


Good Morning Kashmir

15th Year Of Publication

Office of LG J&K
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J&K is at the forefront of promoting sustainable tourism. For this holy Yatra, we've worked a solution through fusion of tech & human resource. Our integrated strategy aims at Zero-waste, clean & efficient sanitation system & complete protection to natural resources & environment.

Srinagar • Sunday 23, June 2024 • Vol: 15 • Issue No: 145 • Page: 08 • Price: ₹ 2/- (Air Surcharge for Delhi, Jammu & Ladakh 50/- Paisa) RNI No. JKENG/2010/36998

UAPA Tribunal Confirms Ban on TeH, Muslim League

AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: A tribunal set up under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) on Saturday confirmed the Centre's decision to impose a five-year ban on the Muslim League Jammu Kashmir (Masarat Alam faction) and Tehreek-e-Hurriyat, Jammu and Kashmir.

The one-member tribunal of Delhi High Court judge Sachin Datta was constituted under the stringent anti-terror law in January to assess whether there was "sufficient cause" behind the imposition of the ban.

Upholding the ban, the tribunal held the two organisations were carrying out secessionist activities in the valley with help from across the border to realise the merger of Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan and establish Islamic rule in the Union Territory.

The tribunal also upheld the Centre's contention that the organisations were acting on behalf of Pakistan-based terrorist organisations such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Hizbul Mujahideen, and were giving constant on ground support for carrying out militant operations in the valley.

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati and advocate Rajat Nair represented the government before the tribunal.

The Muslim League Jammu Kashmir (Masarat Alam faction) was declared outlawed for five years by the government under the UAPA on December 27, 2023 on account of being involved in anti-national and secessionist activities in the Union Territory.

Founded by deceased separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Tehreek-e-Hurriyat (TeH) was outlawed for five years on December 31, 2023. The organisation was banned for fomenting terrorism and spreading anti-India propaganda in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Union Home Ministry, while imposing the ban, had said the leaders and members of TeH have been involved in raising funds through various sources, including Pakistan and its proxy organisations, for perpetrating unlawful activities, including supporting terrorist



Security measures tightened ahead of Amarnath Yatra



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: With the Amarnath Yatra set to begin in a week, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday said security arrangements have been tightened and facilities improved for the successful conduct of the pilgrimage.

Jammu Additional Director General of Police Anand Jain has reviewed security arrangements along the Jammu-Srinagar national highway, emphasising the need for the highest level of alertness to scuttle any attempt by terrorists to disrupt the pilgrimage, officials said on Saturday.

Taking part in the virtual 'Pratham Puja' which marks the ceremonial commencement of the Amarnath Yatra -- at the Raj Bhawan in Srinagar on Saturday morning, Sinha said 'darshan' for the pilgrims across the country will start on June 29 when the yatra commences.

LG performs Pratham Puja of Amarnath Ji Yatra

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Saturday performed the 'Pratham Puja' to mark the ceremonial commencement of the Annual Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra, through video conferencing.

The Lt Governor sought the blessings of Baba Amarnathji and prayed for the good health, progress, and well-being of all the people.

Interacting with the media persons, the Lt Governor highlighted the efforts of the Administration and the Shrine Board to bring qualitative improvement in the overall Yatra experience for devotees.

"Officials of Shri Amarnath Ji Shrine Board and concerned departments are

HAJJ-2024 First batch of 320 J&K pilgrims return home



MUBASHIR ALAM WANI

SRINAGAR: As the annual Hajj-2024 concluded earlier this week, the first batch of pilgrims from Jammu and Kashmir landed at Srinagar International Airport on Saturday evening.

The first batch of 320 pilgrims from Jammu and Kashmir returned from the Haj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia on Saturday, officials said.

Executive Officer J&K Haj Committee, Dr. Shujahat Qureshi said that the first batch of 320 Hajj pilgrims returned today and were received at the Srinagar International Airport by J&K Hajj Committee members, Airport authorities and senior officials from police and civil administration.

"One flight was scheduled today, in which 320 pilgrims—166 males and 156 females—

J&K at forefront of promoting sustainable tourism: LG

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Saturday launched various Swachh initiatives of Directorate of Rural Sanitation for Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra 2024, at Raj Bhawan today.

In his address on the occasion, the Lt Governor commended the Directorate of Rural Sanitation. He said the new logo, Swachh Yatra Anthem, Website and mobile application will greatly benefit our objective of Zero-Waste Pilgrimage.

The Lt Governor highlighted the integrated strategy of the UT Administration and Shri Amarnath Ji Shrine Board aimed at Zero-waste, clean and efficient sanitation system and complete protection to

Doodhpathri attracts 70,000 visitors on 4 days of Eid



NAVEED UL HAQ

BUDGAM: Doodhpathri, a picturesque place in central Kashmir's Budgam district has witnessed a massive rush of visitors during the Eid-ul-Adha celebrations, with nearly 70,000 people visiting over the course of four days.

Chief Executive Officer of the Doodhpathri Development Authority (DDA), Dr Nargis Suraya said the location has been a major draw for festival-goers.

Providing the official data, she said that on June 17, a total of 9,103 people visited Doodhpathri, including 103

Transit accommodation for migrant employees witnesses rapid progress



NAVEED UL HAQ

BUDGAM: The construction of a transit accommodation colony in the Kakanmaran area of central Kashmir's Budgam district is progressing rapidly. The colony, consisting of 12 blocks (with 2 blocks yet to receive approval), features 16 flats per block.

The project, initiated under the Prime Minister's package by the Roads and Buildings (R&B) Department of Budgam, began in March 2023 and is scheduled for completion in 2025.

MA Construction Builders and Contractors, the construction agency in charge, informed that eight blocks are expected to be handed over by September 2024, ahead of the stipulated deadline.

The colony is being built on 42 kanals of land and is designed to provide all necessary facilities for migrant employees.

Talking to KNO, Sunil Bhatt, President of the Migrant Pandit Colony,

Security of Amarnath Yatra top priority: CS



AGENCIES

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo said Saturday the security of the Amarnath Yatra is a top priority of the administration, as he chaired a meeting to review arrangements at the Bhagwati Nagar base camp here.

Accompanied by the Additional Director General of Police (ADGP), Jammu zone, Anand Jain, Dulloo went around the heavily guarded base camp to inspect the arrangements ahead of the annual pilgrimage.

The 52-day pilgrimage will commence via the traditional 48-kilometre Nunwan-Pahalgam route in Anantnag and the 14-kilometre shorter but steep Baltal route in Ganderbal on June 29.

"The first batch of pilgrims will be flagged off from here (Bhagwati Nagar) on June 28 and the yatra will start (in Kashmir) the next day. We have come to oversee the

JK's political landscape heats up again as PM announces Assembly polls

AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: In a decisive move, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the forthcoming assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, setting the stage for a significant political showdown. This declaration follows a series of terrorist attacks in the region, with the latest incidents targeting civilians and security forces, underscoring the urgency for a stable and democratic governance structure in the Union Territory.

Terrorist Attacks Heighten Urgency: The announcement comes in the wake of increased terrorist activities. On June 9, just before Prime Minister Modi's swearing-in, terrorists attacked a bus of pilgrims in Shivkhori, resulting in nine deaths and over 33 injuries. This was followed by another incident in Saida Sohal village, Hiranagar, where terrorists attempted to take hostages,

leading to the deaths of two terrorists and injuries to a civilian and a CRPF jawan. Additionally, multiple attacks on security personnel have raised concerns about the ongoing threat of terrorism in the region.

Political Parties Gear Up: The Prime Minister's announcement has effectively put an end to the decade-long speculation about the timing of assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir. In response, political parties are mobilizing their resources and strategizing for the upcoming elections.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has appointed Union Minister G Kishan Reddy as the election in-charge for the region, indicating their serious commitment to the electoral process.

On the other hand, the Indian National Congress is preparing for a crucial meeting in New Delhi on June 27 to discuss election strategies. There is speculation that a senior Congress leader from Punjab may be



MeT predicts dry weather in J&K



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: The weatherman has forecast generally dry weather in Jammu and Kashmir from June 23-28 but said possibility of brief spell of rain and thundershower at few places can't be ruled out.

From June 29-30, a meteorological department official here said that a fresh spells of rain and thundershower is expected at many places of J&K.

He said in last 24 hours till 0830 a.m., Srinagar received 1.44mm of rain, Qazigund 1.8mm, Pahalgam 5.6mm, Kupwara 2.1mm, Kokernag 6.8mm, Gulmarg 6.6mm, Jammu 0.0mm, Banihal 0.8mm, Batote 0.3mm and Baderwah 2.9mm.

INOX CINEMA SHIVPORA SRINAGAR

Sunday 23 June MOVIES Schedule

ISHQ YSHK REBOUND (HINDI) 12:20PM, 05:05PM (U/A)	INSIDE OUT 2 (3D ENG WITH ENG SUBTITLE) 11:30AM, 05:30PM (U)	MUNJYA (HINDI) 03:15PM (U/A)
CHANDU CHAMPION (HINDI) 12:10PM, 06:00PM (U/A)	ROCKSTAR (HINDI) 02:00PM (U/A)	THE EXORCISM (ENGLISH) 02:45PM, 07:30PM (A)

DIGIWAY ADS

MD JJM visits Sopore, inspects progress of ongoing projects

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SOPORE: Mission Director, Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) J&K, Dr. G.N. Itoo Saturday conducted a tour of Sopore sub-division of Baramulla district during which he detailed on-site inspection of various water supply schemes being executed under JJM.

The Mission Director was accompanied by Additional Deputy Commissioner Sopore, Shabir Ahmad Raina; Superintending Engineer Jal Shakti Department and other Engineers and officers.

During the visit, Dr. Itoo thoroughly inspected the Water Supply Scheme Rampura-Rajpura being constructed at an estimated cost of Rs. 2.42 crore. The scheme when completed will provide portable drinking water to 275 households.

During the inspection, the MD said that the project is in final stages of its construction and will be inaugurated soon for the residents of this area and safe drinking water will be directly provided to their homes.



Dr. Itoo also inspected the construction work on WSS Sangri-Muqam project which is being constructed at a cost of Rs.991 lacs. The project after completion will provide tap water connection to 421 households of the nearby villages.

During his visit, the MD highlighted the progress under the Jal Jeevan Mission in Baramulla district and said that against the target of 1.45 lakh tap water connections in rural areas, over 1.21 lakh connections have already been provided. He added that in Sopore sub-division alone, 43000 household tap water connections have been delivered against a target of 45000.

The MD commended the support of the local administration for their role in achieving this goal and

said that the department will further accelerate its efforts to reach 100% saturation by the end of September this year.

Later, Dr. Itoo conducted an on-site inspection of major Water Supply Scheme under construction at Bohripura Sopore. The project being constructed at an estimated cost of Rs. 11.45 Crore, will provide safe portable drinking water to 1130 households of the nearby villages on completion.

DC Kupwara reviews preparedness for Supervisor Recruitment Exam

GMK NEWS NETWORK

KUPWARA: Deputy Commissioner, Kupwara Ayushi Sudan Saturday presided over a comprehensive meeting to review the preparedness for the OMR based exam of Supervisor, Social Welfare Department, being conducted by JKSSRB on June 23rd.

The meeting focused on meticulous review of logistics plans for the examination day and ensuring a free, fair and seamless examination process.

The Deputy Commissioner issued crucial directives to Magistrates, Observers, centre Superintendents, Principals, invigilators and stakeholder departments, emphasizing the transparency and upholding of SOPs to facilitate the smooth conduct of the examination.

The DC issued specific directives to various departments, including ban on mobile phones and electronic devices inside examination centers.

While meticulously reviewing the logistic plan for the examination day, the Deputy Commissioner emphasized the importance of proper lighting, seating arrangements



besides bold signage and toilet facilities. The DC called for putting in place foolproof arrangements to avoid any malpractice during the examination.

The PDD department was directed to ensure proper power supply during the examination

hours, while the Jal Shakti department was tasked with arranging adequate water supply at all examination centers. The ARTO Kupwara was directed to ensure proper conveyance at proper time for students appearing for exam.

The Information Department was specifically directed to brief the Videographers hired for tomorrow's exam to ensure adherence to established protocols.

"Only purpose of the hiring Videographers is to cover /shoot while opening of the sensitive material and sealing of the sensitive material. Videographers aren't allowed to share or upload videos for any media channel or social media page" DC said.

Instructing officers to ensure sufficient staff deployment at examination centers, the DC emphasized the need for backup arrangements to tackle unforeseen circumstances. She stressed on the significance of coordinated efforts from various departments to guarantee the integrity and fairness of the examination.

ADC Kupwara, Muhammad Rouf Rehman and ADC Handwara, Aziz Ahmed Rather, Member SRRB, Peerzada Zahoor and Additional SP Kupwara, G.M Bhat gave briefing to Magistrates, Centre Superintendents, Deputy Superintendents, on their roles and responsibilities during the critical recruitment process.

PHC Afti Warwan launches Portable Digital Urine, Blood Analyzer

GMK NEWS NETWORK

KISHTWAR: In a significant step towards enhancing healthcare services in the remote Aspirational Block of Warwan, the Primary Health Centre Afti of Warwan introduced a state-of-the-art digital urine and blood analyzer.

This advancement is part of the district's ongoing efforts to strengthen health facilities under the dynamic leadership of Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar, Dr. Devansh Yadav and CMO, Dr. Rajinder Kumar.

The new digital analyzer, which is powered by solar energy, promises to revolutionize diagnostic capabilities in this far-flung block of District Kishtwar.

The device is user-friendly, as any medical staff can easily make use of these digital machines and delivers instant test results, making it an invaluable tool for healthcare providers.

The analyzer facilitates a variety of tests including Hemoglobin (HB), urine analysis, blood sugar, bilirubin, cholesterol, tri-



glycerides, creatinine, uric acid, SGOT and SGPT.

The Lab technicians besides dedicated para medical staff of such Health Centres have been provided with hands-on training recently at District Hospital Kishtwar under the guidance of Medical Superintendent District Hospital Kishtwar, Dr. Yudhveer Singh Kotwal.

Dr. Krishan Singh

Katoch, Block Medical Officer (BMO) Dacchan, expressed gratitude to the dedicated team whose relentless efforts have made this project a reality.

The introduction of this advanced technology is expected to bridge the healthcare gap in Marwah, ensuring that residents have access to essential diagnostic tests without the need to travel long distances.

Seven terrorists active in Gundoh, Chattergala areas of Doda district: SSP



AMIR TANTRAY

DODA: The Jammu and Kashmir Police has said that around seven terrorists are active in two places in district Doda which include around four in Kota Top area of Gundoh and two to three in Chattergala area of Bhaderwah.

Police have also arrested three people for providing shelter and acting as a guide to these terrorists in Kota Top.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Doda Javed Iqbal said that in connection with the contact established with the terrorists in Kota Top, three people Safdar, Mubashir and Sajad, all

resident of Tanta Draman village of Gundoh area have been arrested for providing shelter and food to militants and also acting as guide to them. "They helped the terrorists to settle there, provided logistics support and didn't inform the police about it. We have arrested them on these charges and more arrests are expected in upcoming days," the SSP said.

"We have confirmation of the presence of two groups of terrorists in Kota Top and Chattergala of which four are active in Kota Top and two to three militants are active in Chattergala," the SSP informed.

On June 11 a joint patrol party of police and Army was fired upon by terrorists in Chattergala area of Bhaderwah in which five soldiers and one special police officer were injured whereas on June 12 one police constable was injured when security forces had established a contact with terrorists in Kota Top.

The SSP said that security forces are alert to the situation and have taken necessary steps to address the matter. "Cordon and search operations are going on continuously in these areas and forces are alert to the situation," he added—(KNO)

CBC organizes Yoga Awareness Programme at GHSS Natipora



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: The Central Bureau of Communication, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Field Office Srinagar, organized a Yoga Awareness Programme at Government Boys Higher Secondary School Natipora on Saturday, in continuation with the International Yoga day 2024 celebrations.

Aimed to emphasize the importance of yoga for maintaining a healthy lifestyle, the programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from students and community members who performed

various yoga asanas. The event Expert speakers elaborated on the benefits of incorporating yoga into daily routines, underscoring its role in enhancing physical and mental well-being.

In addition to the yoga sessions, an open quiz competition on yoga was conducted, with winners and participants receiving certificates and mementoes.

Cultural artists empanelled with CBC Srinagar presented cultural and informative programs on yoga, blending entertainment with education to further highlight the significance of yoga in contemporary life.

SANKALP Team celebrates 10th International Day of Yoga

GMK NEWS NETWORK

KISHTWAR: The SANKALP-Hub for Empowerment of Women team celebrated the 10th International Day of Yoga at Elite Public School Kishtwar.

The team organized a special event aiming to foster wellness and empowerment among students, teachers, and the local community highlighting the role of yoga in enhancing physical, mental, and emotional health among women and students as part of their self care and important section of society.

The students participated in the yoga session, which included basic asanas, pranayama and a guided meditation.

DM Ramban imposes restrictions around examination centres

GMK NEWS NETWORK

RAMBAN: District Magistrate, Ramban in exercise of powers vested under Section 144 Cr.PC, imposed restrictions within 200 meter radius of the designated Examination Centers for conduct of OMR based examination for the post of Supervisor (Social Welfare Department) on 23.06.2024.

Only candidates appearing in the examination with printed Admit Cards, Superintendents/ Invigilator Staff, Magistrates, Observers, Coordinator, Supervisory Officers deployed for the purpose authorized Videographers and other staff/ Class IV detailed for facilitation and logistical support at the Centre shall be allowed.

No unauthorized person shall be allowed to enter within 200 meter radius of the Examination Centres.

Power department's undeclared shutdown takes toll on people in Doda

AGENCIES

DODA: In the scorching heat, the Jammu Power Development Corporation Limited (JPDCL) today took people of rural areas of Doda for a ride when without any information the power supply to Bharath, Dashnan, Bhabore and Ghat feeders were cut for eight and a half hours.

The shutdown of electricity started at 6 am which continued till 2.30 pm was taken without any prior information to either people living in these areas or to District Information Officer (DIO) Doda circulating in the media.

Executive engineer of Sub Transmission Division (STD) Doda had written to Superintending Engineer (SE) of O&M Circle of Jammu Power Development Corporation Limited (JPDCL) Kishtwar

for shutdown of 11 KV of four feeders of rural Doda for June 22 and had got the approval on June 19, 2024.

But neither the communication was made public

through one or the other medium but this time there was no communication and the shutdown was taken in a hurry," said an official of PDD.

As per the communication of SE JPDCL Kishtwar the approval of shutdown was only from 6 am to 11 am but the electricity supply was restored at 2.30 pm.

When contacted a junior engineer of STD wing Doda, who was looking after the repair work, said that they had taken the approval for shutdown but is not aware whether the communication was made public or not.

Even the DIO Doda told KNO that he had no information of any such activity of STD wing Doda. "We usually get such communication from the department but this time I didn't receive anything," he said—(KNO)



GCoE Srinagar to host NEP-2020 Conference on June 25, 26

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Govt. College of Education (GCoE), MA Road Srinagar is organizing a National Conference on NEP-2020 on the theme 'Innovative Pedagogical Approaches & Evaluation Reforms in Higher Education' on 25th-26th June, 2024.

The conference will bring together academicians and educationalists in the field of education from across the country to discuss crucial issues pertaining to pedagogy and assessment in higher education.

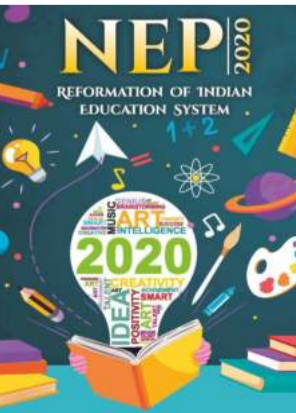
During the conference, technical sessions would be chaired by academicians from Delhi University, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India

Millia Islamia, Jammu University, Kashmir University and Cluster University. Principal, GCoE, Prof.

dignitaries include Prof. A. Ravinder Nath, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Central University of Kashmir; Prof. Manisha Priyam, NIEPA, Ministry of Education, New Delhi and Prof. Yasmeen Ashai, Director Colleges, Higher Education Department, UT of J&K.

The conference coordinator, Fazl Illahi said that the conference is significant academic event in the wake of NEP-2020 in J&K. "It will definitely shift and shape the

teaching learning process in higher education institutions of J&K as per the recommendations of NEP-2020", he added.



LG chairs security, district development review meeting with DCs, SSPs

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Saturday chaired a high-level security and district development review meeting in Jammu with the DCs and SSPs of 10 districts of the division and senior officials of Civil and Police Administration.

The meeting was attended by Sh Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Sh RR Swain, DGP; Sh Chandraker Bharti, Principal Secretary Home Department; Sh Vijay Kumar, ADGP Law & Order; Sh Nitish Kumar, ADGP CID; Sh Anand Jain, ADGP Jammu; Dr Mandeep Kumar Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lt Governor; Sh Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner Jammu, DIGs, Deputy Commissioners, SSPs and other senior officials.

The Lt Governor reviewed the overall security scenario in the



region. He called for close synergy between the Security forces, Civil and Police administration to dismantle the entire terror ecosystem. He said the terrorists and those aiding and abetting them should be neutralised on priority.

The Lt Governor also took stock of the development projects and the progress achieved on saturation of social welfare

Yatra Security; traffic management; essential facilities for yatis on the route; lodging, upgradation of roads; distribution of RFID Cards etc.

The Lt Governor also sought the action taken report on the measures taken by the Districts and Police administration to control the increasing incidents of accidents, illegal mining activities, and the steps taken to curb the drug menace.

He highlighted the growing concern of the people over road safety and road accidents in hilly districts of Jammu division resulting in severe injuries and fatalities.

To address this issue, the Lt Governor instructed DCs and SSPs to adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards traffic rule violators and strict monitoring and penalization. He said unfit vehicles flouting rules should be immediately identified and impounded.

and other government schemes

The DCs briefed the chair on the implementation of Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), development of Industrial Estates and extension of public services.

The meeting also discussed the preparations ahead of the Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra and important matters related to

BROCCOLI, LETTUCE, SWEET CORN

Kashmir farmers shift to exotic vegetable farming, script success

MUBASHIR AALAM WANI

SRINAGAR: Muhammad Akbar Dar, a farmer from Baramulla would grow traditional vegetables, which would fetch him not enough sum to suffice his family expenses.

Though his four kanal land is under vegetable cultivation, the expenses in the form of fertilizers and pesticides, would consume a major part of his income.

Come 2022, he started growing new exotic varieties like broccoli, sweet corn and others, his income improved apart from low maintenance cost.

"I got to know that the agriculture department is promoting these new vegetable varieties and purchased seeds. Now, my vegetables reach various markets and stores, which has increased my income," Dar said.

Known for apples and saffron, Kashmir is getting recognition for growing exotic veggies, which are doubling the income of farmers.

Broccoli, lettuce, snow peas, parsley, and sweet corn have found fertile ground in the region's temperate climate, offering a

lucrative alternative to traditional crops.

Farmers have embraced innovative agricultural practices to grow these exotic vegetables. Leveraging modern techniques and locally adapted meth-

"We saw an opportunity to introduce something different that would thrive in our climate. The response has been beyond our expectations," remarked Shakkor Ahmad, an enthusiastic farmer from Budgam.

culture department said the idea clicked as many districts have adopted this trend and grow exotic vegetables in "good" quantities. "Now there are better market facilities and constant expertise from the



ods, they have managed to overcome the challenges posed by Kashmir's unique geography and climate.

Farmers are reporting handsome earnings from the cultivation of these high-value vegetables, fetching premium prices in local markets as well as attracting interest from regional distributors.

Pertinently, the idea of introducing the exotic vegetables dates back to 2019, when the agriculture department imported seeds of these vegetable varieties from Holland and Spain.

The department then targeted to grow exotic crops on at least 500 hectares of land.

Officials from the agri-

department. We are hoping that the trend continues and Kashmir produces the best organic exotic vegetables in good quantity," he said.

Currently only 100 of 48,000 hectares of land is under vegetable cultivation in Kashmir. Each hectare of land produces 325 quintals of vegetables—(KNO)

PM POSHAN Scheme

Govt finds inordinate delay in incurring expenditure of funds

AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: Authorities have said that there has been inordinate delay in incurring expenditure of funds released for clearing the pending liability of 2023-24 under PM POSHAN Scheme.

Jammu and Kashmir Mission Director PM POSHAN issued a communiqué to Directors of both regions.

"It is intimated that the funds to the tune of Rs 5454.67 lakh were released on 14.06.2024 in favour of districts of J&K UT for clearing the pending claims of 2023-24 under PM POSHAN Scheme," it reads.

The Mission Director further added that "Despite repeated telephonic calls and whatsapp messages for incurring maximum expenditure with respect to the clearing of liabilities

of the previous year, only expenditure to the tune of Rs.12.05 Crores, has been incurred till date, as per PFMS Portal."

"Ministry of Education, GoI has issued communication to the Principal Secretary, School Education, J&K for delay in submission of proposal for release of 1st installment under PM POSHAN Scheme," it reads.

According to the official communiqué, it is prerequisite for submission of proposal, that the expenditure must be above 75 percent of available funds.

"In this regard, DSEK and DSEK are requested to ask the Chief Education officers under their control to incur the expenditure, against the released funds immediately making us eligible for submission of proposal for release of 1st installment of financial year 2024-25," it reads—(KNO)

JK Govt proposes to provide financial support for over 25,000 OoSC in 2024-25



MUBASHIR AALAM WANI

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government has proposed to provide financial support to more than 25,000 Out of School Children (OoSC) in the academic year 2024-25.

According to the official documents available, the concerned authorities from Jammu and Kashmir have proposed to the Ministry of Education (MoE) that "The UT has proposed financial support for 25393 OoSC."

"With respect to support through National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) for out of school children, it was informed that special centers have been provided by NIOS across the country for students in government schools," it reads.

The MoE has further said that the registration

fees in these special centers have been subsidized at Rs 2000 per student.

"This is a special provision made by NIOS for out of school children identified through the PRABANDH portal and examination fees are also exempted for first timers," it reads.

MoE has further mentioned that many states have undertaken enrolment drives for identification and mainstreaming out of school children.

"In this context, it was pointed out that the basic role of the School Management Committees should be monitoring and supervision of this exercise on a regular basis and ensuring all students enrolled are coming to school and not dropping out. For the year of 2024-25," the ministry said—(KNO)

Pahalgam's Aru valley craves for mobile network connectivity

Tourists, locals say mobile network woes impact businesses

JAHANGEER GANAIE

PAHALGAM: The picturesque tourist spot of Aru valley in the famous tourist destination Pahalgam craves for proper mobile network connectivity.

Located around 12 km from Pahalgam in south Kashmir's Anantnag district; Aru is known for its scenic meadows, lakes and mountains, and is a base camp for trekking to the Kolahoi Glacier and Tarsar Lake.

However, tourists and locals complain of the lack of a proper mobile network in the area. They said that the lack of mobile connectivity is limiting Aru's potential to become a famous tourist hub in the valley.

"Though we enjoyed the scenic beauty of Aru, the lack of mobile connectivity disappointed us," said Mahesh, a tourist from Uttar Pradesh, adding that he wanted to



make a video call to his relatives and friends.

Locals said that only BSNL is working here with very slow internet while the rest of the cellular companies haven't installed their towers here. The government must think about it as it is

of mobile network. Rest, everything is fine here," said Sameer, who owns a restaurant at Aru. "That is why no tourist stays here for long."

"This is affecting our business. The government must seriously look into it to attract more tourists here," Sameer added.

Locals along with tourists have sought the attention of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and other authorities to this issue so that the area can have more flow of tourists.

The lack of connectivity not only deters tourists but also impacts local businesses that rely on tourism, they added.

An official from the government told KNO that efforts are underway to improve mobile connectivity in Aru.

"We are hopeful that Aru will have a 4G network facility very soon," he said—(KNO)

Use bins, keep environ safe at Aru Valley, CEO PDA to people

JAHANGEER GANAIE

SRINAGAR: While the flow of tourists continues to increase in the higher reaches of Pahalgam including Aru Valley, the authorities here have made fervent appeal to the people with regard to making the picturesque place clean.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Pahalgam

Development Authority (PDA), Tariq Hussain Naik said that Aru Valley has cultural and natural significance, but the people visiting the spot are polluting the destination by throwing the waste in an open.

"We need to make sure that the picturesque place belongs to the people and needs to be preserved by keeping the surroundings

neat and clean," he said, adding that the people visiting the spot should use proper mechanism to throw their waste in order to maintain the hygiene at the spot.

Naik further stated that efforts are being made to promote eco-friendly tourism and better waste management. "Therefore, public cooperation in this regard

is imperative to encourage sustainable tourism practices," he said.

He advised visitors to have civic sense and throw waste in dustbins so that it can be treated properly. He warned violators to refrain from throwing waste in open, saying that strict action will be taken against those found violating the norms—(KNO)

South Kashmir residents demand macadamization of Pulwama-Awantipora road

JAHANGEER GANAIE

PULWAMA: The residents of different areas of South Kashmir here have demanded immediate macadamization of Pulwama-Awantipora road and also the widening of the narrow spots along the route to prevent traffic jams and accidents.

According to the locals, the narrowness of the road at some points from Pulwama-Awantipora road results in traffic jams besides that the condition of the road is very dilapidated.



"The government must take urgent steps to widen

this important road, especially in Koil area," said Sameer Ahmad, a local resident.

He said the road is currently in shambles at several spots and there is an immediate need of repairing this road.

Mudasir Ahmad, another local urged the government to pay particular attention towards this vital road, adding that the narrowness of this vital road connecting Awantipora, Tral, and other areas with the district headquarters has also resulted in frequent traffic mess.

Employees and daily passengers said that the dilapidated condition of the road and narrowness is giving tough times to them, adding that students, elderly people and employees are the worst sufferers.

They said that despite bringing this issue into the notice of concerned authorities several times, nothing has been done in this regard. They requested higher ups to look into the matter at an earliest and take immediate action so that the locals won't suffer anymore—(KNO)

Urs of Syed Soliha Khansahib (RA) celebrated with fervor

NAVEED UL HAQ

BUDGAM: The Urs of Sufi saint Syed Soliha Khansahib was celebrated with religious fervor at Khansahib area of Central Kashmir's Budgam district in which thousands of devotees participated on Saturday.

The Urs is celebrated here on 21st June with thousands of devotees thronging the place to participate in the special prayers.

On the occasion, Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Khansahib, Tariq Ahmad Malik, DySP Khansahib, Gulam Mohiuddin Malik, Awkaf President, Hakeem Ashraf and

EX minister and MLA Hakeem Yaseen visited the shrine and prayed for the peace and prosperity of the region.

SDM Khansahib, Malik Tariq on the occasion said that, "adequate arrangements were put in place for the devotees."

Mohammad Shafi, one of the devotees, said that "Khansahib is blessed as Syed Soliha Khansahib who resided here and prayed for the peace and prosperity of the region and country and it's the reason that Khansahib has got its name from the name of Syed Soliha Khansahib and said people from various corners visit the shrine on this day."—(KNO)

Gandbal bridge to open for public in July



REHAN QAYOUM MIR

SRINAGAR: The much-anticipated Gandbal Srinagar bridge, which was the site of a tragic incident in April this year, is scheduled to be completed and opened to the public in the first week of July, according to officials.

An official from the Roads and Buildings (R&B) department informed that the construction of the Gandbal bridge is progressing rapidly and is on track for completion by

early July. This bridge garnered significant attention in April when a boat capsized in the Jhelum River, resulting in the deaths of eight people, with one person still missing.

Chief Engineer of the R&B department, Sajad Ahmad Naqeeb, confirmed to KNO that the Gandbal bridge is expected to be ready for public use by the first week of July.

"The work is going on and will be completed on time," he said—(KNO)

NAME CORRECTION

My Father's Name Is Wrongly Entered In Driving License Driving License No JK1320220003264 As Fouzan Jan S/O Jan Mohammed Lone R/O Kadlabal Pampore Instead Of Fouzan Jan S/O Jan Mohammad Lone R/O Kadlabal Pampore. Now I Want To Apply For It's Correction In My Fathers Name Anybody Having Any Objection, He/She May Contact The Regional Transport Office Pulwama Within Seven Days From The Date Of Publication Of This Notice. No Objection Shall Be Entertained After The Stipulated Period.

Fouzan Jan
S/O Jan Mohammad Lone
R/O Kadlabal Pampore

Good Morning **Kashmir**

EDITORIAL

Hajj Mismanagement

As the days progress the Saudi Arabia authorities give a revised list of the number of Haajis who died due to exhaustion and extreme heat during Hajj pilgrimage. God have his mercy on us, some rough estimates put the number of those dead in thousands. While as certain conservative estimates put the number of dead to close to two thousand. We do not know the right number though but as things stand there are reports pouring in that those who are extremely critical are not being given due medical care because of which the number of casualties could increase.

While Saudi authorities are blaming the over-zealous Haajis for going out during the noon hours in 50 degree Celsius temperature there are contradictory reports pouring in which sat that a metro running through the hottest stretch of the road was stopped indefinitely and Haajis were forced to take busses. The directions of how to survive the heat wave were given mainly in Arabic and was mainly unintelligible to the non-Arab Haajis. A video viral on social networking sites shows dead body on the streets. The same video shows a few extremely serious patients lying on road without any medical help reaching them.

Pictures do not lie is an age-old saying. In this case, the pictures emerging from the Hajj pilgrimage are horrifying to say the least. Already ten Haajis, predominantly females, have been declared due to heat wave and exhaustion. As things are shaping up it appears this number could very well rise.

The non-Arabs mainly go to this all-important pilgrimage at the fag of their life making them more susceptible to fatigue and weather anomalies.

The Saudi authorities earn billions of rupees from the Hajj pilgrimage. The annual Hajj pilgrimage is still one of the key component of the Saudi GDP despite the petro-dollar riches. Saudi authorities have a lot to answer for once the final count of deceased Haajis is out in public domain.

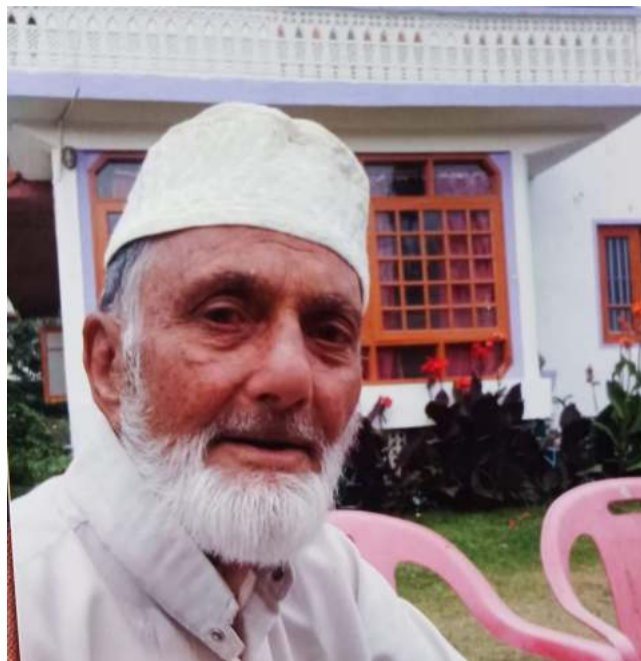
Remembering an exemplary grandfather



SYED MAJID GILANI

Reflecting on the people who have shaped and influenced my early life, one person stands at the top of my mind: Syed Abdul Rashid Gilani, my late grandfather. Born in 1927 at Khanquah Moulla, Srinagar, to Maulana Syed Mohammad Yasin Shah Gilani, my grandfather, whom we affectionately called Abaji, was a remarkable individual. He was a graduate of the 'prestigious' Punjab University and among the first generation of educated persons in Kashmir. Abaji began his career as a supervisor in Food Control Department, now known as the Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution Department, and retired as an Assistant Director in 1982 at the age of 55.

Abaji was an avid reader with a passion for literature. He read books, newspapers, and magazines voraciously, and had a talent for writing poetry, ghazals, and naatiya kalaam in Urdu, Persian, and occasionally Kashmiri. Despite his literary talent, he never sought to publish his works, preferring to keep his poetry personal. His life took a tragic turn when his only child, my father Syed Iftikhar Gilani, passed away from a cardiac arrest in 2001 at the age of 50. This event profoundly affected



Abaji was a disciplined, learned, and God-fearing man. His life was guided by principles of truthfulness, honesty, and straightforwardness. His optimism and commitment to helping others were truly inspiring. Throughout his life, he was a devoted husband, a loving father, a caring grandfather, and an exemplary father-in-law. His dedication to family and his unwavering support provided us with a sense of security and love.

Abaji, who then took on the responsibility of raising me and my two younger sisters, Yasmeen and Sabiyah, after

we were orphaned. Our grandparents, along with our mother Shahida Chishti, embraced this respon-

sibility wholeheartedly. They never let us feel the absence of our father and treated our mother with the same care and respect as their own daughter. Abaji's life shifted from his literary pursuits to focusing on our upbringing. His dedication ensured that we received the best education and a stable life. We were brought up in a disciplined, decent, and religious environment, for which we are immensely grateful.

Abaji was a disciplined, learned, and God-fearing man. His life was guided by principles of truthfulness, honesty, and straightforwardness. His optimism and commitment to helping others were truly inspiring. Throughout his life, he was a devoted husband, a loving father, a caring grandfather, and an exemplary father-in-law. His dedication to family and his unwavering support provided us with a sense of security and love.

Abaji's day began early with the Fajar Namaz (dawn prayers), followed by the recitation of the Holy Quran and reading Auradi Sharief. He maintained an active lifestyle, tending to the kitchen garden and the lawn, and taking care of household chores. Even in his old age, Abaji enjoyed good health, walking regularly and remaining mentally sharp. His love for reading books and daily newspapers kept his mind engaged and youthful.

He believed in living the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Hadith, not just reading them. His devout faith and practical approach to religion set a strong example for us. He often taught us English, demonstrating his excellent command and accent, and instilled in us the values of hard work and prayers. Abaji emphasized

that success required dedication, self-discipline, and honesty, and these lessons have stayed with us throughout our lives.

One of my fondest memories of Abaji is his surprise visits to our study room. His thoughtful gestures reminded us to stay focused and dedicated to our studies. His emphasis on self-discipline, commitment to truth, and loyalty to family and friends has significantly shaped our beliefs and practices. Despite living a simple life, Abaji found joy in family and relationships. He taught us that true happiness comes from living simply, earning honestly, and maintaining strong family bonds.

Abaji passed away peacefully on March 13, 2016, at the age of 90 at his home, 'Darul Iftikhar' in Lalbazar. His extraordinary life, full of wisdom and discipline, continues to inspire us. His memory and teachings remain a guiding force for me and my sisters. We are grateful to Allah for blessing us with such a caring, polite, and educated grandfather. He played a significant role in our childhood, and we have countless memories of sitting in his reading room and playing with his books.

Abaji was not just our grandfather; he was also our friend and inspiration. Our relationship was unique and special, a testament to his remarkable qualities. His teachings will forever be a part of our family's memories. He has left a lasting impact on our lives, helping us become well-rounded individuals.

May Allah elevate his status in Jannat ul Firdous. Aameen.

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TOSS IT OUT

Impact of junk food on health

SHABNUM SHOWKAT

The eating habits of the Indian population have undergone a significant transformation in recent decades. The proliferation of food products high in calories but deficient in essential micronutrients like vitamins, minerals, fiber, and amino acids has become a prominent dietary concern. Such food products are commonly referred to as "junk food." The consumption of junk food has led to a marked increase in the daily calorie intake of children and teenagers, with studies like the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES 2003-2006) indicating a 13% rise in calorie intake from these sources.

One of the primary consequences of this shift towards unhealthy eating habits is the rise in obesity rates and the prevalence of chronic diseases such as diabetes, dementia, mental illness, and cancer. According to the World Health Organization (WHO)-Global Burden of Disease report, in 2019, diets rich in trans-saturated fatty acids were responsible for 645,000 deaths and 14.2 million disability-adjusted life years (DALYs). Additionally, diets high in sugar-sweetened beverages caused 242,000 deaths and 6.31 million DALYs the same year. Trans-saturated fat-rich diets rank seventh among dietary risk factors for attributable DALYs, while sugar-sweetened drinks rank 13th. These figures starkly highlight the detrimental impact of junk food on public health.

The overconsumption of junk food can severely impair overall health and wellness, diminishing physical activity capacity and leading to a host of complications. These health issues are associated with diets high in sugar, salt, trans- and saturated fats, and low in essential nutrients such as fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Junk foods are particularly appealing to consumers due to their delectable taste, affordability, and convenience. However, when these foods become a regular part of one's diet, they

can lead to significant health problems.

To mitigate the adverse effects of junk food, it is crucial to prioritize the inclusion of high-fiber foods such as whole grains, vegetables, and fruits in our diets. These foods pro-

vide essential nutrients that support overall health and well-being. Furthermore, it is important to consume meals with moderate amounts of sugar and salt and to choose foods rich in calcium and iron. By making these healthy food choices, individuals can contribute to the development of robust bodies and minds.



vide essential nutrients that support overall health and well-being. Furthermore, it is important to consume meals with moderate amounts of sugar and salt and to choose foods rich in calcium and iron. By making these healthy food choices, individuals can contribute to the development of robust bodies and minds.

The reduction of junk food intake can be approached at both the individual and societal levels. On an individual level, making conscious food choices and being aware of the nutritional content of foods can significantly reduce the consumption of junk food. This can be achieved by reading food labels, choosing whole and minimally processed foods, and preparing meals at home where the ingredients and cooking methods can be controlled.

At the societal level, gov-

ernment policies and health-promotion strategies play a vital role in curbing junk food consumption. Governments can take action by regulating advertising practices that target young individuals. Restricting junk food adver-

isements, especially those aimed at children, can reduce the allure and consumption of these unhealthy foods. Additionally, governments can support the establishment of healthier food alternatives in place of junk food establishments. Policies that pro-

vide essential nutrients that support overall health and well-being. Furthermore, it is important to consume meals with moderate amounts of sugar and salt and to choose foods rich in calcium and iron. By making these healthy food choices, individuals can contribute to the development of robust bodies and minds.

Researcher's and public health experts can contribute

by educating the public about the benefits of healthy eating and the risks associated with junk food consumption. Public awareness campaigns, nutrition education programs, and community initiatives can inform and motivate individu-

als to make healthier food choices. Collaborating with young people to develop innovative solutions and health-promotion strategies can further enhance these efforts. Engaging youth in these initiatives ensures that the strategies are relevant and appealing to the target audience. Moreover, schools and educational institutions can play a pivotal role in promoting healthy eating habits among children and teenagers. Inter-

grating nutrition education into the curriculum, providing healthy meal options in school cafeterias, and encouraging physical activity can foster a culture of health and wellness from a young age. Parental involvement is also crucial;

parents can set a positive example by adopting healthy eating habits themselves and creating a home environment that supports nutritious food choices.

In conclusion, the excessive consumption of junk food poses significant health risks and contributes to the development of various chronic diseases. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach that includes individual responsibility, government intervention, public health education, and community engagement. By working collectively, we can reduce junk food consumption and promote healthier dietary habits, ultimately improving the overall health.

The author is doing M. Tech in Food Process Technology, Division of Food Science and Technology SKUAST K.

ANOTHER FEATHER

Groundbreaking HIV Prevention Option



SHOBHA SHUKLA

Results of a phase 3 PURPOSE 1 HIV prevention study done among adolescent girls and young women in South Africa and Uganda show that there were no HIV infections in HIV-negative women who received 6 monthly (twice yearly) injectable investigational drug Lenacapavir - an injectable form of PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) drug developed by Gilead Sciences. In other words, an HIV-negative woman will need just two injections a year of this long-acting drug to remain safe from acquiring HIV through the sexual route.

An independent Data and Safety Monitoring Committee found this new regimen to be safe and 100% effective, with no infections seen among study participants, and recommended that Gilead stop the blinded phase of the trial and offer open-label lenacapavir to all participants.

Mitchell Warren, Executive Director of AVAC, calls this as one of the most important results we have seen to date in an HIV prevention study. "Adding additional HIV prevention options means more people may find an option that is right for them. Beyond expanded choice, a twice-yearly injection has the potential to transform the way we deliver HIV prevention to people who need and want it most - from an easier to follow regimen for individuals to a decreased burden on healthcare systems that are stretched to the limit", he said.

PURPOSE 1 is a phase-3, double-blinded, multi-centre, randomised study to evaluate safety and efficacy of twice yearly long-acting injectable lenacapavir, and daily oral Descovy (emtricitabine and

tenofovir alafenamide), and - The 3rd group was given once-daily oral Truvada (emtricitabine and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate).

There were zero-incident cases of HIV infection among

Access barriers need to be dismantled if the best of health services have to reach everyone equitably

Deep-rooted gender and structural inequalities and poverty deny many women

The new long-acting PrEP can go a long way in controlling new HIV infections in young women and girls - provided we also dismantle patriarchy and remove all other access barriers.

Lenacapavir can be approved for multiple populations and communities that are most in need of additional HIV prevention options.

Eliminate delays in roll-

Lenacapavir. Also, communities, policymakers, funders, and program implementers must start to re-design HIV prevention programs and prepare health systems to be able to deliver the new drug- once it is approved- to the people for whom it is intended, without unnecessary delays.

Lessons learned from the rollout of daily oral PrEP, and, more recently, the Dapivirine vaginal ring and injectable cabotegravir, can help speed regulatory approval and guideline development in key countries, as well as community understanding and acceptance of Lenacapavir for PrEP.

"There is no time to waste if we are to translate these exciting clinical trial results into actual public health impact and expand the toolbox of HIV prevention choices," says Mitchell Warren of AVAC.

For the unversed, PrEP helps prevent people from getting HIV. It is for people who are HIV-negative but are at risk of getting HIV. It means taking prescription medicine routinely before exposure to HIV to prevent getting it. The most common way to get HIV is through sex or injection drug use. PrEP can reduce the chance of getting HIV through sex by 99%. It also reduces getting HIV from injection drug use by at least 74%. However, PrEP medication does not protect against other sexually transmitted infections.

Groundbreaking HIV prevention option is here

Will we address access barriers so that it reaches all equitably, quickly and justly?

tenofovir alafenamide) for pre-exposure prophylaxis in adolescent girls and young women at risk of HIV infection.

The study enrolled over 5,300 cis-gender adolescent girls and young women aged 16-26 years across 25 sites in South Africa and 3 sites in Uganda. The participants were randomised into 3 groups in a 2:2:1 ratio.

- The 1st group received twice-yearly Lenacapavir,

- The 2nd group took once-daily oral Descovy (emtricitabine and tenofovir alaf-

2,134 women in the Lenacapavir group and 16 incident cases among 1,068 women in the Truvada group. HIV incidence in the Descovy group was numerically similar (39 incident cases among 2,136 women) to that in the Truvada group.

The results demonstrated the superiority of twice-yearly injectable Lenacapavir over once-daily oral Truvada or Descovy.

In the study, Lenacapavir, Descovy, and Truvada - all were generally well-tolerated and no new safety concerns were identified.

and adolescent girls their sexual rights, deprive them of their bodily autonomy, and expose them to various forms of physical and emotional violence, as well as heighten the risk of HIV - especially in low- and middle-income countries.

As per UNAIDS data, globally 4000 adolescent girls and young women (aged 15-24 years) were infected with HIV every week in 2022, and more than 80% of them live in sub-Saharan Africa. In this region, there were 210,000 new HIV infections among adolescent girls and young women in 2022.

A companion phase 3 study, PURPOSE 2, is underway in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Peru, South Africa, Thailand and the US, testing twice-yearly lenacapavir for PrEP among cis-gender men who have sex with men, transgender women, transgender men, and gender non-binary people. Results from this study are expected by early 2025.

The regulatory filing for lenacapavir for PrEP will include the results of both PURPOSE 1 and currently-underway study PURPOSE 2 (if positive) to ensure that

ing out new health technologies

Many countries have not yet fully rolled out existing PrEP (or not rolled it out at all in public services). Every new HIV infection that occurs is a grim reminder we could have done better in terms of prevention - and more importantly - in making prevention services accessible to all with equity and dignity.

Regulatory agencies must start preparing to fast-track regulatory review and introduction plans for the twice-yearly long-acting injectable

Shobha Shukla is the award-winning founding Managing Editor and Executive Director of Citizen News Service and is a feminist, health and development justice advocate. She is a former senior Physics faculty of the prestigious Loreto Convent College and current Coordinator of Asia Pacific Regional Media Alliance for Health and Development (APCAT Media) and Global AMR Media Alliance (GAMA). Follow her on Twitter @shobha1shukla or read her writings here www.bit.ly/ShobhaShukla

Strategic Implications of Russia-North Korea Summit



FAHEEM UL ISLAM

In a world already on the brink of geopolitical upheaval, the recent summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin took place at the Vostochny Cosmodrome on 19th June 2024 is a sign of proactive changes in global politics. This meeting, full of military and technological exchanges, is more than just a diplomatic activity; it is a harbinger of further intensified rivalry and a potentially destabilized international order.

The main focus of the summit on military cooperation cannot be overstated. North Korea's great need for advanced military technology, including surveillance satellites and nuclear submarines, finds a ready supplier in Russia. In contrast, North Korea appears ready to support Russia's military operations in Ukraine with conventional weapons and artillery. This mutual agreement underscores a growing military axis that threatens not only regional stability in East Asia, but also the broader global balance of power.

The timing and symbolism of this summit is crucial. As the United States strengthens its trilateral cooperation with South Korea and Japan, the partnership between Russia and North Korea represents a deliberate counterweight. Kim Jong Un's outspoken support



for Russia's stance against "hegemonic powers" - a thinly veiled reference to the United States - underscores the ideological and strategic divide that is increasingly polarizing the world. This realignment raises the spectre of a new era of bloc politics reminiscent of Cold War dynamics but with potentially more transformative consequences in the current global landscape.

In addition to the military sphere, the summit emphasized important economic and technological exchanges. Russia's com-

mitment to aid North Korea's robust space program and talk of joint ventures in tourism, construction and agriculture point to deeper economic interdependence. For North Korea, these ties are a lifeline between harsh international sanctions and economic isolation. For Russia, this partnership is a strategic tool to secure unwavering support and resources in compliance with its international sanctions and military commitments.

The implications of this strengthened alliance are numerous. First, it calls into

question the effectiveness of international sanctions regimes, as both countries find ways to avoid economic isolation through mutual support. In addition, the potential for joint military exercises and arms sales could encourage North Korean provocations and increase tensions on the Korean Peninsula and beyond. Furthermore, the union is a sharp reminder of the limits of Western diplomatic and economic pressure.

As Russia and North Korea strengthen their partnership,

it is clear that a new, more aggressive form of multipolarity is emerging. Such alignment could lead to increasingly serious conflicts, as countries in these emerging factions defend their interests more boldly and with less respect for diplomatic decisions.

The Kim-Putin summit is more than a bilateral meeting; it is a clarion call that heralds a new phase of global strategic realignment. As a student of international politics, one must critically examine the broader implications of such alliances.

The deepening of relations between Russia and North Korea indicates a change in global power structures with profound consequences for international stability and peace. This emerging partnership requires close monitoring and a robust response from the international community to reduce risks in an increasingly polarized and militarized world.

Author has done Masters in international politics from AMU. He can be mailed at faheemulislam9@gmail.com

India committed to realising Bangabandhu's vision of progressive Bangladesh: PM

IAN S

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday reiterated India's commitment to realising Bangabandhu's vision of a stable, prosperous and progressive Bangladesh while asserting that New Delhi will continue to give the highest priority to its relations with Dhaka.

"Bangladesh is India's largest development partner and lies at the confluence of our 'Neighbourhood First' policy, Act East policy, Vision SAGAR and Indo-Pacific vision. Together, we have completed many important public welfare projects in the last one year," said PM Modi after holding talks with visiting Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi.

Deepening historic ties between the two countries, the talks covered a range of areas of bilateral cooperation including development partnership, energy, water resources, trade, defence cooperation, and more.

PM Modi said that both countries have prepared a futuristic vision for cooperation in new areas.



"The youth of both countries will benefit from the consensus reached on cooperation in areas such as green partnership, digital partnership, blue economy and space," said Prime Minister Modi.

"We welcome Bangladesh's decision to join the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative. We will also continue our cooperation in other regional and international forums, including BIM-STEC," he added.

The two leaders have met each other 10 times since 2019, making unprecedented transformations in the relationship which has served as a role model for neighbourhood partnership.

Earlier, PM Modi received the Bangladesh Prime Minister at the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan, as the first guest on a bilateral State visit after the formation of the new government in India.

PM Sheikh Hasina also paid respect to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat.

The Bangladesh leader is also scheduled to call on President Droupadi Murmu and Vice President Jagdeep Thakkar.

Sheikh Hasina was among the international leaders who attended the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Modi and the Union Council of Ministers on June 9, earlier this month.

NEET ROW

High-level committee formed under ex-ISRO chief for smooth conduct of exams

IAN S

NEW DELHI: The Centre on Saturday said it has formed a high-level committee under the former ISRO Chief which will make the necessary recommendations regarding the smooth and fair conduct of exams through the National Testing Agency (NTA) and other examinations.

The committee will work under the Chairmanship of K. Radhakrishnan, former Chairman, of ISRO and Chairman of BoG, IIT Kanpur.

"The committee will submit the report in two months and will make necessary recommendations on reform in the mechanism of the examination process, improvement in data security protocols and structure and functioning of NTA," an official of the Ministry of Education said.

The ministry said that the other members include Dr. Randeep Guleria, Former Director, AIIMS Delhi. Prof. B J Rao, Vice Chancellor, Central University of Hyderabad. Prof. Ramamurthy K, Professor Emeritus, Department of Civil Engineering, IIT Madras. Pankaj Bansal, Co-Founder, People Strong and Board Member- Karmayogi Bharat. Prof. Aditya Mittal, Dean Student Affairs, IIT



Delhi. Govind Jaiswal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Education.

The Terms of Reference of the committee include reform in the mechanism of the examination process, to analyse the end-to-end examination process and suggest measures to improve the efficiency of the system and to forestall any possible breach. To conduct a thorough review of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)/Protocols of the NTA, and suggest measures to strengthen these procedures/protocols along with monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance at every level.

It will also evaluate the existing data security processes and protocols of NTA and recommend measures for its improvement. It will also examine existing security protocols related to paper-setting and other processes for different examinations and make recommendations to enhance the robustness of the system.

For Structure and Functioning of the National Testing Agency, committee will make recommendations on the organisational structure and functioning of the National Testing Agency (NTA) for implementation of recommendations and clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of functionaries at every level.

It will also assess the current Grievance Redressal Mechanism of the NTA, identify areas of improvement and make recommendations for enhancing its efficiency.

The Committee can co-opt any Subject Matter Expert to assist them.

Indian startup develops AI-enabled yoga mat for personalised coaching



IAN S

NEW DELHI: A startup incubated at IIT Mandi has developed an artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled Yoga mat, which was presented to Union Ministers here.

The mat called 'YogiFi' was handed over to External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar; Railways, I&B and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw; Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and others on behalf of the Ministry of Science and Technology.

The mat has the poten-

tial to revolutionise the at-home yoga experience by leveraging AI and Computer Vision (CV) technologies to enable comfortable yoga practice, according to the ministry.

It is equipped with a built-in innovative sensor layer, tracks the postures of yoga performers and offers suggestions to help correct their posture in real-time.

It has been developed by Wellnesys Technologies Private Ltd, incubated at the Technology Innovation Hub (TIH) iHub at

IIT Mandi and supported under the NM-ICPS programme of DST.

The mat, which is a fully indigenous 'Make in India', has several benefits, according to the ministry.

These include simplified yogasana training, interactive yoga classes, real-time feedback on posture and personalised coaching anywhere, anytime around the world.

YogiFi Smart Mat works seamlessly with other smart devices at home to set up the right ambience for performing yoga.

FM holds pre-Budget meeting with finance ministers of states

IAN S

NEW DELHI: Union Minister for Finance Nirmala Sitharaman chaired pre-Budget consultations with the Finance Ministers of states and Union Territories to take their views on board for the upcoming Union Budget 2024-25 here on Saturday.

The meeting was attended by Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary, Chief Ministers of Goa, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Sikkim; Deputy Chief Ministers of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan and Telangana; State Finance Ministers and other Ministers; and Senior Officers from the States and Union Territories (with Legislature) and the Union Government.

This will be followed by the 53rd meeting of the GST (Goods & Services Tax) Council on Saturday of which the finance ministers of states and UTs are also members.



The GST Council is likely to deliberate on key issues such as the taxes on fertilisers and the inputs of chemicals used for making fertilisers and taxation on online gaming. The need for an amendment to overrule retrospective tax demands and a possible exemption for reinsurance is also likely to be taken up.

The council may discuss the recommendations made by the Standing Committee on Chemicals and Fertilisers to reduce GST

on raw materials used to manufacture fertiliser in order to correct the inverted duty structure.

At present GST at a rate of five per cent is charged on fertilisers, while raw materials like Sulphuric Acid and Ammonia face a higher GST of 18 per cent.

A reduction in tax on the import of maintenance, repair and operations (MRO) services for foreign airlines in India which are currently taxed at 18 per cent may also be taken up for consideration.

New 'anti-paper leak' law: Jail term, up to Rs 1 cr fine as punishments

IAN S

NEW DELHI: Amid the controversies surrounding the NEET and UGC-NET exams, the Centre has notified the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024, passed in February to prevent paper leaks and cheating.

The stringent law came into effect on Friday.

Under the law, any person or persons found guilty of leaking a paper or tampering with answer sheets will receive a minimum jail term of three years. This can be extended to five years with a fine of up to Rs 10 lakh. All offences under the Act will be cognisable and non-bailable.

As per the new law, examination service providers who have knowledge about a possible offence but do not report it can be fined up to Rs one crore.

During the investigation, if it is established that any senior official from the service provider had allowed or was involved in committing the offence, he will face

imprisonment for a minimum of three years, which can go up to 10 years, and a fine of Rs 1 crore.

If the examination authority or the service provider commits an organised crime, the jail term will be a minimum of five years and a maximum of 10, and the fine will remain Rs 1 crore.

The Public Examinations (Prevention of



Unfair Means) Bill, 2024 or the 'anti-paper leak' bill was first introduced in the Lok Sabha on February 5 and was passed a day later. The Rajya Sabha cleared the bill on February 9. President Droupadi Murmu approved the bill in the same month following which it became law.

Foreign portfolio investors bullish on Indian markets, pumps Rs 23,786 Cr

IAN S

NEW DELHI: Buoyed by the policy and reform continuity, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have altered their position in the equity market following the election results, injecting Rs 23,786 crore since June 10, industry analysts said on Saturday. There are three primary reasons for this positive inflow.

"First, the continuity of the government assures ongoing reforms. Second, the Chinese economy is decelerating, as evidenced by a 12 per cent decline in copper prices over the past month," said Sunil Damania, Chief Investment Officer, MojoPMS. Third, certain block deals in the market have been eagerly taken up by FPIs.

"However, these FPI inflows are concentrated in a select few stocks rather than being widespread across the market or sectors," Damania said.

Till June, FPIs sold equity for Rs 11,193 crore.

According to market experts, it is interesting to note that this net sell figure is composed of selling through the exchanges for Rs 45,794 crore and buying through the "primary market and others" for Rs 34,600 crore.

FPIs are selling where valuations are high and buying where valuations are reasonable. Analysts believe that FPI inflows will remain constrained due to the high valuations currently commanded by the Indian equity market.

Meanwhile, the Indian market initially continued its upward trend as concerns over election outcomes eased and global sentiment improved.

With a coalition government in place, there is optimism that the upcoming budget will strike a balance between growth initiatives and populist measures, they noted.

Atal Pension Yojana adds record 12.2 million new members in 2023-24

IAN S

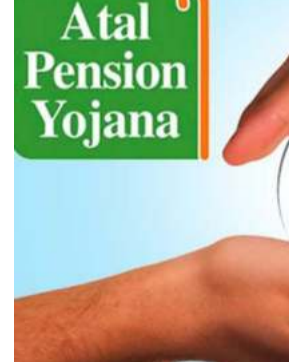
NEW DELHI: A record 12.2 million new accounts were opened in the Atal Pension Yojana (APY) during 2023-24 taking the total enrolments to 66.2 million under the government's social security scheme, according to figures compiled by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Authority (PFRDA).

According to APY data, around 70.44 per cent of the total enrolments in the scheme has been done by public-sector banks, 19.80 per cent by regional rural banks, 6.18 per cent by private sector banks, 0.37 per cent by payment banks, 0.62 per cent by small finance banks and 2.39 per cent by cooperative banks.

The government pension scheme achieved a growth of 24 per cent in gross enrolments at the end of FY 23-24 standing at 64.4 million. APY is rapidly gaining popularity among women and

youth, PFRDA chairman Deepak Mohanty said.

In FY24, out of the total enrolments, 52 per cent



were women and out of the total gross enrolment since inception, 70 per cent subscribers are in the 18 to 30 years age group.

Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of over 10 million enrolments among states, followed by Bihar, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu (5 million each); Madhya Pradesh,

Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Karnataka (3 million each); and Gujarat, Odisha, Jharkhand (2 mil-

lion each). These 12 states account for more than 80% of enrolments.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emphasised the need to 'saturate' the government's social security schemes including APY for each and every entitled person.

As part of this mission, PFRDA has under-

taken outreach programs in coordination with all SLBCs (State-level Bankers' Committee) and RRBs across the country. More such campaigns will be conducted in the current Financial Year.

As part of its campaign to expand membership, PFRDA aims to target Jan Dhan account holders and promote a digital mode of enrolment to target the young population, involving other Central ministries, state governments and agencies.

The APY scheme allows any citizen aged 18-40 to join through a bank or post office branch in which a person has a savings bank account.

Under the scheme, a subscriber would receive a minimum guaranteed pension of Rs 1,000 to Rs 5,000 per month from the age of 60 years, depending upon their contribution. The same pension would be paid to the spouse in case of the demise of the subscriber.

SWATI MALIWAL CASE

Judicial custody of Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar extended

IAN S

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court on Saturday extended Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar's judicial custody in the Swati Maliwal assault case till July 6.

Bibhav Kumar was arrested on May 18 in connection with the assault on Maliwal, an Aam Aadmi Party Rajya Sabha member and former Chairperson of the Delhi Commission for Women, on May 13.

The Delhi Police had moved an application seeking an extension of Kumar's judicial custody. While his counsel opposed the plea, the prosecution said that Kumar might

interfere with the current investigation.

He was produced through video conferencing before Metropolitan Magistrate Gaurav Goyal



of Tis Hazari Court on the expiry of his previously extended judicial custody.

Earlier, his bail was dismissed by the judge. On May 17, Swati Maliwal filed a complaint with the Delhi Police, revealing the extent of harassment and torture she faced at the Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence. She had visited the CM's residence on May 13.

T20 WORLD CUP

Harbhajan backs Indian team to bring title home, says 'boys are in great touch'



IAN S

NEW DELHI: Former India spinner Harbhajan Singh has backed the Rohit Sharma-led side to lift the ongoing ICC Men's T20 World Cup and credited them for their consistent performance in the tournament so far. India are unbeaten in the tournament with four wins in five games as their final group-

stage encounter against Canada was abandoned due to rain in Florida. India continued their momentum in the Super Eight stage with a convincing 47-run win over Afghanistan in Barbados. Ahead of their clash against Bangladesh in Antigua on Saturday, the legendary spinner lauded the all-round contribution of players in the ongoing

campaign. He asserted that if the Men in Blue continue to play with the same "determination", they will undoubtedly win their second T20 World Cup title after 2007. "Our team has shown exceptional form in the T20 World Cup so far, with every player in the playing 11 contributing significantly. We have been playing our A-game ticking all the

boxes. The boys are in great touch, and the confidence is high. If we continue to play with the same determination, intensity, and passion I do not doubt that we can get over the line and bring the World Cup home for the first time after 2007," Harbhajan said on Disney+ Hotstar. India are placed second in Group 1 with two points after one match. They

need to finish in the top two to progress to the semifinals. If they win against Bangladesh, they will bolster their chance for the final four. India will play their final Super Eight match against Australia in St Lucia on Monday (June 24). Currently, Australia are in the top spot after a commanding win over Bangladesh.

FC Goa complete signing of Muhammad Hammad for an undisclosed fee

IAN S

MARGAO: Indian Super League (ISL) club FC Goa have announced the signing of Jammu & Kashmir footballer Muhammad Hammad on a permanent transfer from FC 1 for an undisclosed fee. Signing a multi-year contract, Hammad will join the Gaurs for the upcoming 2024-25 season and beyond, marking an exciting new chapter in his career.

"Joining FC Goa is a dream come true for me. The club's vision and commitment to excellence resonate with my personal goals, and I am eager to bring my best to the pitch. I look forward to representing the Gaurs and making my mark in the ISL. This opportunity means a lot to me and to be the first from my region to play for FC Goa is a proud moment," said Hammad.

Born and raised in Jammu & Kashmir, Hammad's football journey began with Lonestar Kashmir FC in the I-League 2nd Division. His impressive performances earned him a spot on the J&K state team for the Santosh Trophy in the 2015-2016 season.

The defender then joined Real Kashmir FC, where his defensive prowess helped the Snow Leopards clinch the I-League 2nd Division title in the 2017-18 season and secure promotion to the I-League.

He then made an immediate impact in the I-League, debuting in a 1-0 victory over defend-



ing champions Minerva Punjab FC in the opening game of the 2018-19 season. He also showcased his skills in the Durand Cup, contributing to Real Kashmir's advance to the semifinals, where they eventually faced Mohun Bagan FC after advancing from a group that included FC Goa's Reserves Team.

"We are delighted to welcome Muhammad Hammad to FC Goa. His consistent performances, leadership, and versatility make him an invaluable addition to our squad. Hammad's journey reflects his dedication and resilience, and we believe he will continue to grow and contribute significantly to our success in the upcoming season," said FC Goa's Director of Football, Lokesh Bherwani.

Following stints with Jaipur Elite FC in the Rajasthan State League and FC 1 in the J&K Premier Football League, Muham-

mad Hammad rejoined Real Kashmir on loan for the 2023-24 season from FC 1. As captain, he played every minute of the I-League, leading his team to a commendable fifth-place finish and earning the prestigious Jarnail Singh Award for Best Defender of the season.

His remarkable campaign included an assist, 12 clean sheets, and versatility across the backline, helping Real Kashmir concede just 19 goals in 24 matches.

The centre-back's stellar performances caught the attention of then-Indian national team coach Igor Stimac, leading to his call-up to the probables' camp for the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers. His impending debut in the Indian Super League (ISL) with FC Goa will mark a significant milestone as he becomes the first player from Jammu & Kashmir to represent the Gaurs.

T20 WORLD CUP

Definitely want to win against England to finish event well, says Aaron Jones

IAN S

BRIDGETOWN: After being on the verge of exit from the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 after a nine-wicket defeat to West Indies, the USA captain Aaron Jones said his team will go all out against England to finish their tournament on a high note.

The USA entered the Super Eight stage in what is also their first T20 World Cup campaign, after defeating Pakistan and Canada in Group A. But in Group 2 of the Super Eight, the USA are currently at the bottom of the standings with no points against their name and will face England at the Kensington Oval in Barbados on Sunday.

"I don't think (there) is any pressure. I think when we first started the World Cup a lot of people didn't think that we would be here right now. Obviously, we always believed, even before the World Cup started, that we could beat any team in the world."

"And as I say, every time you put on your jersey and you go and play for your country, you want to win. So definitely we want to

win the game against England and finish well, although we can't advance in the next round for sure." "For me personally, I will go into the game just looking to win the game and doing as best as possible as a team and me personally as well. And then



let's see what happens after that," said Jones to ICC after the match ended.

Asked to highlight the importance of the USA's stellar campaign in the tournament where nine associate teams competed, Jones explained, "I think the game against England

is important. For me personally, every time I put on a US jersey, I want to win the game, regardless of who we're playing against. "I think over the last couple of weeks, starting from winning the series against Bangladesh, it really and truly opened

the eyes of everybody in the world, not only for US cricket but associate cricket in general." "And then obviously moving on to beating Pakistan in the World Cup, and then having a close game against India and then a close game against South

Africa. People know that associate cricket is on the rise I would say." Similar views were echoed by head coach Stuart Law in his post-match press conference. "Look, I think Associate cricket is one of the toughest formats going around. I remember going to Zimbabwe with West Indies to the World Cup qualifiers, the 50-over World Cup qualifiers to watch, to go there. It's a brutal tournament." "If those guys play those tournaments quite often, they're going to be pretty relaxed playing something like a World Cup where you get a game and then you have a day, maybe four days off. In those qualifiers, you get game, day off, game, day off. So, it's brutal."

"The way that Scotland nearly would have been great to see that game play out against England. They could have pushed them hard. But the Associated Nations shouldn't be discounted either. We're trying to grow the game of cricket. It's called the World Cup. I think the 20-team format was done pretty well."

Reliance Foundation celebrates Olympic Day with 900 children

IAN S

MUMBAI: Around 900 children celebrated a unique Olympic Day organised by the Reliance Foundation, featuring a special carnival as part of the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) Let's Move India initiative, promoting volunteerism and sports. The event held at the Reliance Corporate Park (RCP) in Mumbai on Saturday, treated children from disadvantaged communities across the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) to a day filled with fun, sports, and educational activities centred around Olympic values such as excellence, respect, and friendship.

The highlight of the event was a meet-and-greet session with six-time Olympian Shiva Keshavan. He shared his experiences and emphasised the importance of key Olympic values such as excellence, respect, and friendship with the children. Keshavan also participated in a special "move and groove" session with the children, the organisers informed in a release on Saturday.

The event aimed to inspire children to embrace an active lifestyle and rec-

ognise its significance. More than 200 employees from Reliance Industries volunteered for the initia-

ment is medicine. "The kids were extremely enthusiastic, and their passion and energy were



tive, overseeing various sports stations such as basketball, football shootouts, walking races, and fitness sessions, alongside drawing and art activities. These sessions were designed to instill the importance of physical movement and activity among the children, motivating them to adopt healthier lifestyles.

Speaking about the initiative, Keshavan said, "Reliance Foundation has always taken the lead in supporting the growth of the Olympic movement in India. Let's Move is a great way to help children understand the benefits of being physically active and how

infectious. They had a lot of questions and will learn a lot from this experience. As an Olympian, I hold the Olympic values very close to my heart, and they are values that will serve the kids well in their lives too. I hope some of these kids are inspired to play sports actively and maybe even pursue a career in it," he added.

Leandro Larrosa, Director, Digital Engagement and Marketing, IOC, added, "Thank you to the Reliance Foundation, for collaborating on the Let's Move initiative in India and creating this opportunity for young people to meet

and learn from an Olympian. The initiative is all about encouraging people to embrace the joy of movement and an active lifestyle as the world warms up for Paris 2024 and we hope this will inspire more kids in India to join the fun of sport".

Through the Let's Move India campaign, Reliance Foundation aims to promote inclusivity, development, and the importance of physical activity among 10,000 children from disadvantaged communities across multiple cities in India in the coming weeks. This initiative will be facilitated by 500 volunteers from Reliance employees, who will work towards encouraging a healthier lifestyle and fostering positive growth among these children.

The Let's Move India edition aligns with Reliance Foundation's goal of supporting the expansion of the Olympic movement in India and engaging more kids with Olympic values through sports. The initiative is part of the Olympic Values Education Programme (OVEP), supported by a partnership between the Reliance Foundation and the IOC.

Bhatia tied 2nd with Scheffler as they trail Korean star Tom Kim in Travelers golf

IAN S

CROMWELL: Akshay Bhatia stayed in the group tied at second place in the US\$20 million Travelers Championship as Korea's Tom Kim (65) retained his first round two-stroke lead on Friday.

Kim celebrated his 22nd birthday in style by firing a 5-under 65 and remaining bogey-free for a second straight day.

Indian American Bhatia, who shot 64 on the first day, added a 65 with seven birdies and two bogeys. He birdied twice in the first three holes and added further birdies on the sixth, eighth and ninth and then 15th and 17th. A bogey on fifth was his first dropped shot and the next came on 18th.

Another Indian American Sahith Theegala (69-67) was T-24.

He said, "It was great. I hit

a lot of quality shots. I got up-and-down when I needed to, other than 18, but other than that I played good. The wind was supposed to be out of the south and it was northeast the majority of the day, so it was pretty interesting how that came about."

"I'm playing great. I mean, this is why I'm playing, this is seven in a row for me, I just want to keep building on good golf and kind of learning as I go. I feel like I've been working really hard on my technique especially this week, and I feel like my coach and I have found a feel that works, so we're just kind of trying to build on that and focus on that as much as I can," added Bhatia.

He went on, "There's so many trees guarding you, like 10, 11, 12, 13, it is really hot during that stretch. I mean you can't feel a breath of wind. So when you're standing over, or you're wait-



ing for your opponent to putt, you're dying. So, it's definitely extreme, but it also makes the golf course a little easier."

Seeking a fourth PGA TOUR victory, the hugely-talented Kim continued his impressive form at TPC River Highlands to

reach a career-low 36-hole score of 13-under 127 as he kept his nose ahead of close friend and World No. 1 Scottie Scheffler

(64), Collin Morikawa (63) and Akshay Bhatia (65) who sit in tied second place on 129.

Compatriot Sungjae Im hit a 64 to move up to tied sixth on nine-under, four back, in what is the eighth and final Signature event of the 2024 PGA TOUR season.

Leader Kim said, "I've been playing really, really solid. It's not about this week, it's about keeping building these momentum blocks for the rest of the season," explained Kim, who is competing in his eighth successive week on TOUR.

His round was highlighted by five birdies over his first 10 holes, before his game cooled off down the home stretch. Not only was Kim's ball-striking laser-like where he missed only one fairway and one green, his putting was equally impressive where he nailed three birdie putts from between 13 to 16 feet. If Kim secures victory on Sunday,

he will become the first Asian winner in the tournament's history, eclipsing K.J. Choi's joint runner-up finish in 2014.

He attributed his strong run of form to the extra time spent on the range, even after his sublime first-round performance where he fired a season's low of 62.

He is under no illusion that maintaining his advantage will be easy with the quality of the chasing pack, led by Scheffler who also celebrated his 28th birthday on Friday.

After struggling for most of the season, with a tied fourth at the RBC Canadian Open being his only top-10 earlier this month, Kim stressed the importance of maintaining his form not just for this week, but for the remainder of the season with the FedExCup Playoffs looming, plus the Olympic Games and Presidents Cup on the horizon as well.