renewables; a fact which earlier price prediction models overlooked," according to Matthew Ives, co-author of a report by the University of Oxford's Institute for New Economic Thinking. And because wind and sunlight are inherently free, there are no ongoing feedstock costs.

**Bioenergy, otherwise known as biomass energy, is, however, different.**

This kind of power involves using living matter or matter that was recently been alive. Plants are commonly used as "feedstock" to generate biomass energy; examples are switchgrass, copra, cotton, sunflowers, palm nuts, wheat, sugar cane, canola, rice, and algae. Trees are also used, most often from the forests of the U.S. South, including pine and hardwood species. Materials derived from plants and animals are also a source of bioenergy. These biomass feedstock materials include paper scraps, cotton, wool, yard clippings, animal manure, animal fats, solid municipal waste, and sewage.

These feedstocks are dried out and then converted to energy. Most woody feedstocks are burned or "fired" directly, alone, or with fossil fuel. Other feedstocks are subjected to thermochemical conversion to produce solid, gaseous, and liquid fuels.

In 2019, biomass constituted 60 percent of all renewable energy used in the European Union—following the organization's 2009 pledge to shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy, which led to biomass being classified as a renewable energy source. Most of the wood pellets needed to make this bioenergy are mainly harvested in the United States, with the "American South [emerging] as Europe's primary source of biomass imports."

**Woody Biomass Energy**

A major subtype of bioenergy, woody biomass consists of small wood pellets produced from raw wood materials, including whole trees, branches, and wood dust. Woody biomass is essentially firewood.

Wood pellets can be made from any type of wood. In the past, they were mainly composed of "low-value wood," such as dust or chips left over from other wood products. However, the increasing demand for bioenergy—bioenergy accounts for 55 percent of renewable energy globally while making up for more than 6 percent of the energy supply in the world—has led to wood pellets being made from large logs and whole trees.

Companies that produce wood pellets claim that the biomass industry is harmless. They claim to be extracting less wood than paper and packaging companies. While that may be true, massive growth in the biomass industry (pegged to expand from \$91.3 billion in revenue in 2023 to \$105.7 billion by 2028).

Bioenergy is a huge global industry. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), "About three-quarters of the world's renewable energy use involves bioenergy." Moreover, it "accounted for about 10 percent of total final energy consumption and 1.9 percent of global power generation in 2015." The U.S. was the world's largest producer and exporter of wood pellets in 2021. In 2022, the U.S. exported nearly 9 million tons of wood fuel pellets, mainly to Europe, the UK, and Asia.

Supporters argue that bioenergy is a climate-friendly, sustainable power source that helps local economies. The truth is that wood pellet plants are as dirty and problematic as coal plants. Wood pellets are often burned alongside coal, which only helps prolong the use of coal. The United Nations even cautioned against its extensive use, stating, "[B]ioenergy should only be used in limited applications, given potential negative environmental impacts related to large-scale increases in forest and bioenergy plantations, and resulting deforestation and land-use change."

Burning wood pellets (burning trees) for heat and electricity harms people, biodiversity, and ecosystems. Compared to low-carbon technologies like solar and wind energy, bioenergy is more expensive and harmful to the environment. It requires a constant source of forest biomass—including felled trees—to operate, and the number of trees on the planet is not unlimited. It isn't a solution that can replace fossil fuels or any other high-carbon energy production method; Biomass is not a climate solution.



In fact, a study published in Environmental Research Letters in 2018 pointed out, "[C]arbon dioxide emissions from burning wood are actually higher than burning coal because wood contains more water—even when dried and compressed into a pellet—and is a less efficient source of energy," according to a Wired article.

**Subsidizing Wood Pellets**

In the U.S., the Department of Agriculture (USDA) and state and local governments subsidize bioenergy companies. While the USDA does so in the name of "research," the other government entities tend to offer subsidies in the name of questionable economic benefits.

State and local governments are throwing money at these dirty industries. Most state and local money for bioenergy facilities comes via "economic development" programs. These programs may or may not require reporting on the number of jobs created.

According to Dogwood Alliance, states and the federal government have collectively provided more than \$75 million to subsidize wood pellet production as of 2023, and according to a 2022 article by CoastalReview.org, Enviva, the world's largest wood pellets producer, received nearly \$10 million in state subsidies alone.

Even though millions of dollars may seem like a large sum, U.S. investment in bioenergy is a drop in the bucket compared to the foreign investment it receives. Foreign funding for bioenergy is nearly 700 times greater than domestic spending. Although not all that money ends up in the hands of U.S. companies, a significant portion does.

According to the UK and the EU renewable energy guidelines, woody biomass is officially classified as renewable and carbon neutral, despite pressure from environmental activists to make revisions to this policy in 2023. Utilities have been encouraged to convert coal-fired generators to generators using woody biomass, allowing them to burn wood pellets to help them officially meet the EU air pollution and renewable energy standards.

Also, due to a policy loophole, carbon dioxide emissions for wood pellets are counted during the trees' harvest but not when they are burned. Therefore, if the trees are harvested abroad, they are "free" in terms of carbon accounting. "Countries are not required to count the carbon emissions emitted by wood-fired power plants. That allows woody biofuels to flourish as a climate solution nevertheless," points out a National Geographic article.

For this reason, European and UK power companies chose the southeastern United States, where logging is much less restricted than in Europe, as one of the primary suppliers of wood pellets. Countries

across Europe and Asia import wood pellets from North America because it is a cheap and easy way to meet their climate goals (on paper). Often, governments subsidize these purchases to the tune of billions of dollars.

A 2022 report prepared by Trinomics—an economic policy consultancy—for the nonprofit environmental group Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) found that 10 key European countries—Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany,

Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom—spent more than \$6.8 billion in subsidies supporting bioenergy in 2021—more than in any previous year, amounting to a nearly 33 percent increase from 2015.

"[M]any governments are doubling down on bioenergy and making it central to their plans to tackle climate change, despite its many risks to people and the planet," wrote Debbie Hammel, deputy director of the lands division of NRDC's nature program, and Elly Pepper, deputy director of global biodiversity conservation of NRDC's Nature Program, in 2022.

This hasn't happened without opposition. Climate activists and forest advocates have been lobbying the public, the U.S. government, and the European Parliament on the issue long enough that it finally became a matter of public debate. In September 2022, the European Parliament voted on amendments to its Renewable Energy Directive (RED) to decide whether or not to reject the definition of woody biomass as renewable and carbon neutral. Although the parliament decided to keep the renewable classification, activists were heartened that it was finally being discussed in parliament.

Another favorable decision by European lawmakers was to end some of the "wood-energy subsidies," indicating a recognition among them that the incentives offered by the EU "has contributed to deforestation without curbing greenhouse gas emissions."

**Forests Are More Than Fuel**

Harvesting truckloads of whole trees threatens forests, one of our most important environmental protection systems. Trees provide humans and nonhuman animals with oxygen, clean water, shelter, medicine, protection, and food. In short, they are a vital part of a healthy planet and are necessary for the survival of animal species, including ours.

However, the indiscriminate cutting of trees to supply pellets for energy is "ravaging biodiverse forests and damaging humanity's chances to avert the worst climate catastrophes," according to a letter written by more than 500 scientists and economists to President Joe Biden.

Pointing to the extent of damage these facilities are capable of, NDRDC states, "[n]eeting the production capacity of four of Enviva's wood-pellet facilities in North Carolina and Virginia requires logging almost 50,000 acres of forest per year."

**Clean Water**

Trees are critical to sustaining the quality of natural water supplies because they collect, filter, and release rainwater into bodies of water such as lakes, rivers, and streams. Clear-cutting can cause nitrogen pollutants to leach into water runoff, while salvage logging (logging after a fire) hurts the regulation of ecosystem services like water and soil quality.

"Forest cover has been directly linked to drinking-water treatment costs, so the more forest in a source watershed, the lower the cost to treat that water," writes

Austri Somvichian-Clausen of American Forests, a nonprofit conservation organization based in Washington, D.C. "Forests provide these benefits by filtering sediments and other pollutants from the water in the soil before it reaches a water source."

While biomass is touted as a clean source of energy, an analysis of its water footprint shows that a shift away from fossil energy and toward energy from biomass will put more pressure on freshwater resources.

**Climate Impacts of Wood Pellets**

Forests mitigate the effects of extreme weather. In cases of flooding after a hurricane or storm, they act as a sponge, soaking up excess rainwater. This has the benefit of reducing runoff and damage caused by flooding. In areas with clear-cuts, flooding spreads more quickly and is more dangerous.

Forests also retain water in leaves, branches, twigs, roots, and soil. A large tree can retain 332 gallons of water. The larger the forest, the greater the amount of stored water.

For this reason, forests may play a significant role in alleviating drought and desertification caused by climate change.

They also play an essential role in keeping regional temperatures steady and safe. By absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen, forests help balance the Earth's atmosphere and protect ecosystems, wildlife, and local communities.

They function as important carbon sinks that help mitigate climate change. While biomass energy is promoted as a carbon-neutral energy source, which is a major driver of the international demand for wood pellets, scientific evidence says that wood pellets are not carbon-neutral. They were responsible for 88 million tons of carbon dioxide being emitted due to the production and combustion of biomass in the U.S. at the end of 2020.

Far from preventing global warming, biomass destroys our forests and leads to irreversible environmental impact. For each ton of wood pellets produced, 24,000 acres of forest are destroyed.

Apart from this, every single stage of pellet production involves carbon emissions. The amount of energy used to produce wood pellets varies but can range from 5 to 20 percent of the total carbon emissions generated by the entire lifecycle.

To begin with, logging releases carbon from the soil and leads to reduced carbon sequestration.

Moreover, logging machinery and transport vehicles run on diesel and gasoline. Producing the pellets (pulverizing, drying, milling, compressing, cooling, and packaging them) requires fuel, usually natural gas; shipping the pellets across the Atlantic consumes a lot of diesel. Wood storage can lead to methane emissions. Finally, burning wood pellets releases as much or even more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere as an equivalent unit of coal. "[P]ower plants that burn biomass emit 150 percent more carbon dioxide than those burning coal," according to the Partnership for Policy Integrity.

Moreover, rather than offering a genuine energy alternative, the biomass industry effectively helps companies burn more coal. Many wood pellets are "co-fired" alongside coal in traditional power plants. Power plants can burn wood pellets alongside coal to get renewable energy credits. In other words, they can get credit for "green" energy while still burning coal.

When power plants are allowed to "offset" greenhouse gas emissions by co-firing dirty coal with wood pellets, they're putting more and more carbon into the atmosphere. Despite claims by the biomass industry, bioenergy is far from being "carbon neutral."

Wood pellet production facilities simply release too much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere to help the fight against climate change. They also degrade and destroy natural forests to get their forest biomass material. Collectively, wood pellet production means more air pollution and carbon emissions and fewer natural and healthy forests.

**Clear-cutting, Deforestation, and Degradation**

Deforestation is a devastating side effect of the growing woody mass bioenergy industry. In sourcing wood, the industry conveniently ignores climate change and destroys forest ecosystems. From 2011 to 2023, more than 1 million acres in the U.S.

have already been cut for wood pellets.

The most common type of logging in the U.S., especially in the U.S. South, is clear-cutting, when loggers remove all the wood from an area of forest, leaving bare ground. New trees are either planted or allowed to regrow naturally. Companies clear-cut forests because it's easier for them to move equipment in a cleared area. It's also more cost-effective for the forestry company; a clear-cut ensures that a company gets the greatest amount of wood from a single area. The downside is that the ecological effects of clear-cuts are worse than other types of logging.

According to a 2019 NRDC and Dogwood Alliance report, "Global Markets for Biomass Energy are Devastating U.S. Forests," clear-cutting in the North Atlantic Coastal Plain Biodiversity Hotspot for wood pellet production, "harms many unique plant and animal species, including at least 30 species of birds that are the focus of conservation efforts."

Moreover, logging is the number one cause of carbon emissions from U.S. forests. From 2006 to 2010, a whopping 85 percent of carbon emissions from forests were attributed to logging, which is five times more than carbon lost through fires, insects, disease, drought, or development combined. In 2018, more than half of forest tree-cover loss was due to logging in North America. The number creeps higher when you focus on the U.S. South.

Scientists agree that our forests need to absorb more carbon, and quickly, if we're to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Logging can cause a carbon deficit for up to 200 years as the trees regrow; around 60 of the carbon lost through deforestation and harvesting from 1700 to 1935 has not yet been recovered in our forests. Converting old-growth forests to young plantations in Western Oregon and Washington has released 1.5 to 1.8 million metric tons of carbon into the atmosphere.

**Waste Product or Waste Wood**

The biomass industry often claims it only uses "waste" wood as a feedstock. The implication is that it exclusively uses leftover woodchips, shavings, bark, and off-cuts from industrial lumber activity or scrap wood such as used furniture. In reality, many wood pellet facilities regularly harvest whole trees.

The industry interprets "waste" in a much broader and more self-serving sense than environmental legislation intended: waste wood or "low-value wood" is any tree that isn't perfectly shaped or is the wrong kind of tree for lumber.

In nature, nothing is wasted. A tree has great value if it's left alone in a forest. Even if imperfect, a living tree filters water, cleans the air, and provides a habitat for wildlife. A dead tree provides habitat, cycles nutrients, aids plant regeneration, and prevents erosion.

**Types of Forest Logged**

The biomass industry is not picky when it comes to sourcing trees. In North Carolina, in 2019, bioenergy companies took wood from 27 different types of forests. Forty-one percent of the wood that bioenergy facilities received were loblolly and shortleaf pine forests, which could have been natural or planted.

Anywhere from 15 to 30 percent of forested area around biomass industry facilities comprises planted pine trees—not natural forests. These "pseudo-forests" offer far less ecological value than natural forests. They need toxic herbicides and pesticides to grow successfully, take a long time to grow, and do not offer the same benefits as natural forests, which tend to store more carbon per acre. Planted trees may not lead to carbon benefits even after several decades.

The next-largest category of wood used by the pellet industry includes tree species that grow in moist soil, often near rivers and streams. These trees, including sweetgum, black gum, sycamore, and poplar, make up roughly 28 percent of the feedstock used by the wood pellet industry in North Carolina.

Because old-growth forests are critical to the ecosystems they support, they must be allowed to remain standing. However, because there is no single standard definition of old-growth forests, it's hard to determine whether or not the biomass industry is cutting them down. If we define an old-growth forest as more than 80 years old, the biomass industry will likely be getting wood from those forests. In 2019, for instance, approximately 2 percent of forest harvests in North Carolina were from stands older than 80 years.

The answer is less clear if we define old growth as containing certain ecological characteristics such as downed wood and biodiversity. We simply don't have an easy way to measure those characteristics on a large scale. Companies would need to carry out audits of old-growth characteristics in every forest that they have logged. At the moment, there is no requirement for them to do so. Alarmingly, in 2022, an Enviva whistleblower told Mongabay, "We take giant, whole trees. We don't care where they come from. The notion of sustainably managed forests is nonsense. We can't get wood into the mills fast enough." (C-Counter Currents)

*This article was produced by Earth | Food | Life, a project of the Independent Media Institute.*

# 10 Superfoods That Can Help Reduce Plaque In Arteries

**P**laque in arteries refers to the buildup of fatty deposits, cholesterol, calcium, and other substances on the inner walls of the arteries. This condition is called atherosclerosis and can lead to various cardiovascular diseases. Certain foods can help reduce plaque in arteries and boost heart health, read on as we list some of them.

10 Foods that can reduce plaque in arteries:

**1. Turmeric**

Turmeric contains a compound called curcumin, which has anti-inflammatory properties. It can help reduce inflammation in arteries and prevent the buildup of plaque. Additionally, curcumin improves heart health by reducing the risk of blood clots, lowering LDL (bad) cholesterol levels, and increasing HDL (good) cholesterol levels.

**2. Garlic**

Garlic contains allicin, a compound that helps lower cholesterol levels and prevent plaque formation in arteries. It also reduces blood pressure, improves blood vessel function, and decreases the risk of blood clots.

**3. Berries**

Berries are rich in antioxidants, particularly flavonoids, which have been shown to improve heart health by reducing oxidative stress and inflammation. Berries also help lower blood pressure and improve blood vessel function, reducing the risk of plaque buildup.

**4. Fatty fish**

Fish like salmon, mackerel, and sardines are high in omega-3 fatty acids, which have numerous heart-healthy benefits. Omega-3s help reduce inflammation, lower triglyceride levels, and prevent plaque formation in arteries. They also help regulate heart rhythm and reduce the risk of blood clots.



Avocados are a great source of monounsaturated fats, which can help lower LDL cholesterol levels and increase HDL cholesterol

levels. They are also rich in fibre, potassium, and antioxidants, all of which contribute to heart health by reducing inflammation and preventing plaque buildup.

**6. Green leafy vegetables**  
Vegetables like spinach, kale, and broccoli are packed with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. They help improve heart health by reducing blood pressure, improving blood vessel function, and decreasing inflammation.

**7. Nuts**  
Nuts, such as almonds and walnuts, are high in healthy fats, fibre, and antioxidants. They help reduce LDL cholesterol levels, inflammation, and oxidative stress. Nuts also contain L-arginine, an amino acid that promotes healthy blood vessels.

**8. Olive oil**  
Olive oil is rich in mono-

unsaturated fats and antioxidants, which help reduce inflammation and oxidative stress. Consuming olive oil instead of saturated and trans fats can improve cholesterol levels, decrease blood pressure, and prevent plaque formation in arteries.

**9. Dark chocolate**  
Dark chocolate with a high cocoa content is rich in flavonoids, which improve heart health by reducing inflammation, increasing

HDL cholesterol levels, and decreasing LDL oxidation. However, it is important to consume dark chocolate in moderation due to its calorie content.

**10. Green tea**  
Green tea contains catechins, a type of antioxidant that helps reduce cholesterol levels and prevent plaque formation. It also improves blood vessel function, lowers blood pressure, and reduces the risk of blood clots, ultimately benefiting

heart health. However, it's important to note that while a healthy diet can contribute to heart health, it should be combined with other lifestyle modifications have a greater impact on reducing plaque in arteries and improving overall cardiovascular health. If you have existing heart conditions or concerns, it's recommended to consult with a healthcare professional for personalised advice.

heart health. However, it's important to note that while a healthy diet can contribute to heart health, it should be combined with other lifestyle modifications have a greater impact on reducing plaque in arteries and improving overall cardiovascular health. If you have existing heart conditions or concerns, it's recommended to consult with a healthcare professional for personalised advice.

## FROM THE FRONT PAGE .....

### Education Powerful

from across the country including its Chairman Sh Vinod Dugar; President JATF Sh Narendra Mehta and other office bearers were present.

### Ten Dead As Vehicle

Ramban district hospital. Police have registered a case and further investigation is underway, he added. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Ramban, Anuj Kumar, said the bollard on the road was broken, indicating that the vehicle could have been travelling at a speed of 80 to 100 km/h. Regarding the cause of the accident, he said rain and slippery road conditions may also have led to the incident. "Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) need to be developed with all stakeholders, including NHAI, private construction companies and traffic authorities, as preventive measures for road accidents," he said.

The SSP said drones have been deployed to locate the vehicle, as the gushing water flow in the Nallah has swept it away.

Meanwhile, President Droupadi Murmu expressed her condolences on the tragic incident.

Taking to her official X account she said, "The news of many people getting killed after a vehicle fell into a ditch in Ramban area on Jammu-Srinagar National Highway is very sad. I offer my condolences to the bereaved families."

In a post on X, PMO India said, "PM Modi has expressed grief on the accident in Ramban, Jammu and Kashmir. He extends condolences to the bereaved families and prays for a quick recovery of the injured."

The Prime Minister's Office said an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund would be given to the next of kin of each of the deceased. The injured would be given 50 thousand rupees

J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha expressed shock and grief over the loss of lives in the Ramban road accident.

In a condolence message, the Lt Governor said, "I am deeply shocked to learn of the unfortunate road accident in Ramban today, in which precious lives have been lost. I send my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. I have issued instructions to the District Administration and Divisional Commissioner to render all assistance, as provided in rule, to the kin of victims".

Former Chief Minister and National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah took to X to express his anguish over the accident. "What a terrible tragedy as our highway claims more precious lives. We eagerly await the day when the promised 4 lane highway is completed & people are able to undertake this journey with the assurance of greater safety. May the souls of the deceased rest in peace," he wrote.

Peoples Democratic Party president and former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti took to X and wrote, "Terrible to know about the accident at Ramban

that claimed ten lives. My deepest sympathies to their families & loved ones."

In a statement issued here, J&K Apni Party president Altaf Bukhari expressed grief over the loss of lives in the accident. "I extend my heartfelt condolences to the family members, who have lost their loved ones," he said.

Bukhari demanded immediate eviction of the injured persons in the road accident site, and free of cost medical treatment to the injured persons. "The administration should release the compensation in favour of the next of kin of the deceased persons," he said.

Former chief minister and Chairman, Democratic Progressive Azad Party, Ghulam Nabi Azad also expressed condolences.

J&K BJP Chief Ravinder Raina and J&K Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) President Vikar Rasool also expressed condolences to the bereaved family members. They prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured—(KNO)

### Mercury Drops As

(4.8mm), Katra (3.6mm) and Jammu (1.7mm).

Regarding night temperature, he said, Srinagar recorded a minimum of 8.2°C against 9.8°C on the previous night and it was above normal by 2.1°C for the summer capital of JK for this time of the year.

Qazigund recorded a minimum of 8.4°C against 9.8°C on the previous night and it was 3.7°C above normal for the gateway town of Kashmir, he said.

Pahalgam recorded a low of 5.0°C, same as on the previous night and it was 3.4°C above normal for the famous resort in south Kashmir.

Kokernag, also in south Kashmir, recorded a minimum of 7.7°C against 9.1°C on the previous night and it was 3.0°C above normal, the official said.

Kupwara town recorded a low of 7.3°C against 9.5°C on the previous night and it was 2.8°C above normal there, the official said.

Gulmarg recorded a low of 0.4°C against 3.0°C on the previous night and it was above normal by 1.2°C for the world famous skiing resort in north Kashmir's Baramulla district.

Jammu, he said, recorded a minimum of 19.6°C and it was above normal by 3.0°C for the winter capital of J&K.

Banihal recorded a low of 10.4°C, Batote 10.1°C and Baderwah 9.6°C, he said.

With regard to the forecast, he said, fairly widespread light to moderate rain/snow/TS is expected over Jammu and Kashmir during next 24 hours.

On March 31, he said, partly to generally cloudy weather with intermittent light rain/snow is expected at a few places. Generally dry weather has been forecast thereafter till April 5.

### Avalanche Warning

avoid venturing in the avalanche prone areas till further orders.

In case of any help, the authority can be reached at 112.

### 3 Main Contenders Of

Congress ticket in 2004 and 2009, besides being a three-time former MLA. He switched from the Congress to the BJP in 2014 and was also a minister in the previous PDP-BJP government in Jammu and Kashmir that collapsed in June 2018 after the national party pulled out of the alliance.

Several months before the government's fall, Choudhary Lal Singh resigned from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and floated his own outfit following an uproar over his participation in a rally in support of the accused in a rape-and-murder case of an eight-year-old girl in Kathua in January 2018.

However, he defended his participation in the rally, stating that he was there to "defuse the situation".

On November 7 last year, Choudhary Lal Singh was arrested by the ED in connection with a money laundering case against an educational trust run by his wife. However, he was released on bail three weeks later.

In his latest affidavit, Choudhary Lal Singh put the value of his movable assets at Rs 26,53,027 and immovable assets at Rs 1.53 crore. His wife's movable assets are valued at Rs 76.60 lakh and immovable assets at Rs 1 crore in 2024.

In 2009, he had declared his movable assets of Rs 2,27,378 and immovable assets of Rs 5 lakh, while his wife's immovable and movable assets were declared at Rs 5,62,000 and Rs 5 lakh respectively.

The latest wealth included Rs 45,000 cash in his hand and Rs 40,000 cash with his wife, three bank accounts each for self and his wife having over Rs 11.63 lakh and over Rs 25.40 lakh respectively. The assets also included a residential house in Marheen in the name of his wife and non-agriculture land in Basholi.

Besides the husband and wife own 150 grams and 600 grams of gold worth Rs 9.45 lakh and Rs 10 lakh respectively.

According to the latest affidavit, the income tax returns of Choudhary Lal Singh filed for the last five financial years are pegged at Rs 4,55,870 in 2022-23, Rs 1,50,000 in 2021-22, Rs 4,75,000 in 2020-21, Rs 3,47,500 in 2019-20 and Rs 20,91,486 in 2018-19. His wife has also filed her income tax returns ranging between Rs 6 lakh and Rs 27 lakh during the same period.

The Congress candidate has a liability of Rs 20.34 lakh, including Rs 15.34 lakh loan from UCO bank, while his wife has a liability of a loan of Rs 5 lakh from the Jammu and Kashmir assembly, which they are yet to pay.

According to the affidavit, the CBI has filed a charge sheet against Choudhary Lal Singh in the R B Education trust which was subsequently converted into a case of money laundering by the ED in 2022.

Besides him, there are two more crore-patis, including Union minister Jitendra Singh of the BJP and G M Saroori of the Ghulam Nabi Azad-led Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) in the fray.

Jitendra Singh, who won from the Udhampur seat in the 2014 and 2019 polls,

has put the value of his movable assets at Rs 3.33 crore and immovable assets at Rs 3.71 crore. His wife Manju Singh's movable assets are pegged at Rs 88.88 lakh and immovable assets at Rs 66 lakh.

Saroori of DPAP has movable assets worth Rs 4,446,542 and Rs 1,11,560 in cash. He does not have any jewellery.

His wife has movable assets worth Rs 2,828,247, including 500 grams of gold amounting to Rs 2,671,000 and Rs 151,500 cash. Saroori has immovable assets worth Rs 51,924,450, while his wife has immovable assets of Rs 8,407,755.

The nominations of 12 candidates, including independents, have been found valid.

### Ready To Thwart

"So, the BSF and the Army are alert and ready to foil such attempts," he added.

Yadav said the chances of infiltration attempts also increase as the routes of infiltration open after the snow melts.

"We have put plans in place to dominate those areas. We have made vulnerability maps and the forces will conduct area domination exercises according to that. The forces are capable to foil any such attempts," he said.

The BSF IG said about 65 companies of the BSF are deployed in the hinterland in Kashmir along with the Jammu and Kashmir Police to make the security grid stronger.

"About 65 companies of BSF are deputed in North, South and Central Kashmir ranges and are making security grid stronger and conducting area domination exercises along with the J-K Police. Whatever we have to do to ensure smooth elections, we will do that," Yadav said.

### Jamia Records Huge

auspicious time. One of the devotees, Mohammad Umer said, Ramadan holds immense importance for us, and it's essential for authorities to uphold our religious rights.

He added despite the weather challenges, the community's spirit remains strong, reflecting our unwavering commitment to our faith.

Moreover, as the holy month progresses, residents of Srinagar continue to unite in prayer and reflection.(KNO)

### Avalanche Hits

Meanwhile, SSP Ganderbal Sandeep Gupta said that two vehicles that were trapped under the avalanche were rescued while no loss of life or injuries was reported. (KNS)

### No One Can Stop Lotus

after August 05, 2019. They are supporting pro-people initiatives of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. March 7 rally at Bakshi Stadium Srinagar is eye opener for regional political parties. No one can stop Lotus to bloom in every house of J&K," Chugh added.

FROM SUPERFOOD MILLET TO FINDING INNER PEACE

# PM Modi's key lifestyle mantras for Bill Gates

IAN S

**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a candid conversation with Microsoft Co-founder Bill Gates, not only discussed AI, climate change, healthcare and digital inclusion but also gave him some useful tips about how to remain healthy while finding inner peace in hectic times.

When the billionaire philanthropist Gates asked PM Modi how he maintains such energy levels despite working almost round the clock, the Prime Minister replied that he feels a sense of relaxation that comes naturally to him.

"I find my inner peace through a spiritual practice instilled in me by my teachers which energises me to a great strength. This energy does not stem from physical strength but my dedication and emotional connection to the mission at hand, focusing solely on it," PM Modi told Gates. "Additionally, my body



has adapted to little rest. I sleep for less hours, work late into the night, yet wake up early, feeling refreshed. This resilience partly comes from a period spent in the Himalayas, where I followed the tradition of bathing in early morning hours which has conditioned my body over time," the Prime Minister explained. "As a result, I don't need conventional methods to relax".

When a curious Gates asked PM Modi how millet is changing the way vegetarian food is looked at globally, the Prime Minister said that promoting millet can be a big way forward as switching to it can bring several health benefits.

"I have seen a significant increase in millet production. Many reputable companies are now offering millet-based products, enhancing its value and

making it both common and trendy. Even five-star hotels have introduced special millet menus. And it is improving the livelihoods of small farmers," said PM Modi.

"Millet is a superfood. I celebrated 2023 as the Year of Millet with the UN. Millet has great benefits. It grows in barren land. It needs minimal water and does not require any fertiliser," the Prime Minister further explained.

## India has democratised technology, aims to end digital divide: PM Modi

IAN S

**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said technology is meant to empower people from all strata of the society and India has achieved democratisation of new technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) to help millions of people especially in rural parts of the country.

In an exclusive conversation with Microsoft Co-founder and billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates, PM Modi said that for him, the best use of technology is in areas like healthcare, agriculture and education. "We have established 2 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandir across the country where people can get quality healthcare from medical specialists from best hospitals with the use of modern technology," PM Modi told Gates.

Launched under the umbrella of Ayushman Bharat, Ayushman Arogya Mandir scheme has the goal to provide comprehensive, affordable and quality healthcare services to citizens across urban and rural areas.

The Namu Drone Didi and Lakhpati Didi initiatives are integral to the Prime Minister Modi's vision of fostering economic empowerment and financial autonomy among women, especially in rural areas.

"When I speak to women involved in the 'Namu Drone Didi' initiative, they feel so happy that they could not ride a bicycle but now, they are using drones in the fields and have become innova-



tors of modern agricultural methods," PM Modi emphasised. The Prime Minister further said that he will not let digital divide affect people in the country and India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) is a shining example for the world. "I want to give the best education to children with the use of new technologies. We should embrace digital technology to enhance daily life for everyone," PM Modi added.

During his interaction with Gates, PM Modi covered a spectrum of critical topics ranging from AI to India's impressive advancements in digital technology.

Their conversation delved into the transformative role of technology in healthcare, showcasing India's innovative use of drones to empower the 'Nari Shakti'.

They also explored India's remarkable success in combating the Covid-19 pandemic with indigenously developed and produced vaccines, highlighting the nation's self-reliance in crucial healthcare solutions.

Moreover, they touched upon India's proactive stance in addressing climate change, underscoring the country's commitment to sustainable development.

## Sales turnover of Govt e-Marketplace doubles to Rs 4 lakh crore in 2023-24

IAN S

**NEW DELHI:** The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) has closed the 2023-24 financial year with a Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) of a staggering Rs 4 lakh crore which is double that of the corresponding figure for the previous fiscal year (2022-23), the Commerce and Industry Ministry said on Friday.

"This testifies to the portal's unique digital capabilities that have facilitated greater efficiency, transparency, and seamlessness in public procurement," the ministry said. Nearly 50 per cent of this GMV has been attributed to the procurement of services, displaying a remarkable surge of 205 per cent in the segment over the previous year.

"By creating access to the market, GeM has been exceptionally successful in breaking down the cartel of established service providers and paved the way for small domestic entrepreneurs to participate in government tenders from anywhere at any time," the ministry stated.

The contribution made by central entities including ministries and Central public sector enterprises have spurred the huge growth in GMV. These government organisations have contributed to nearly 85 per cent of the total Rs 4 lakh crore milestone.

The Ministry of Coal, Ministry of Power and Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas and their subsidiaries have emerged as the highest procuring entities at the central level.

At the same time, there

has also been an increased engagement from states that has helped in this phenomenal growth in GMV. The highest procuring states like Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi, have contributed to surpassing the public procurement target for this year.

GeM's vast network of 1.5 lakh+ government buyers and 21 lakh sellers and service providers have made this incredible feat possible. By integrating 89421 Panchayats and 760+ Cooperatives within its procurement ecosystem, GeM has facilitated sustainable procurement while ensuring optimisation in public spending at the very last level of administration, the official statement said.

"Through its inclusive initiatives like 'Vocal for Local', 'One District, One Product', 'Startup Runway', 'Womaniya' etc., GeM has provided a level-playing field for domestic businesses to grow and thrive. Of the 4 lakh crore GMV, orders nearly 50 per cent have been awarded to marginalised seller segments such as artisans, weavers, craftsmen, MSEs, especially women-led and SC/STs, SHGs, FPOs and Startups.

GeM's collaboration with 5.2 lakh+ CSCs and 1.5 lakh+ India Post offices has served as a phenomenal force in maximising outreach and capacity-building at micro levels," said GeM CEO PK Singh.

He said GeM has become a one-stop shop for seamless public procurement as it offers over 12070 product categories and 320+ service categories.

## Talks with Ukrainian FM focused on conflict with Russia: EAM Jaishankar

IAN S

**NEW DELHI:** In an open and wide-ranging conversation with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba on Friday, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar discussed the Kyiv's ongoing conflict with Russia and exchanged views on various initiatives.

In a first high-level visit by a Ukrainian leader since the start of Russian invasion of Kyiv in 2022, Kuleba began his two-day official visit to India on Thursday to reinvigorate bilateral ties with India.

"An open and wide-ranging conversation with Ukraine FM @DmytroKuleba this afternoon. Our discussions focused on the ongoing conflict and its wider ramifications. Exchanged views on various initiatives in that context," EAM Jaishankar said in a post on X.

"Spoke as well on global and regional issues of interest to both of us. Reiterated our commitment

to strengthen the overall relationship, including bilateral cooperation," the minister added.



In his opening remarks at the meeting at Hyderabad House, S. Jaishankar said that Kuleba's visit gives India "an opportunity to understand the situation in your own region. And I look forward to hearing your perspectives on that".

Speaking of "momentum" in the bilateral relationship, the EAM said that the two nations have had interactions at various levels in recent months. "I am glad to see some of our bilateral mechanisms have also met and this has created a certain momentum in our bilateral relationship," he said.

On his maiden visit to India, Kuleba said in a post on X on Thursday that he is in India to build on the dialogue between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Ukraine President

Volodymyr Zelensky for peace.

Further, he said that his talks in India will include the peace formula proposed by Zelensky, which follows a 10-point plan to restore just and long-lasting peace in Ukraine.

Kuleba's visit comes just as Prime Minister Modi spoke to Presidents of the warring Ukraine and Russia over the telephone this month.

In his talks with Zelensky, Prime Minister Modi highlighted that India supports all efforts for an early and peaceful resolution of all issues between Kyiv and Moscow.

The Prime Minister added that India would continue to do everything within its means to support a peaceful solution as Zelensky appreciated the country's continued humanitarian assistance for the people of Ukraine.

LS POLLS

## 2.54 crore voters for Phase 1 in Rajasthan; 13 above 120 years of age

IAN S

**JAIPUR:** Around 2.54 crore voters will exercise their franchise in the 12 Lok Sabha constituencies in Rajasthan that will go to the polls in the first phase on April 19.

According to the final list of voters for the first phase of polling released by the Election Commission, there are 13 voters above the age of 120.

Over 45 lakh voters are aged 60 years or more. Of these, over 23 lakh are women, while over 21 lakh are men.

Jaipur City, Jaipur Rural, Dausa, Nagaur, Karauli-Dholpur, Bharat-



pur, Alwar, Sikar, Jhunjhunu, Churu, Bikaner and Ganganagar are the 12 seats that will go to the polls on April 19.

Chief Electoral Officer Praveen Gupta held a meeting with the representatives of all the recognised political parties at the Secretariat on Thursday, during which he informed about the publication of

integrated voter lists for the Lok Sabha constituencies where polling will be held in the first phase.

Gupta said the total number of general voters is 2,53,15,541 for the first phase, of which 1,32,89,538 are male voters, 1,20,25,699 are female voters, while 304 voters belong to the third gender.

As many as 7,98,520 are first-time voters aged 18-19 years, while 2,51,250 persons with disabilities are eligible to exercise their franchise during the first phase of polling.

Gupta said that among the 12 Lok Sabha constituencies that will vote in the first phase, Jaipur has the highest number of voters at 22,87,350, while Dausa has the least number of voters at 18,99,304.

Jhunjhunu has the highest number of voters above 100 years of age -- 1,802.

Gupta also said that 24,370 polling stations, including 719 auxiliary polling stations, have been set up for the first phase of voting.

## Magisterial probe ordered into Mukhtar Ansari's death

IAN S

**LUCKNOW:** Uttar Pradesh government has ordered a magisterial investigation into the death of Mukhtar Ansari.

The inquiry will be conducted by a three-member team, said a government spokesman.

Mukhtar Ansari's son Umar Ansari claimed that the gangster-turned-politician was subjected to "slow poisoning" in prison.

A similar claim was also made by Ansari's brother and Ghazipur MP Afzal Ansari. However, the charge has been denied by



the authorities.

Last week, Mukhtar, the former five-time MLA from Mau, submitted an application in Barabanki court, saying he was given some "poisonous substance" along with his food.

Ansari claimed that on March 19, his nerves and limbs started to pain after he consumed the food.

Police officials said that Ansari's post-mortem is underway and is also being videographed. His viscera will be preserved if needed, the spokesman said.

Meanwhile, preparations are underway for his cremation at the Kalibagh burial ground in Mohamadabad in Ghazipur district. The convoy carrying Ansari's body will start its journey after Friday prayers, said a district official.

Section 144 has been imposed across Uttar Pradesh, banning large gatherings. Additional security personnel have been deployed in Banda,

Mau, Ghazipur and Varanasi districts.

Mukhtar Ansari was brought to the Rani Durgavati Medical College in Banda from the district jail in "an unconscious state" on Thursday. A team of nine doctors attended him but he died of cardiac arrest.

On Tuesday, Mukhtar Ansari was hospitalised for around 14 hours after he complained of abdominal pain.

Ansari was born into a family with roots in the independence struggle. His grandfather served as the Indian National Congress President in 1927.

**Government of Jammu & Kashmir UT**

## OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PW(R&B) DIVISION CHRARI-SHARIEF

Near: Nowhar (Iqbal Abad) Chrar-I-Sharief E-mail: xennbchrar23@gmail.com

**NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER SINGLE COVER SYSTEM**

**E-NIT No. 32/RNB/CHRAR of 2023-24** **Dated: 28/03/2024**

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, UT J&K, e-tenders (In single cover system) are invited on Percentage basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:-

SN	Name of Work	Adv. Cost (Rs. In Lacs) Incl. GST	Cost of T/Doc. (In Rupees)	Earnest Money (In Rupees)	Time of completion	M.H OF Account	Class Of Contractor
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Construction of 37 Ramps at various Polling Stations in Chrar-I-sharief Division.	2.62	200	5240	10 days	Lok Sabha Election, 2024	D

Position of AAA: - Accorded  
Position of funds: - Committed  
Position of TS: - Sanctioned  
Project Authority: District Development Commissioner Budgam

- The Bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website [www.jktenders.gov.in](http://www.jktenders.gov.in) as per schedule of dates given below:-

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	28/03/2024
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	28/03/2024
3	Bid submission Start Date	28/03/2024
4	Bid Submission End Date	03/04/2024 upto 4.00 PM.
5	Date & time of opening of Technical Bids	04/04/2024 at 11:30 AM in the office of Executive Engineer R&B Division Chrarisharief

Note :- The Bidders are advised to read all conditions laid down in the NIT carefully before uploading soft copy. Any short fall found in the soft copy will render the Bid rejected.

As per Circular issued by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir Civil Sector Finance department vide No.OM No.A/24(2017)-651 dtd.07-06-2018 which reads as under :-

- Furnishing of Hard Copies of bids immediately after submission of e-tenders is dispensed with. The same should be obtained only from the Bidder who's declared 1st Lowest (L-1) after opening of financial bids.
- The Cost of tender document should be collected by introducing Treasury Challan (Receipt).

- All bidders shall upload the following information and documents along with qualification criteria/ qualification information with their bids:-
  - All bidders must submit copies of original documents defining their constitution/legal status, place of registration, and principal place of business, as well as their cell phone number and e-mail address.
  - A valid Contractor/ Firm Registration Certificate issued by a competent authority in accordance with the Contractor Registration Act with latest Renewal. Only digitally issued and renewed contractor registration cards through [jkpwdoms.jk.gov.in](http://jkpwdoms.jk.gov.in) shall be accepted for contractors registered with PW(R&B) department. However, contractor's registered with other departments must have online registration on [www.jkpwdoms.gov.in](http://www.jkpwdoms.gov.in)
  - Valid Treasury Challan and Earnest money
  - Valid GSTIN Registration/No. & PAN Card/No.
  - All bidders shall mandatorily upload Verification Certificate from Concerned Chief Engineer/ Superintending Engineer of Enlistment registration card. Non submission of the same shall render the bid non-Responsive. However, digitally issued Contractor Registration Cards shall be verified online on [www.jkpwdoms.jk.gov.in](http://www.jkpwdoms.jk.gov.in) and need not necessarily upload verification certificate.
  - Scanned Copy of GSTIN Registration and latest clearance certificate FORM GSTR-3B i.e. latest clearance certificate FORM GSTR-3B of the latest quarter/ latest Month to the Issuance of NIT i.e. Oct-Dec 2023-24/ Feb-2024.

Illustrations: -

- For the NIT issued after 20<sup>th</sup> of this month, the bidder has to upload the latest clearance certificate FORM GSTR-3B of the latest quarter i.e. Oct-Dec 2023-24 / Latest month i.e. Feb-2024.
- The bidder at his own responsibility and risk should visit and examine the site of work and its surroundings before submission of bid.
- Non attendance of pre-bid meeting will not be cause of disqualification of the bidder.
- All documents relating to the bid shall be in the English Language.
- The tender/bid is liable to rejection if it does not fulfill the requirements as laid down in NIT.
- 50% of the normal deposits (Deducted at 10% from running bills) to be released after virtual completion of the work and balance 50% after completion of DLP.
- All other terms conditions are as per PWD Form 25 (Double agreement Form).

No.: 3040-49 DIPK-18252-23  
Dated: 28/03/2024 DT: 29/03/2024

Executive Engineer  
R&B Division Chrarisharief

# Want to fill gaps created by shortcomings of teachers with technology: PM Modi

AGENCIES

**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said he wants to bring the best education for children in the country and fill any gaps created by shortcomings of teachers with technology.

In an interaction with philanthropist and Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates, Modi said that visual content is being developed to cater to children's interests. "I want to bring the best education to our children. The shortcomings of teachers, I want to fill with technology. If a child's interest lies in visuals, in storytelling, we are developing content in that direction. I have conducted some surveys, I have seen, children are really enjoying it," he said.

In the candid, free-wheeling chat, Modi spoke at length on how India has



democratised technology for the benefit of its citizens, embracing the power of digital for improving lives, and exuded confidence that the country will take remarkable strides in the fourth industrial revolution, that has digital at its core.

Modi also cautioned that a powerful technology like AI in unskilled, untrained hands holds significant risk of misuse, as he advocated the need for clear 'dos and don'ts' and use of watermarks on AI-generated con-

Today, I want to bring the digital facilities to villages," he said.

Lauding the "digital government", Gates said India is not just adapting technology but is actually leading the way and some of the digital systems create efficiency by getting rid of the middlemen, which is super beneficial.

"I sometimes say that I want to run such a government, as far as the middle class is concerned, the government should move out of their life, there shouldn't be any need for the government in their life. Where there is a poor person, where the government is needed, there the government should be fully there. But where there is no need, without reason the government keeps doing - bring this, bring that, do this, do that. So, that will stop," Modi said in response.

# India, world's No 1 country in digital payments: Anurag Thakur

IANS

**NEW DELHI:** Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Anurag Thakur on Friday explained in great detail about India's giant strides on economic, infrastructure and technological fronts while making an elaborate presentation on the swift changes during ten years of Modi government.

The I&B Minister briefing the Viskit Bharat Ambassador event participants also took a moment to call out the incompetency of previous governments, especially on the digital front and told the audience that today India enjoys a numero uno position in the world in digital payments.

An undated video clip of P Chidambaram, the acclaimed finance minister of the UPA era, run during the event showed him taking taunts over the possible penetration of digital payments into villages and the rural ecosystem. The minister said that



the previous governments failed because they didn't have the will but the Modi government's vision and focus turned the country into a digital economy.

"Today, India is world's no 1 digital payment country. It alone accounts for 46 per cent of digital payments in the world. Rupy Cards are facilitating Indian citizens to make payments in foreign nations in our own currency. All that looked far beyond possible is reality," he said.

Anurag Thakur also listed out many groundbreaking initiatives of

He said that today India boasts more than 100 unicorns, and multi-national firms are setting up bases for semi-conductors and chips making. "All this has been possible because of government's faith in our youth power and encouragement of their potential," he added.

"India was the second largest mobile phone importer some years ago, today it is the second biggest mobile phone manufacturer. iPhone manufacturing company has accelerated its production in the country to unprecedented levels and very soon, India would be a hub for the same," he pointed out.

Highlighting the improvement in the plight of marginalised workers, he said that schemes like PM SVANidhi and Vishwakarma Yojana have gone to great lengths in handholding the workers belonging to lower strata including street vendors, masons, craftsmen and supporting them in their business endeavours.

## Radio isotopes to remain temporarily suspended at SKIMS: MS



KNO CORRESPONDENT

**SRINAGAR:** Authorities in Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) Soura, said that Radioisotopes will remain temporarily suspended in the first week of April.

Medical Superintendent, SKIMS Soura, Dr Farooq Jan has requested the public to cooperate as radio isotope based scans cannot be undertaken during this period.

"The general public is informed that there will be no supply of iodine -131 (Radio Isotopes) for the 1st week of April 2024 as has been communicated by BRIT Mumbai due to issues with their generators and hence erratic availability of Iodine-131 in the country. As such Iodine -131 based scans done at Nuclear Medicine cannot be undertaken. We request people to cooper-

ate and the inconvenience is regretted," said Medical Superintendent SKIMS Soura in public notice.

Radioisotopes are an essential part of radiopharmaceuticals and they have been used routinely in medicine for more than 30 years.

Officials said that radioisotopes are used in a variety of ways to improve productivity and gain information that cannot be obtained in any other way. They said that those who heavily depend on Nuclear Medicine for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes will suffer due to unavailability of radio isotopes at the valleys premier hospital.

They said that there is a need for robust planning and approach required so that such back up facilities may be put in place so that patients won't suffer at all—(KNO)

LOK SABHA POLLS

## DEO Rajouri briefs political representatives about MCC

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**RAJOURI:** District Election Officer (DEO), Rajouri, Om Prakash Bhagat Friday convened an important meeting with representatives from different political parties to brief them about Model Code of Conduct (MCC).

The objective of the meeting was to underscore the importance of adhering to highest ethical standards outlined in the MCC to be observed by all in Lok Sabha Elections 2024.

The meeting served as a platform to sensitize political parties about the imperative nature of upholding integrity, fairness, and transparency throughout the electoral process.

The discussions held during the meeting underscored the collective commitment of all political stakeholders towards fostering an environment characterized by ethical conduct, accountability, and respect for democratic principles as per ECI guidelines.

The DEO urged all political parties to refrain from criticizing any party based on unverified facts and cautioned against making



personal comments or engaging in caste and communal politics.

Furthermore, the DEO also urged all political parties to intimate the venue and time of their meetings and rallies to the police and administration in advance. Additionally, the DEO asked the party representatives that polling agents should strictly adhere to the guidelines and refrain from entering the polling stations.

The District Election Officer reiterated the pivotal role of political parties in upholding the democratic ethos of the nation and emphasized the need for cooperation and adherence to the guidelines set forth in MCC. He urged all parties to conduct themselves with utmost integrity and responsibility, thereby setting a positive precedent for a free, fair, and peaceful electoral process.

The DEO expressed confidence in the cooperation in conduct of political parties to the guidelines outlined, thereby fostering conducive environment for the smooth conduct of the Lok Sabha Elections.

A detailed briefing was given regarding mandatory pre-certification as per MCMC norms as required by all political parties/candidates for all issues of advertisements and paid news. The political representatives were asked to ensure that with MCMC certification no advertisement is allowed.

Officers who attended the meeting were ADC Rajeev Kumar Khajuria; ACR, Mohammad Jhangir Khan; Dy DEO, Shakeel Ahmed; DPO, Mohammad Nawaz Choudhary and DSWO, Wakeel Ahmed Bhatt besides representatives of political parties were also present.

## 3 day Tawi Sahitya Lok Utsav begins at Abhinav Theatre

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU:** Tawi Sahitya Lok Utsav, a celebration of regional literature and culture, began here Friday. The event was organised by the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages (JKAACL) in collaboration with Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA), Jammu.

Suresh Kumar Gupta, Principal Secretary, Department of Culture, launched the festival in presence of Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner, Jammu, Deepika Kumari, Secretary in Department of Culture, Trishla Kundal, Special Secretary, Department of Culture, Sanjeev Rana, Additional Secretary, JKAACL and Shruti Awasthi, Director, IGNCA, Jammu.

The Principal Secretary said that the main aim of the festival is to celebrate Jammu and Kashmir's cultural diversity and literary heritage through interactive sessions, cultural performances and creative competitions.

The Divisional Commissioner emphasized the significance of promoting the region's cultural legacy, fostering an atmosphere of cultural harmony and artistic expression. The inaugural day was



marked by thought-provoking author interactions, captivating mushairas, short story sessions, insightful book launches and an array of creative competitions and exhibitions.

The Authors Interaction sessions, held at the Main Stall of JKAACL, provided a platform for literary dialogue and cultural exchange, featuring prominent writers from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Renowned Dogri writer Padma Shri Mohan Singh graced the event, sharing his insights and literary contributions, moderated by Ravinder Koul. Similarly, Khalid Hussain, a distinguished Punjabi writer and Dr. Adarsh Prakash, a noted Hindi writer, engaged the audience with their experiences and literary prowess, moderated by Surinder Kour Neer and Professor S.K. Mishra, respectively. Professor Shad Ramzan,

a prominent Kashmiri writer, shared reflections on Kashmiri culture and heritage, moderated by Bindiya Tickoo.

The event also featured various programs such as Hindi, Gojri and Dogri Mushairas, celebrating the poetic heritage of these languages. The release of "Hindi AalochanKosh" marked a significant literary event, reflecting scholarly pursuits in Hindi language and literature.

The Authors interaction sessions exemplified the spirit of literary exchange and cultural celebration, showcasing the rich tapestry of languages and literature in the region. Furthermore, various competitions and exhibitions including poetry recitation, photography exhibition, painting competition, and rangoli provided emerging talents with a platform to showcase their creativity.

## SVEEP team spreads voters awareness across Banihal



GMK NEWS NETWORK

**RAMBAN:** On the directions of District Election Officer (DEO), Ramban, Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary, a series of awareness programs were held Friday under Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation program (SVEEP) at different institutions and locations of the district.

Resource Persons and members of the district SVEEP Cell dispersed across key locations and institutions such as Doli-gam Banihal, Bus Stand Banihal and other adjoining areas, sensitized the gatherings about voting rights. They also engaged with devotees after Friday prayers in Banihal town.

Through comprehensive presentations, they elucidated the importance of

inclusive voter participation in safeguarding democratic principles and fortifying the electoral framework.

The awareness programmes were conducted under the supervision of District Nodal Officer SVEEP, Mohammad Ashfaq Kanji.

The events, conducted in the Sub-division of Banihal, aimed to uplift citizens' involvement in the electoral process, General election Lok Sabha, 2024 and cultivate a culture of civic responsibility.

The campaign emphasized the pivotal role of strong civic engagement in shaping the democratic landscape. The vibrant participation of youth, alongside members of the public and election personnel, underscored the collective commitment to fostering an informed electorate.

## DC G'bal discusses road safety measures on SANJY route



GMK NEWS NETWORK

**GANDERBAL:** The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Shyambir Friday chaired a meeting to discuss the issues pertaining to road safety and infrastructure advancement along the Shri Amarnathji Yatra route via Baltal.

The meeting delved into pivotal agenda items, culminating in strategic decisions aimed at fortifying road conditions and safeguarding commuters.

A pivotal focal point of the meeting revolved around the formulation of an exhaustive blueprint for expediting the completion of the route/road intersection. Stressing the urgency of prompt action, the DC set a deadline of April 3, 2024, for the submission of the plan.

Addressing apprehensions regarding road safety, deliberations ensued regarding the installation of crash barriers and safety illumination, particularly

along SSG Road.

The significance of these installations in averting accidents and augmenting visibility was underscored, aligning with established standards observed on other segments of the National Highway.

Meeting also discussed the dilapidated state of specific road stretches, notably from Hung Park to Shuk-kari. The concerned stakeholders were tasked with taking requisite measures to ameliorate road infrastructure in these areas, ensuring smoother and safer passage for travelers.

Moreover, strategies were delineated to mitigate pollution stemming from the transportation of construction materials.

Additionally, provisions were made to enrich amenities for tourists, encompassing the optimal utilization of parking facilities and identification of designated drop-off points to forestall road encroachments.

## H&H Deptt kick-starts Exhibition at Emporium Building



GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** The Department of Handicrafts and Handloom Kashmir Friday organized a calligraphy Exhibition at the Government Arts Emporium, Srinagar to spotlight the remarkable craftsmanship of Solih Alnajjari, a well known figure in the calligraphy field.

The opening reception attracted a large audience, with visitors relishing the artistic displays and interacting with the talented artists.

Calligraphy over the years is receiving focus and recognition at both the UT and national levels

Speaking at the event, the Joint Director of Handicrafts and Handloom Kashmir, Parvaz Sajad Ganie reiterated the department's commitment to providing a platform for local artisans to showcase their talents and boost sales.

Such initiatives, he emphasized, play a crucial role in preserving the legacy of handicrafts and providing exposure and livelihood support to local artisans.

The department plans to organize many more such exhibitions throughout the valley to connect artisans with both local and global markets.

## Schools cannot force students to buy books, uniform from a specific shop: DSEJK

ALI ASAD

**SRINAGAR:** The Directorate of School Education in Jammu and Kashmir has issued stern directives to private schools, warning against unauthorized fee hikes and unfair practices for the upcoming academic session of 2024-25. Schools found guilty of increasing tuition fees without proper permission may face fines of up to Rs 1 lakh, with the possibility of registration cancellation.

According to the newly issued instructions, private schools must seek approval from the Fee Fixation Committee before implementing any fee hikes. Failure to comply with this requirement could result in fines ranging from Rs 50,000 to Rs 1 lakh. Additionally, schools are prohibited from mandating parents to purchase uniforms and books from specific vendors, promoting fair competition among suppliers.

Furthermore, the circular emphasizes that private

schools are only permitted to charge tuition, annual, transport fees, and voluntary special purpose fees for activities like picnics and excursions. Any additional fees imposed beyond these categories will be deemed unauthorized. "In light of these directives, the Directorate aims to uphold transparency and accountability within the education system, ensuring that students and parents are protected from undue financial burdens and discriminatory practices," said a senior Officer privy to the development.

Strict enforcement measures are outlined in the Jammu and Kashmir School Education Act 2022, with provisions for initiating action against schools found in violation of its regulations. The Directorate has urged parents to step forward and report any instances of non-compliance or unfair practices to the Chief Education Officer of the district or the Directorate of School Education—(KNO)