

Good Morning Kashmir

15th Year Of Publication

Office of LG J&K @OfficeOfLJandK

Inaugurated joint edition of Jammu Film Festival & The International Film Festival of Srinagar. Glad to see entries from more than 50 countries, a testimony to vibrant, peaceful and prosperous J&K UT under the leadership of Hon'ble PM Shri @narendramodi Ji.

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CM Calls For Focus On Agriculture Varsities To Tackle Climate Change



GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Wednesday emphasized the critical role of agriculture in addressing climate change and improving the economy of Jammu and Kashmir. He was speaking at the inauguration of the four-day National Agriculture Summit & Farmers' Fair-2024 at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST), Jammu.

Highlighting the exigency of climate change, the Chief Minister said, "Climate change is a huge challenge, and the responsibility lies on SKUAST (Kashmir and Jammu) to address it and assist our farmers. We can no longer depend solely on rain and snowfall, as climate patterns have drastically shifted. For instance, in our childhood, snowfall would arrive in December; now, it comes in February. Our aver-

age temperatures are also rising. To adapt, we need to promote modern agricultural practices, introduce new techniques and technologies, and raise awareness among farmers."

He lauded the progress made by SKUAST-Jammu in recent years, saying, "I felt excited on visiting SKUAST-Jammu. Since my last visit, the university has made remarkable progress, for which I congratulate the Vice-Chancellor and his entire team."

The Chief Minister expressed concern over the neglect of agriculture in discussions about J&K's development.

"In Jammu and Kashmir, we find farmers in every corner, yet when we discuss progress, we focus on factories, tourism, and facilities for pilgrims at religious places. Sadly, the contribution of farmers and the agriculture and allied

Law Enforcement Agencies Monitoring Anti-India Elements, Separatists': LG

Inaugurates Joint Edition Of Jammu Film Festival, The Int'l Film Festival Of Srinagar

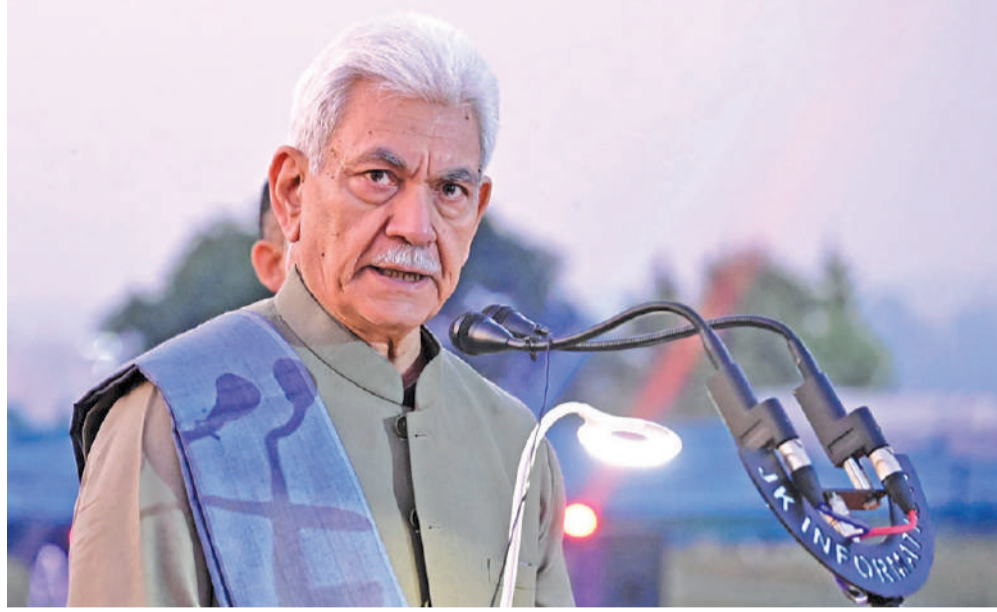
GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Wednesday said that law enforcement agencies are monitoring anti-India elements and separatists' ecosystem and if they try to compromise India's integrity.

"Our law enforcement agencies are monitoring the anti-India elements and separatists' ecosystem and if they try to put people's lives in danger or compromise India's integrity, we will ensure exemplary punishment for them," LG said while inaugurating the joint edition of Jammu Film Festival (JFF) and The International Film Festival of Srinagar (TIFFS), at Aquaplex Crown, Bagh-e-Bahu, Jammu.

In his address, the Lieutenant Governor extended his felicitations to the organizers and all the participants. He said the entries from more than 50 countries is a testimony to vibrant, peaceful and prosperous J&K UT under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.

"Peace, vibrant movie culture and economic prosperity



are interlinked and I want to warn those who are trying to disrupt normal life or day dreaming of bringing disorder that existed before 2019", the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said, "Our law enforcement agencies are monitoring the anti-India elements and

separatists' ecosystem and if they try to put people's lives in danger or compromise India's integrity, we will ensure exemplary punishment for them".

The Lieutenant Governor called upon filmmakers to utilise their craft to inspire people to follow the right path,

serve their art and also give priority to national interest. He observed that cinema is vital element of soft power and global popularity of our film industry has contributed in bonding with different cultures across the world.

"Good Cinema is

PEACE, VIBRANT MOVIE CULTURE AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY ARE interlinked and I want to warn those who are trying to disrupt normal life or day dreaming of bringing disorder that existed before 2019", the Lieutenant Governor said.

Srinagar Records Season's Coldest Night



OWAIS GUL

SRINAGAR: Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir among other parts of the Valley recorded the coldest night of the season with mercury plummeting to below freezing point in the intervening night of Tuesday-Wednesday.

The first sub-zero temperature was recorded in Srinagar this season as the mercury settled to -0.7 degree.

The details further revealed that Qazigund, a gateway of Kashmir, has recorded a minimum temperature of -1.6 degree Celsius while Pahalgam, a famous tourist destination recorded a night temperature of 3.7 degree Celsius.

Gulmarg, a famous ski-resort, recorded a minimum temperature of -0.6 degree while Kupwara recorded -0.8 degree in the intervening night of Tuesday-Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the weatherman said that there is a possibility of gradual

Massive Drop In Application Numbers As 711 Pilgrims Opt Out

JAHANGIR SOFI

SRINAGAR: The number of Hajj pilgrims seems to be further dwindling as over 700 pilgrims who applied for the pilgrimage have opted out of Hajj 2025, reducing the number to only 3,602.

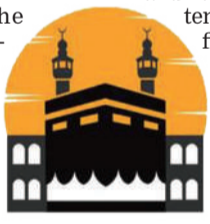
According to details obtained, out of 4,313 applications received for the Hajj 2025, 711 pilgrims were unable to pay fees.

According to the JK Hajj Executive Officer, 711 application forms will be cancelled within a week and the second installment will be announced in the coming

weeks. He said the airfare and hotel accommodations tender was about to be finalised, followed by the payment.

Notably, a low response was again witnessed for Hajj applications this year in Jammu and Kashmir, leaving authorities with no option other than repeatedly extending dates for receiving the applications for Hajj 2025.

With over 35,000 Hajj applications submitted in 2017 from Jammu & Kashmir, the numbers are rapidly declining, with the current year receiving just over 4,300 applications, of which over 700 applicants could



Govt Determined To Establish World-Class Healthcare Infrastructure: Sakeena

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Masood, Wednesday chaired a meeting to review progress on ongoing works on prestigious All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Awantipora.

The Minister had a comprehensive assessment of all the ongoing works of the project. She deliberated on several aspects of this prestigious project with concerned officers and agencies. She also took a detailed review of both physical and financial progress, water supply to AIIMS, construction of approach road and other



allied facilities.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Health and Medical Education, Executive Director AIIMS, Deputy Commissioner

Pulwama, Engineer in Chief R&B, Director Finance H&ME, Chief Engineer, CPWD, Chief Engineers of PDD, JSD, PWD and other concerned

J&K Records Alarming Spike In Accidents

UMAISAR GULL GANIE

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed an alarming rise in road traffic accidents in the first ten months of this year, with 4,990 accidents resulting in 703 deaths and 6,820 injuries across the Union Territory.

Official data accessed reveals that 703 lives have been lost in road accidents till October this year.

"703 people were killed, while 6,820 others were injured in 4,990 accidents across J&K in the past ten months," the data reveals.

The major accident



hotspots include the twin capitals of Jammu and Srinagar, as well as the Chenab Valley, particularly Doda district.

"Jammu district recorded 105 deaths in 910 road accidents, while 43 people lost their lives in 394 accidents in Srinagar. Kulgam district followed with 42 deaths in 138 road accidents," the data reveals.

Statistics show that 893 people were killed and 8,469 injured in road accidents across J&K in 2023. In 2022, 805 fatalities and 8,372 injuries were reported, while in 2021, 774 people lost their lives in 5,452

J&K Govt To Begin Pre-Budget Discussions From November 27

NASIR AZAM

SRINAGAR: The Jammu & Kashmir government's pre-budget meetings with different departments will begin from November 27 to firm up budgetary proposals for 2025-26 and finalise revised estimates for 2024-25.

This will be for the first time after a gap of six years that J&K's budget would be presented in the Assembly of the Union Territory.

As part of its budget preparations, the Finance department will begin the series of meetings on November 27.

During the pre-budget meetings, the J&K Government will hold consultations with 36 administrative departments before concluding the exercise on December 20, reads the schedule released by the Finance Department.

Ahead of the meetings, the Finance Departments has directed departments



to submit the Action Taken Reports (ATRs) on budget announcements, if any, besides the complete details of establishment budget and fiscal resource and budget management (FRBM) to it.

The details have also been directed to submit data on staffing, trends of scheme-wise revenue and capital

expenditure, revenue receipts etc.

This would be after a gap of six years that J&K's budget would be presented in its Assembly.

After the imposition of central rule in J&K in 2018, J&K's budget was presented in Lok Sabha due to absence of the Assembly—(KNO)

JK to Receive Enhanced Ration Quota in 2025: Satish Sharma



REHAN QAYOOM MIR

SRINAGAR: Minister for Food Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA), Satish Sharma on Wednesday said that enhancing ration quota and 12 gas cylinders will be the New Year gift to the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Minister Sharma said that all arrangements have been put in place for winter.

He also said that statehood restoration is a priority and chief minister Omar Abdullah has himself met top leadership in New Delhi. "I believe PM Modi is himself interested in restoring the statehood and all other issues will be addressed after its restoration," he added.

The Minister sought 11 months time to fill the

SINGHAM AGAIN (HINDI) (U/A)
11:40AM, 03:30PM, 6:00PM

BHOOL BHULAIYAA 3 (HINDI) (U/A)
12:05PM, 02:45PM, 06:30PM

SHUSHUR THE FROZEN TIMES (HINDI URDU WITH HINDI SUBTTILES) (U) 4:30PM

KAYA PALAT (HINDI) (UA)
02:10PM

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AHEAD OF THE MEETINGS, THE FINANCE DEPARTMENTS has directed departments to submit the Action Taken Reports (ATRs) on budget announcements, if any, besides the complete details of establishment budget and fiscal resource and budget management (FRBM) to it.

Chairperson DDC B'la chairs review meeting of Development Works

GMK NEWS NETWORK

BARAMULLA: The Chairperson, District Development Council (DDC) Baramulla, Safina Beigh Wednesday chaired a review meeting of all DDC Members and Officers at Dak Bungalow here to take a first-hand appraisal of ongoing developmental works in the district.

The meeting was attended by all the members of DDC, Additional District Development Commissioner Baramulla, Syed Qamar Sajad, Block Development Officers, Officers of R&B, RDD, PDD, and other departments.

At the outset, the ADDC provided a detailed presentation on the physical and financial progress achieved in developmental works being executed under different sectors in the district during the financial year 2024-25.

During the meeting, it was informed that for the financial year 2024-25, under ongoing works, 79 out of 112 projects approved under PRI, BDC, and DDC have been completed, with an expenditure of Rs.1.4 crore.

Similarly, under new works for the financial year 2024-25, 1,877 projects were approved under ADP (PRI/



BDC/DDC). Of these, 1,710 works have been tendered, and 1,230 have been allotted, with a total allocated budget of Rs.31.4 crore.

The chairperson DDC conducted a comprehensive block-wise review of the projects undertaken under the Area Development Plan (ADP), encompassing works approved under PRI, BDC, and DDC categories. The review focused on assessing the progress of each project, identifying any challenges or delays, and evaluating the current status of their implementation and completion.

Meanwhile, the chairperson DDC also conduct-

ed the review of works undertaken by the R&B and other departments under District Capex, ABDP, DDC, and BDC and directed the officers to complete all the allocated works in accordance with the target deadlines.

During the meeting, Safina Beigh directed the concerned authorities to take strict action against contractors causing delays in completion of works by blacklisting them. Furthermore, it was instructed to re-tender the projects that remain pending due to the involvement of such contractors, ensuring that the

works are expedited without further obstruction.

Meanwhile, the DDC chairperson stressed on all the officers and the members of the DDC to ensure completion of targets and utilization of 100% funds to avoid any fund lapse and exhorted upon all the officers to maintain transparency and accountability in the execution of works.

During the meeting, Safina Beigh directed the officers to prevent any procedural delays and ensure that the allocated funds for the projects are utilized effectively without getting lapsed.

DDC B'la inspects Sangrama Flyover Construction Work

GMK NEWS NETWORK

BARAMULLA: The District Development Commissioner (DDC) Baramulla, Minga Sherpa Wednesday conducted a thorough inspection of the ongoing construction work of the Sangrama flyover, which is nearing completion.

During the inspection, DDC reviewed the progress of the project and emphasized the need to expedite the remaining work while maintaining high-quality standards. He directed the executing agency to resolve any pending issues immediately and ensure that all aspects of the construction are completed within the stipulated timeline.

Regular monitoring and coordination among all stakeholders were stressed to avoid any delays.

The Sangrama flyover is a significant infrastructure project aimed at addressing the persistent issue of traffic con-



gestion in the area. Once completed, it is expected to provide a smoother flow of vehicles, significantly reducing traffic jams. Additionally, the flyover is set to boost economic activities across North Kashmir by improving

connectivity and facilitating efficient transportation for businesses.

Highlighting the critical importance of the project, the DDC urged all concerned to focus on the timely completion of the remaining work to ensure

the flyover becomes operational at the earliest, benefiting commuters and traders alike.

The DC was accompanied by ADC Sopore, Shabir Ahmad Raina and other officers during the visit.

DC Budgam reviews functioning of Health sector



GMK NEWS NETWORK

BUDGAM: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Akshay Labroo Wednesday chaired a meeting of senior health functionaries at the Conference Hall of the DC Office Complex, here to review the health sector of the district.

At the outset, the DC took a detailed review of progress under various Health sector schemes, functioning of health institutions, infrastructure upgradation and the healthcare facilities being extended to patients.

The DC also took first hand appraisal of the various Healthcare institutions from Block Medical Officers with respect to the healthcare facilities being extended to the patients and works being executed for infrastructure upgradation and procurement of machinery as per guidelines.

A threadbare discussion was held on the physical status of projects, finan-

cial implications, Healthcare achievements, patient care facilities, registration under Ayushman Bharat Health account (ABHA), Jan Aushadhi Kendras, TB/Leprosy free Panchayat and Wards, establishment of Health wellness centers, status of NDHM, RBSK, NPCDCS, JSY-JSSK, IMR/MMR and other related issues.

Stressing on utmost coordination among the senior Health functionaries and concerned line departments, the DC emphasized on expediting works taken up for upgradation of healthcare infrastructure in the district.

The DC also evaluated other schemes and patient care related reforms undertaken to extend up to mark health services to patients in the district.

Meeting was attended by PO ICDS Budgam, Chief Planning Officer Budgam, Chief Medical Officer Budgam, ACP, Executive Engineers, all Block Medical Officers and other concerned officers.

DC Bandipora reviews status of HADP



GMK NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA: In order to speed up the implementation of the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) and guarantee its success in Bandipora district, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bandipora, Manzoor Ahmad Qadri on Wednesday chaired a meeting with the concerned officers at mini secretariat Bandipora.

During the review, the concerned officers briefed the chair regarding the targets and achievements accomplished since the inception of the HADP in the district.

The DC assessed the status of various components including promotion of Niche Crops, Hydro-

ponic units, farm mechanisation, designer plant production and other elements.

The meeting included in-depth discussions on addressing the challenges faced in implementing the programme, especially in remote areas and highlighted the significance of empowering farmers.

The DC asked the concerned to set clear deadlines for accomplishing specific objectives under the HADP programme and extend hand-holding to young and innovative entrepreneurs.

The meeting was attended by Chief Planning Officer, Chief Animal Husbandry Officer, Chief Agriculture Officer, Chief Horticulture Officer and other concerned.

Training program for JKSSB Examination staff held at GDC Shopian

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN: In order to equip and train the staff deployed for the conduct of the upcoming J&K Service Selection Board (JKSSB) examination for Constable recruitment, the District Administration Shopian Wednesday organised a training programme for magisterial, supervisory and invigilation staff in the Auditorium Hall of GDC, Shopian.

The training programme was held under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar.

Addressing the participants, the DC urged the trainees to equip themselves with all relevant knowledge, codified in Standard and Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the smooth and efficient con-

duct of examinations. He called for strictly adhering to the procedures for a transparent examination.

Earlier, ADC, Dr. Zakir Hussain Faaz briefed the participants about the role and responsibilities of deputed staff besides highlighting the substantial deployment of Center Superintendents, magistrates and Invigilation staff for conduct of JKSSB examination.

Additional Secretary, JKSSB, Raies Ahmad Qazi through PowerPoint presentation sensitized the staff about the major and vital SOPs, Rules and Regulations, Do's & Don'ts to be adopted by the staff for the hassle free conduct.

Other speakers and master trainers also presented training sessions while stressing for facilitating the aspirants with kindness and compassion.

Mega Block Diwas held at 3 blocks of Kulgam



GMK NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM: In order to ensure timely redressal of grievances and issues of people, the Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Kulgam, Bashir Ahmad Wani Wednesday presided over a grievance redressal camp under the weekly Block Diwas initiative at Mini Secretariat Kulgam.

During the event, the ADDC listened to the grievances and issues of people, who flagged-off the developmental demands and other day to day issues

confronting local populace.

Officers from District Administration including ADC, ACR, ACD and other officers were present in the public outreach programme. They on the spot responded to the queries and demands of people pertaining to their departments.

ADDC after giving patient hearing to the public addressed some of the immediate nature of grievances on the spot and assured that the rest of the genuine issues and grievances will be addressed in a time bound manner.

Arrangements for conduct of JKSSB examination reviewed in Kupwara

GMK NEWS NETWORK

KUPWARA: On the instructions of the Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan, the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Kupwara, M Rouf Rehman Wednesday chaired a meeting of all concerned officers to review the arrangements for the smooth conduct of upcoming JKSSB Examination (Constable) to be held with effect from 1st December 2024.

During the meeting, the ADC stressed upon the officers to gear up their men and machinery and extend complete support to ensure fair and transparent conduct of the examination in the district.

The ADC took a detailed review of the arrangements including, establishment of Strong Room, CCTV Surveillance, deposition of the examination material, training of Centre Superintendents/Invigilation staff and deployment of videographers.

Besides, arrangements of electricity and water supply were also reviewed and the concerned Execu-



tive Engineers were directed to ensure these facilities are ensured well before the start of the examination.

Dy. SP Traffic and Dy. SP Hqr. Kupwara were directed to prepare a comprehensive traffic plan to ensure hassle free movement of staff, candidates and transportation of examination material. CMO was directed to ensure functioning of Health Centres located in the vicinity of the design-

ated examination centres. Deployment of Magistrates and Security arrangements were also discussed during the meeting.

Chief Education Officer has been designated as District Nodal Officer for conduct of the JKSSB examination in the district.

The meeting was attended by PO ICDS, ACR, CMO, CEO, Executive Engineers and other concerned Police and Civil officers.

Awareness programme under DAJUA held in Manzagam

GMK NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM: In a significant initiative aimed at empowering tribal communities and fostering sustainable development, an awareness programme 'Dharti Abha Janjatiya Utkarsh Abhiyan' was successfully conducted in Manzagam Wednesday.

The event focused on raising awareness regarding welfare and development programs for tribal populations and environmental conservation. It attracted a substantial number of tribal residents, along with prominent figures from various sectors.

DDC Member Manzagam, Choudhary Jameela was the chief guest on the occasion. She underscored the importance of community involvement in achieving long-term socio-economic development for tribal communities and promoting sustainable environmental practices.

The District Social Welfare Officer Kulgam emphasized that tribal



areas have historically been neglected and assured the community that all government benefits would be promptly extended to these regions.

This initiative is part of a broader movement to uplift tribal areas, addressing critical gaps in social infrastructure, health, education, and livelihood in such villages.

Key objectives include improving housing conditions, promoting economic empowerment, enhancing educational access, and ensur-

ing better healthcare services for tribal populations.

Throughout the day, various activities were organized, including awareness programmes, interactive sessions and sports activities.

Educational kits were also distributed to meritorious tribal girls during the event. The event concluded with a call to action for all community members to actively engage in government efforts aimed at the development of tribal areas.

Nasha Mukht Abhiyan J&K Excise Range South Kashmir organizes Drug Awareness programme



GMK NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM: The Excise Range South Kashmir in collaboration with Govt Higher Secondary School (GHSS) Frisal Wednesday organized series of events on the theme, 'Drug Abuse, its Implications/Challenges & the Way Forward' to raise awareness on Drug menace.

The program commenced with a pledge taken by all participants to say no drugs/psycho-tropic substances. The principal accompanied by Excise officers/officials inaugurated the Sports event, Essay competition and Carrom match.

In the concluding part of the event, oath

was taken by all the participants to not cultivate Poppy/Bhung. All the participants were given appreciation certificates. Medals Mementos were also given to the best performers.

After finishing the event, all the participants were enlightened about the growing menace drug addiction amongst youth. The experts from Excise Department & the Principal delivered comprehensive speech on the topic and made humble requests to the student community for developing an attitude of thanksgiving & further requested them to act as the Ambassadors of the department in floating this message far & wide for greater human cause.

Dy CM outlines multi-pronged strategy to eradicate illegal mining in J&K

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Kumar Choudhary, Wednesday chaired a high-level meeting to deliberate on the pressing issue of illegal mining across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Deputy CM issued clear directives for stringent measures to eradicate illegal mining activities, stressing the importance of night-time vigilance and frequent inspections. He emphasised that no mining operations or hot mix plants should be allowed to function without proper permissions, asserting that accountability at every level of administration was essential to achieving this goal.

The officers were instructed to provide updated and comprehensive data on mining activities and ensure consistent coordination with the



police to enhance field-level monitoring. The Deputy CM noted that robust data management would not only expose irregularities but also strengthen the overall governance of mineral resources.

Surinder Choudhary ordered immediate seizure of machinery and vehicles involved in illegal mining. He highlighted the need for imposing substantial penalties on violators, stating

that such measures would serve as an effective deterrent against unauthorised activities.

Highlighting the environmental consequences of illegal mining, the Dy CM expressed concern over pollution in water bodies and called for concerted efforts to address ecological damage. These measures, he noted, align with the government's broader commitment towards sustainable resource management.

Regarding recurring mismatch between field data and records on the J&K Mining Web Portal, Surinder Choudhary asked the officers to rectify this issue promptly, underscoring the importance of transparency and accountability in mineral resource governance.

The meeting was attended by Director Geology & Mining Puneet Sharma and all District Mining Officers, among others.

CS reviews progress on development of 'Bagh-Gul-e-Dawood' in Sgr



GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Wednesday in a meeting of Floriculture, Gardens & Parks Department, assessed progress on development of Chrysanthemum Theme Park (Bagh-e-Gul-e-Dawood) here at Botanical Garden, Srinagar.

Present in the meeting were Commissioner Secretary, Floriculture Department, Commissioner Secretary, Tourism, DG, Codes, DG, Budget, representative from SKUAST-K and other concerned officers. Dulloo, while reviewing

the current status of the project, enquired about its viability from the concerned faculty of SKUAST Kashmir. He said that establishment of such gardens should be explored at other tourism destinations, besides in and around the Jammu city.

He asked the department to look into creating these autumn season attractions for further prolonging the tourism season in J&K. He advised them to coordinate with the local Agricultural Universities and Tourism Department for enhancing their access and reach in most of the

feasible locations of J&K.

Commissioner Secretary, Floriculture, Gardens & Parks, Sheikh Fayaz, in his presentation, informed that following the success of world famous Tulip Garden the Department has initiated the process of establishing Chrysanthemum Theme Park under the name of (Bagh-Gul-e-Dawood) near Botanical Garden, Srinagar on an area of around 100 Kanal of land.

He revealed that this flower is known as 'Queen of East' and blooms lately in the months of October and November in diverse

hues and colours. It was informed that the flowers would add true delight to autumn months being considered as a symbol of royalty.

The meeting was apprised that the Rs 40 lakh work has been allotted to R&B Department for execution this year. The total cost to be incurred on establishment of this park has been estimated at Rs 1.87 crore together with creation of other amenities and utilities for the visitors who would be able to visit it from next autumn when it would be thrown open for public.

18th edition of Film Bazaar kicks off at IFFI Goa



GMK NEWS NETWORK

NEW DELHI: The 55th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) Wednesday witnessed the vibrant launch of 18th edition of Film Bazaar, South Asia's premier film market. A significant segment of IFFI, Film Bazaar promises a dynamic platform for aspiring filmmakers and established industry professionals to connect, collaborate, and propel the future of cinema.

Sanjay Jaju, Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, while inaugurating Film Bazaar at IFFI, highlighted the record-breaking number of registrations (over 1500) and the presence of more than 10 country-specific pavilions. "This is an exceptional platform to nurture future filmmakers. From presenting ideas to securing deals, Film Bazaar fosters productive interactions across all

levels of the industry," he remarked.

He further elaborated on IFFI's commitment to fostering young talent. "This year's Creative Minds Of Tomorrow (CMOT) program, a beacon for discovering and nurturing India's brightest young talents in filmmaking boasts of a significant expansion, welcoming 100 promising individuals", he added.

Gracing the occasion, Shekhar Kapur, Festival Director of 55th IFFI described Film Bazaar as an interesting platform where young filmmakers present their ideas and creations with passion. "Film Bazaar pulsates with the energy of young filmmakers showcasing their work with immense passion. I truly want to be here and feel that passion", remarked the renowned filmmaker.

Prithul Kumar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of I&B

and MD, NFDC, announced the launch of the Online Film Bazaar initiative. He said, the innovative platform serves as a virtual hub for global buyers and sellers to connect, exchange ideas, and drive the business of cinema forward.

Vrunda Manohar Desai, Joint Secretary (Films), Ministry of I&B, unveiled details of the Co-Production Market, featuring 21 feature films and 8 web series from seven countries. Highlighting the Viewing Room, a vital resource for filmmakers seeking distribution and funding, she revealed that 208 films will be available for viewing this year, encompassing feature, mid-length, and short formats.

The event was graced by the presence of distinguished guests, including Jerome Paillard, Advisor Film Bazaar, and Nicholas McCaffrey, Deputy High Commissioner of Australia to India.

71st Cooperative Week celebration

Cooperative Societies bedrock of rural development: Javid Dar

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Minister for Cooperative, Agriculture Production, Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, Javid Ahmad Dar, Wednesday remarked that Cooperative societies are the bedrock of rural development while advocating strengthening of cooperative movement to benefit local communities.

The Minister made these remarks while addressing the 71st Cooperative Week celebrations at Convention Centre here, celebrated annually in third week of November. The event serves as a platform to highlight the transformative impact of cooperatives on rural development, poverty alleviation and self-reliance.

Secretary Cooperative, Babila Rakhwal, Registrar Cooperatives, J&K, Mohammad Shafi, CGM NABARD, Joint Registrar Cooperatives, Additional Registrars, Deputy Registrars, representatives of various cooperative societies, teachers and students of various cooperative schools and other concerned were present on the occasion.

Addressing the gathering, the Minister underlined that Cooperatives is a mission and we need to work in mission mode to achieve its objectives. He called upon all the stakeholders to work together to



achieve the desired goals of cooperatives.

Javid Dar underscored the need for owning responsibilities of all stakeholders involved, highlighting that everyone should know his responsibilities and work with sincerity to make this movement successful. He read out the famous quote of Author and Philosopher Helen Keller, "Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much".

The Minister outlined the indispensable role of cooperatives in addressing the developmental challenges faced by rural areas. He underlined how cooperatives have been at the forefront of fostering inclusive growth, particularly in sectors like agriculture, rural banking, dairy and consumer goods. "Cooperative societies

are bedrock of rural development. They provide a platform for individuals, particularly in underserved areas, to access financial services, livelihood opportunities and community welfare programs", Javid Dar maintained. He highlighted that Cooperatives have a pivotal role to play in shaping the socio-economic landscape of Jammu and Kashmir.

Earlier, the Minister inspected various stalls set up by different cooperative societies and also interacted with their respective representatives. The Minister, during the celebrations, launched

the new Super Bazaar logo of the cooperative department. He also released Compendium as well as ERP Audit Module of the department.

An MoU between Unnati Agri Allied and Marketing Multistate Cooperative Society and J&K Ex-servicemen Cooperative Store Limited was also exchanged on the occasion in presence of the Minister.

In her welcome address, Secretary Cooperatives, Babila Rakhwal outlined the core objectives of Cooperative department and the achievements made by the department in recent years.

CGM, NABARD also spoke on the occasion and enlightened the audience about the role of Cooperative sector in the development of country.

PDP's Actions in 2008, 2016 Destructed J&K: Nasir Aslam

AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam, today launched a scathing attack against the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) over their recent remarks on the National Conference's (NC) resolution, accusing the PDP of misleading people and creating division within society.

Aslam said the PDP has consistently worked against the collective interests of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"What they did in 2008, they repeated in 2010, and their actions in 2016 are also well-remembered by the people. Their agenda has always been to misguide the public and sow discord," he stated.

He accused the PDP of prioritizing political stunts over the development and welfare of the valley. "Even in the past, they supported disruptive politics, and today they continue to indulge in the same practices. They have never considered how people could progress or prosper," he remarked.

Referring to the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A, Aslam held the PDP responsible, claiming that their past alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 2014 laid the groundwork for the state's subsequent troubles. "If they hadn't supported the BJP then, neither would Article 370 have been scrapped, nor would we have witnessed a decade of destruction," he asserted.

Aslam urged the PDP leadership to introspect and take responsibility for their actions, stating, "The people will never forgive them for the damage they have caused." (ANB)

Comm Secy reviews progress on tourism development projects

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Commissioner Secretary, Tourism, Yasha Mudgal, Wednesday convened a meeting to review progress on various tourism development projects being implemented by the Public Works (R&B) Department.

The meeting focused on the status of ongoing projects, the Budget Estimates for 2025-26 and the Revised Estimates for 2024-25 under the UT Capex Budget.

Secretary Public Works (R&B), Directors of Tourism Kashmir and Jammu, Managing Director, JKCC/JKTDC, Chief Engineers of PW (R&B) for Central Kashmir, North Kashmir and South Kashmir, Chief Engineer of PWD (R&B) for Jammu, Pir Panchal and Chenab Valley, Director Finance, Tourism Department, Director Plan-

ning, Tourism Department, Director, SKICC, All Chief Executive Officers of Tourism Development Authorities and Secretary, JTGC/RSGC/RGC were present in the meeting.

The Commissioner Secretary expressed concern over the slow pace of work and low fund utilization under the Capex Budget.

It was decided that the Commissioner Secretary Tourism and the Secretary PWD would conduct zone-wise reviews to ensure the timely completion of projects.

Yasha Mudgal instructed the concerned officers to prepare detailed progress reports and meet established monthly targets to complete the work under the Capex Budget. She issued strong directions to accelerate project execution and ensure full expenditure by the end of the financial year.

Secy Health reviews infrastructure for MCCH, GMC Anantnag

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Secretary Health & Medical Education, Dr Syed Abid Rashid Shah, Wednesday chaired a meeting regarding establishment of additional infrastructure for Maternal and Childcare Associated Hospital (MCCH) for GMC, Anantnag.

The Secretary directed the concerned officers to initiate necessary steps for establishment of a Maternity and Child Care Hospital as an Associated Hospital of Government Medical College Anantnag. He emphasised that this initiative shall go further in improving the Maternal & Child Health Care Services in Anantnag district and its adjoining areas. The measure will decongest the existing Associate Hospital of GMC Anantnag while fulfilling long pending demand of people of the area for provision of Tertiary level comprehensive child and mater-



nal care services in the area.

Further, Chief Engineer, PW(R&B) South Kashmir was directed to furnish Detailed Project Report for a 200 Bedded Maternal and Child Care hospital at Janglat Mandi, Anantnag within the next 45 days.

District Development Commissioner Anantnag, Principal Government Medical College Anantnag, Direc-

tor Coordinator New Medical Colleges, Director Health Services Kashmir and Superintending Engineer PWD South Kashmir attended the meeting.

Among the officers of Health & Medical Education Department Director Finance HME, Joint Director Planning & Deputy Director Planning also participated the meeting.

Srinagar petrol pump declares no fuel for minors, helmetless riders

REHAN QAYOUM MIR

SRINAGAR: A petrol pump at Bypass, Srinagar has put up a poster about road safety, declaring no fuel for vehicles driven by minors and those driving two-wheelers without helmets.

The poster reads: "For 2 Wheelers, No Helmet, No Fuel" and "For Minors, No Fuel".

On November 14, two young boys died, while another one was critically injured after a tragic collision between two vehicles occurred near the Tengpora area in Srinagar, which triggered debate about minor driving and road safety in the valley. Also, the traffic police on Tuesday issued a WhatsApp number to report traffic violations.

The poster which specifically targets minors riding in the valley and

two-wheelers without helmets, has gone viral, drawing praise from residents and urging authorities to take action.

The initiative, displayed by a fueling station near Bypass Srinagar, focuses on preventing minors from riding without proper safety measures, especially helmets.

The message aims to enforce stricter safety norms, stressing that fueling stations should not provide fuel to minors or those without helmets. This initiative soon received support as it went viral on social media.

Nadeem Bashir, a local from Bemina Srinagar, said, "I fully support this initiative. It's high time something is done to stop minors from riding without helmets. This rule should be made mandatory across all fuel stations." He added, "Too

many young people are riding recklessly, and this will certainly make a difference."

Another resident, Sahi Mir, said, "The authorities should implement this idea as soon as possible. It's not just about helmets or giving fuel to minors, but saving the lives of minors who are often seen riding dangerously."

Hailing the initiative, a local shopkeeper said, "It is a great idea. Fuel stations should be part of the solution to curb underage riding. If they refuse to provide fuel, it will send a strong message about safety and responsibility."

As the poster went viral, it sparked hopes that similar measures could be enforced throughout the city, ensuring minors prioritise their safety while riding two-wheelers—(KNO)

Good Morning **Kashmir**

EDITORIAL

School Blaze

About a week ago there was a pandemonium at Kursu Rajbagh in uptown Srinagar. The third floor of the main building of Muslim Public School was on fire. The people of the area had an emotional bond with the school as it was an alma mater to the children of the blue-collared workforce in the vicinity. The school had been running for four decades straight teaching lower-middle-class children on a no-profit no-loss basis. When this school was on fire it left a pall of gloom descending on the whole area. Every eye that had come to witness the blaze was moist and every hand raised skywards for prayers. This school was the heartbeat of the area and everyone was genuinely concerned about its top floor going up in flames. The school authorities in this case were prompt to evacuate all students safely in time and the chance of damage to human life was averted.

Just three days ago another school went up in flames in Kulgam district. Even though the fire tenders have managed to douse the flames in time preventing substantial damage to the building, the question about our children's safety remains. The fire extinguishers which are among the mandatory due diligence amenities in any public building are missing in most school buildings or wherever present are in bad shape or totally dysfunctional. These two incidents happened at the same time when a children's hospital went up in flames in Uttar Pradesh leading to deaths of more than ten children. The incident in Uttar Pradesh has again raised serious questions about the security of patients and students at our hospitals and schools. The sight of seeing young children burning alive is enough to send shivers down anyone's spine.

The registration of schools which do not have a fire escape and functioning fire extinguishers should be canceled as it is a critical matter regarding the security of our children. The government must undertake a thorough inspection of all government as well as private schools to ensure that they have the requisite infrastructure and gadgets in place. The government needs to be proactive here on top priority.

...Breathing In Danger

How Pollution Impacts Pulmonary Health



DR. SARVINDER SINGH

Air pollution has become a pressing health crisis worldwide, significantly affecting respiratory health. North India, particularly the Delhi-NCR region, is grappling with dangerously high air pollution levels. These rising pollution levels not only exacerbate existing pulmonary conditions but also lead to a surge in new respiratory ailments, putting immense strain on public health systems.

The Link Between Pollution and Lung Health

Air pollution is composed of harmful particles like fine particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, and volatile organic compounds. These microscopic particles penetrate deep into the lungs, triggering inflammation, reducing lung function, and exacerbating chronic conditions such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and bronchitis. Long-term exposure to polluted air can also contribute to the development of serious lung diseases, including lung cancer and interstitial lung disease.

According to a recent study, individuals exposed to high pollution levels over time face a significantly higher risk of developing respiratory infections and chronic lung conditions. For children and the elderly, the effects are even more severe due to their weaker immune systems. Alarmingly, recent air quality data from North India reveals hazardous pollution levels, with particulate matter concentrations far exceeding safe limits recommended by the World



Health Organization.

The Burden of Chronic Respiratory Diseases

For those already suffering from chronic respiratory diseases, air pollution acts as a dangerous aggravator. Asthma attacks, COPD flare-ups, and increased hospitalizations are common during peak pollution seasons. Doctors report a marked increase of 10-20% in respiratory cases during the winter months, attributed to spiking pollution levels caused by stubble burning, industrial emissions, and vehicular pollution.

The situation is particularly dire in urban areas, where rapid urbanization and limited green spaces contribute to sustained high pollution levels. People with pre-existing conditions are at a greater risk of experiencing severe complications, including reduced oxygen

exchange in the lungs, making breathing more difficult and affecting overall quality of life.

Fighting the Invisible Threat

Mitigating the impact of pollution on lung health requires systemic change and individual precautions. Governments must enforce stricter pollution control measures, invest in renewable energy sources, and promote sustainable urban planning to combat the crisis.

On an individual level, reducing outdoor exposure during high-pollution days, using air purifiers indoors, and wearing high-quality masks can offer some protection. People with chronic pulmonary conditions should consult pulmonologists to adjust medications during pollution peaks. Incorporating antioxidants into diets and engaging

in breathing exercises can also help strengthen respiratory health.

Hope for Cleaner Skies

While the challenges posed by air pollution are immense, greater awareness and coordinated efforts can pave the way for healthier lungs and cleaner air. By addressing the pollution crisis head-on, both policymakers and individuals can work together to protect pulmonary health and improve the quality of life for millions.

As air pollution continues to rise, its connection to respiratory health serves as a stark reminder of the urgent need for action. The air we breathe is vital to our survival, and safeguarding it is essential for protecting the lungs and lives of future generations.

Author is Senior Consultant - Pulmonology, Yatharth Hospital, Greater Noida

WAYS AHEAD

Financial Literacy And Independence Of Women



DR. RAJKUMAR SINGH

Financial literacy is the ability to understand and effectively use various financial skills, including personal financial management, budgeting, investing, and planning for the future, while being financially literate means we have a basic understanding of how money works and can make informed decisions that help you achieve financial security and goals. In today's world, financial literacy and independence are crucial for women's empowerment, allowing them greater control over their lives, stability, and the ability to contribute economically to their families and communities.

Financial Literacy: Financial literacy enables women to understand money management, investing, budgeting, and saving. With this knowledge, women can: Manage personal finances: Understanding how to budget, track spending, and save effectively helps women manage daily expenses and plan for long-term goals. Avoid debt and build credit: Learning about interest rates, debt management, and credit scores prevents costly financial mistakes. Make informed investment decisions: Knowing about savings accounts, mutual funds, stocks, bonds, and retirement accounts enables women to grow their wealth.

Understand financial products: Familiarity with insurance, loans, and mortgages ensures women make the right choices and avoid predatory practices. Build confidence in financial discussions: Financial literacy equips women to make significant decisions, negotiate salaries, and advocate for fair compensation. **b. Financial Independence:** Financial independence means having the resources to support oneself without relying on others, which leads to: Freedom from dependency: Women with financial independence aren't as vulnerable



to economic abuse or coercive control. Greater life choices: Financial stability offers flexibility in career, education, and personal life decisions, allowing for more fulfillment and growth. Security and resilience: Financial independence creates a safety net during life changes, like retirement, divorce, or illness. Supporting family and community: Financially independent women contribute to their communities, invest in their children's education, and often drive local economic development.

Ways to Foster Financial Literacy and Independence: Education programs: Schools, community centres, and workplaces can offer financial literacy programs for girls and women. Access to financial tools: Savings accounts, mobile banking, and microfinance loans tailored to women's needs can help. Role models and mentors: Seeing other women succeed in financial management and independence provides encouragement and guidance. Public policy support: Policies that support fair pay, job flexibility, parental leave, and retirement benefits are vital for women's financial growth. Empowering women with financial knowledge and independence is transformative, reducing poverty, improving education, and fostering economic growth on a larger scale.

Financial literacy for women has its roots in the broader social, economic, and educational movements that sought to improve women's rights and empower them as individuals. Over the past century, various factors have

contributed to the development and spread of financial literacy for women, leading to a more inclusive financial landscape. **a. Historical Background:** 19th and Early 20th Century: For much of history, women were excluded from formal financial systems, and in many countries, laws prevented them from owning property, signing contracts, or working in certain fields. Marital laws often placed women's financial assets under the control of their husbands, limiting their ability to manage their own finances. Women were rarely seen as needing or deserving of financial education. Post-War Economic Shifts: World War II marked a significant shift as women entered the workforce in large numbers, out of both necessity and opportunity, while men were away at war.

This experience laid the groundwork for greater financial involvement. Women gained skills and financial experience, challenging traditional views about women's economic roles. **b. Beginning of Financial Literacy Initiatives for Women:** Consumer Protection Movements: In the 1970s and 1980s, consumer rights groups advocated for clearer and more accessible information about financial products, which highlighted the importance of financial literacy. As women increasingly managed their own finances, tailored resources and courses for women began to emerge. Non-profit and Community Programs: In the 1990s, non-profit organizations and community centres started offering financial literacy workshops specifically

for women, addressing topics like budgeting, credit management, and retirement planning.

Many of these programs focused on marginalized communities where women had historically been excluded from financial knowledge. Government Initiatives and Policies: Many governments started promoting financial literacy as a public policy goal, recognizing that financially literate citizens contribute to a stronger economy. Financial literacy programs were introduced in schools and community centres, with some initiatives specifically aimed at women, who were often underserved by traditional financial education programs. Corporate and Financial Sector Engagement: Financial institutions and corporations began to realize the untapped potential of female consumers. Banks, insurance companies, and investment firms started creating programs to educate women about financial products and services, often hosting workshops, seminars, and online resources aimed at improving financial literacy for women. Today, financial literacy for women continues to expand, encouraged by growing awareness of the importance of economic independence and equality.

The financial independence of women offers far-reaching benefits, impacting not only the women themselves but also their families, communities, and the broader economy. **a. Empowerment and Personal Freedom:** Increased Autonomy: Financially independent women have more control over their life choices,

including career, education, relationships, and living situations. **Enhanced Self-Confidence:** Managing their own finances boosts confidence, allowing women to take on new challenges and pursue personal growth.

Freedom from Dependency: Financial independence reduces reliance on partners or family members, minimizing the risk of financial abuse or control in relationships. **b. Improved Family Well-being:** Better Family Stability: Financially independent women are better positioned to support their families, providing stability and security. Investment in Children's Education: Financially secure mothers are more likely to invest in their children's education and healthcare, improving outcomes for the next generation. **c. Health and Wellness Benefits:** Improved Mental Health: Financial independence can reduce the stress and anxiety associated with financial insecurity, which often leads to better mental health and overall well-being. Access to Healthcare: Women with financial resources can more easily afford regular healthcare and preventative measures, leading to improved physical health and longevity.

Long-Term Financial Security: Retirement Preparedness: Financially independent women are more likely to save for retirement and plan for the future, ensuring they have the resources needed in their later years. **Wealth Building:** Through smart financial management, investing, and asset building, women can grow their wealth, providing security for themselves and future generations. **d. Social and Cultural Shift:** Reduces Gender Inequality: Financial independence for women helps address systemic gender inequalities by empowering them to participate equally in economic and financial matters. **Role Models and Inspiration:** Financially independent women serve as role models for others, inspiring younger generations and creating a culture that values and supports women's financial empowerment. In essence, financial independence empowers women to make choices that enhance their lives and contribute positively to society, leading to a more equitable and resilient world.

Author is a youth motivator

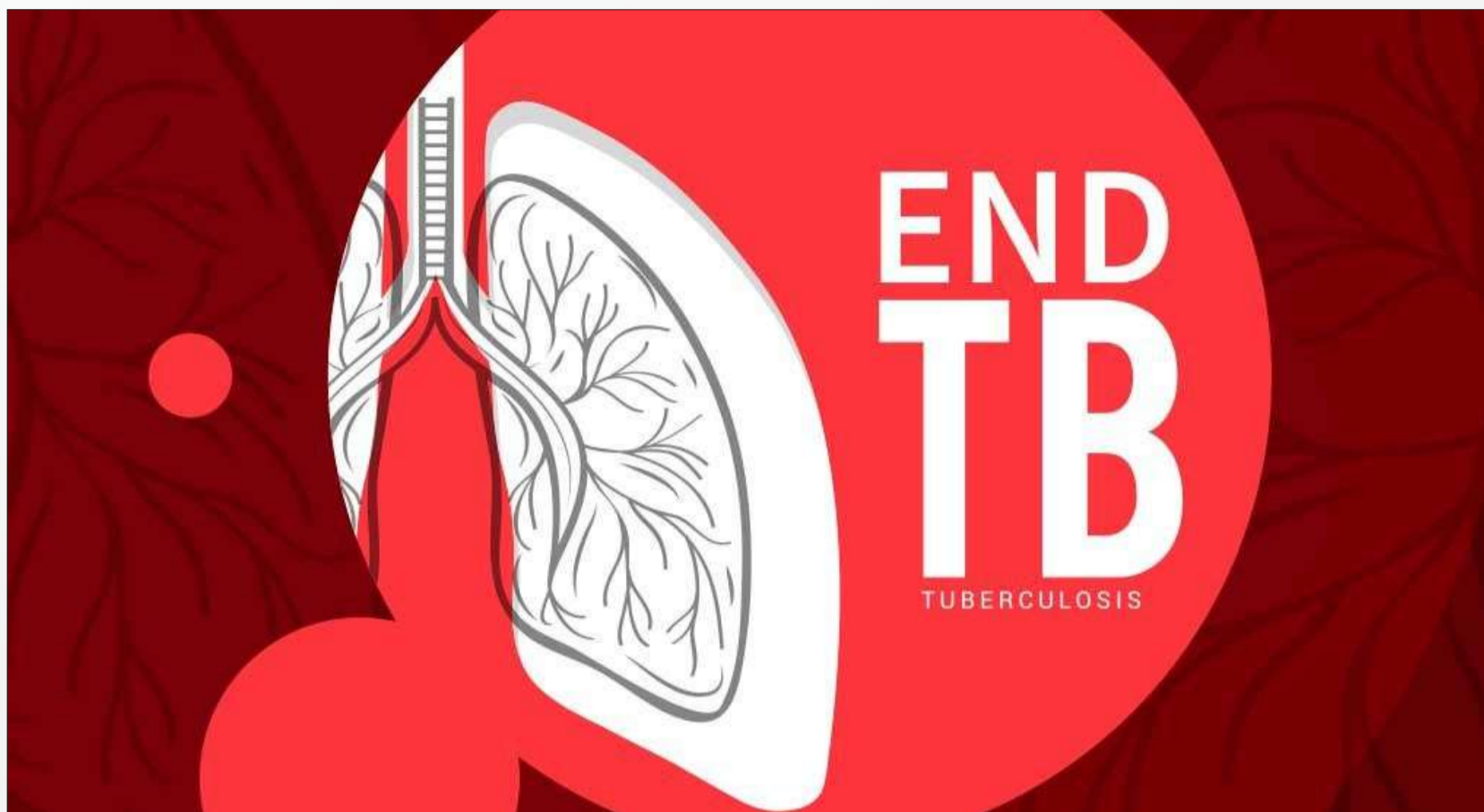
IDEAS, OPINIONS AND VIEWS EXPRESSED IN ARTICLES PUBLISHED ARE WRITERS' OWN AND MAY NOT BE FOUND IN ACCORD WITH THOSE OF GOOD MORNING KASHMIR

Are We On The Wrong Side Of The #endTB Track?



SHOBHA SHUKLA

"It is time to stop decades of failure. We have a lot to do to #EndTB by 2030," said Professor (Dr) Guy Marks, President of the International Union Against TB and Lung Disease (The Union), at the opening of the largest TB and lung health conference this year in Bali, Indonesia (Union World Lung Health Conference 2024).



Marks is bang on spot. Historically, we have never been on track to end TB in high-TB-burden countries. At best, we have been diagnosing and treating TB and saving lives—and preventing some TB—but majorly failing to arrest the infection-spread and end TB. If we could prevent TB, then how come 10.8 million people got infected with TB last year, as per the new WHO Global TB Report 2024? This amounts to TB prevention failure 10.8 million times last year itself.

Of course, over the decades, much work has been done to control TB—but we are still not in TB elimination mode. Millions have got lifesaving TB services but millions more have also got newly infected with TB - year after year. Millions of lives have been saved of TB but over a million die of TB - year after year. We need to face these inconvenient truths that reflect decades of failure - and truly and fully transition from TB control to #endTB response.

Primarily, with an array of evidence-based tools to prevent TB, no one should get infected with TB in the first place - or die of it. Even one TB death is a death too many.

TB treatment is also prevention because soon after a person with TB disease gets an effective treatment, the infection stops spreading. Nutrition, tobacco control, alcohol control, HIV and diabetes prevention and management, and optimal infection control, are important ways to reduce the risk of TB.

If we can find all TB early enough (when it is asymptomatic) and accurately, and link each of the persons diagnosed to effective TB treatment, and support them fully through their treatment and care, we can help shift gears from TB control mode to TB elimination mode.

Legend speaks: Dr Dirgh Singh Bam at WCLH 2024

"TB despite being curable, killed over a million people each year and affected millions more," said Dr Dirgh Singh Bam, who was delivering his opening keynote address at a session of the global meet. Dr Bam is a noted chest physician and a former Health Secretary of the government of Nepal; former Director of the National TB Programme, Ministry of Health and Population, Nepal; former Director of SAARC TB Centre; and a former member of the Board of Directors, The Union.

"TB is deeply rooted in several communities around the world as a health crisis, social and economic burden. All stakeholders including TB survivors have to collaborate effectively to find all people with TB - early and accurately - and treat all of them. Community leadership is a force for change when it comes to ensuring equitable access to full cascade of TB, health and social services for everyone - especially those likely to be left behind," said Dr Bam. He called for stronger political commitment at all levels - including sub-national level

so that well-coordinated local actions can deliver on the promises enshrined in global goals.

Screen everyone regardless of TB symptoms in high-burden settings

While speaking in a WCLH 2024 session on finding, treating and preventing all TB, Dr Kuldeep Singh Sachdeva, reiterated that to eliminate TB we must try to screen the entire population for TB, offer upfront WHO-recommended molecular testing to all those with presumptive TB, and put them on treatment without delay. Dr Sachdeva served an illustrious tenure earlier as head of the Indian government's TB and HIV programmes and also served as Southeast Asian Director of The Union. Currently, he leads Molbio Diagnostics as President and Chief Medical Officer.

"We must also look for TB in the not-so-vulnerable populations. You will find 50% of TB in non-vulnerable and non-symptomatic populations. It has been demonstrated in various surveys that 50-60% of individuals who test positive for TB do not have any symptoms and look healthy - they

have WHO-approved point of care, battery-operated, molecular diagnostic tools like Truenat; we have shorter and patient-friendly treatment regimens that can effectively cure drug-sensitive and drug-resistant TB; and we have TB preventive treatment to prevent TB along with science-backed ways to prevent TB (such as infection control, tobacco and alcohol control, nutrition, NCDs and HIV prevention and control, among others).

But unless we deploy these tools on the ground to find the so-called 'missing TB cases' and put them on treatment and care we will never be able to eliminate TB.

Unacceptable: Missing TB among those who take a TB test

Finding all TB early and accurately needs the programme to be rooted in elimination mode. But quite several public health programmes are not even geared toward finding all TB in people who come to health facilities for TB diagnosis, forget about the "missing TB cases."

Way back in 2018, WHO had asked

could access molecular testing in 2023. In Africa, 54% of TB patients could get diagnosed on a molecular test.

As per India TB Report 2024, TB case notifications increased to 179 cases per 0.1 million population in 2023 (2.55 million TB cases were notified). However, only 21% of the presumptive TB cases were offered a rapid molecular diagnostic test.

Presumptive TB testing by microscopy increased by 40% (from 986.6 per 0.1 million population in 2022 to 1352 per 0.1 million population in 2023). This totally overshadows the 22% increase in rapid molecular testing for the same period.

End inequities and injustices that plague the TB response

Till we get a safe and effective TB vaccine, let us at least roll out the currently existing TB tools that are available for diagnostics, treatments, and prevention - equitably - and chart a pathway to help roll out other upcoming new technologies with equity and justice in future. We cannot be paralysed by a dream of a futuristic vaccine when we are failing miserably to

rightly said Tariro Kutadza, firebrand health justice and human rights activist who leads TB People (Zimbabwe). TB People (Zimbabwe) launched the Africa call to find all TB at the largest AIDS and STIs conference in Africa in 2023 (ICASA).

"We can end TB now if we end inequity and social injustices. We can end TB if we deploy the best of existing TB diagnostic, treatment and prevention services in a people-centric, gender-transformative and rights-based manner - with standard WHO-recommended screening and upfront diagnostic tools. Ending inaccurate and delayed diagnosis of TB will help reduce catastrophic costs too and break the chain of infection transmission," added Kutadza.

TB programmes will have to screen everyone (and not just those with TB symptoms) with WHO-recommended screening tools; confirm those with presumptive TB using molecular tests; put them on appropriate treatment and ensure that they complete the treatment in a socially just and equitable manner.

Global call to find all TB to stop TB

The Global Call to Find All TB to Stop TB was launched in 2023 by organisations and individuals who united to find all TB in a people-centred and rights-based manner - and link all of them to care: www.bit.ly/findalltb. It has been endorsed by over 2000 organisations and individuals so far including The Union.

The call has the key ask to stop missing TB cases, and 2 action points:

100% replacement of sputum smear microscopy with WHO-recommended molecular tests as soon as possible, along with a shift from a lab-centric to a people-centric model to find TB, leaving no one behind.

Find the missing millions by screening everyone (and not just those with TB symptoms) with WHO-recommended screening tools and confirm those with presumptive TB using molecular tests.

Let us hope we are able to end TB and advance progress towards all other goals and targets enshrined in SDGs for 2030. Only 73 months are left and the urgency to get on the right track to end TB and deliver on all SDGs is not only compelling but also a human rights imperative.

(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 prestigious Loreto Convent College and current Coordinator of Asia Pacific Regional Media Alliance for Health and Development (APCAT Media) and Chairperson of Global AMR Media Alliance (GAMA). She coordinates SHE & Rights Media Initiative (Sexual health with equity and rights). Follow her on Twitter @shobhaishukla or read her writings here www.bit.ly/ShobhaShukla)



#FindAllTB → #TreatAllTB → #PreventAllTB



will have symptoms 6 months later when the disease has advanced [and has spread to many more]. The aim of eliminating TB is to find them as early as possible. You can find 50% of the estimated TB in healthy populations if you reach them through the existing tools of TB screening," he said.

Thanks to science, today we have the tools to find all TB, treat all TB and prevent all TB, (and stop the spread of infection) even for those living in disadvantaged and/or difficult-to-reach areas. We have WHO-recommended ultraportable handheld and battery-operated x-ray machines to screen people for TB; we

governments to replace the underperforming microscopy test with 100% upfront molecular testing by 2027. World leaders also re-echoed this goal at the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting on TB in 2023.

Yet, as per the WHO Global TB Report 2024, less than 50% of the new TB cases in 2023 could get upfront molecular testing globally - the rest got microscopy which is an outdated test and misses 50% of the cases. So, we missed the other half of people who had TB and took a TB test - we missed them because we used a bad test. The situation is more dismal in South-East Asia where less than 40%

roll out best-of-health technologies with equity and justice today.

"Racial inequity and injustices, as well as lack of political will and commitment, continue to plague the TB response. The majority of the TB burden is in poor - low- and middle-income countries in the Global South where most of new TB infections as well as TB deaths occur. Recently a public health emergency was declared in Long Island USA, when one TB case was reported. Dozens of contact tracings were done. But in many countries of the Global South, TB is a public health emergency, and a social justice emergency every single day,"

Protein Shakes: Here Are The Dos & Don'ts

Protein shakes are beverages made by mixing protein powder — often derived from sources like whey, casein, soy, or plant-based proteins like pea or hemp—with water, milk, or other liquids. They are commonly used as a convenient source of protein to support muscle repair, growth, and recovery, especially after exercise. While protein shakes can be a healthy addition to a balanced diet, providing essential amino acids and aiding in satiety, there are several dos and don'ts to consider. Below we discuss some common dos and don'ts you must consider when consuming protein shakes.



amino acid profile, essential for muscle repair and growth, especially after workouts.

2. Consume protein shakes at the right time

To maximise benefits, consume your protein shake at strategic times, such as after a workout or in the morning. Post-workout shakes help repair and

rebuild muscle fibres, enhancing recovery. Drinking a protein shake in the morning can provide a quick and convenient source of protein to kickstart

your metabolism.

3. Balance your protein intake with whole foods

While protein shakes can be convenient, they should complement

a balanced diet rich in whole foods like lean meats, fish, eggs, dairy, legumes, nuts, and seeds. Whole foods provide a variety of other essential nutrients, including vitamins, minerals, and fibre, which are crucial for overall health.

4. Adjust your protein shake to your fitness goals

Customise your protein shake to align with your fitness goals. If you're aiming for muscle gain, choose a shake with higher protein content and mix it with milk or add ingredients like nut butter for extra calories.

Don'ts

1. Don't over-consume protein shakes

Overconsumption of protein shakes can lead to an excess intake of protein, which may strain the kidneys and liver, especially in individuals with pre-existing conditions. Excess protein is also stored as fat, contributing to unwanted weight gain.

2. Don't rely solely on protein shakes

Avoid relying exclusively on protein shakes for your protein needs. Whole foods provide a

more diverse range of nutrients that protein shakes may lack, such as fibre, phytonutrients, and essential fatty acids. A balanced diet rich in a variety of whole foods is crucial for overall health.

3. Don't ignore added sugars
Many commercial protein shakes contain high levels of sugar, artificial sweeteners, flavours, and preservatives that can contribute to health issues like weight gain, blood sugar spikes, and digestive discomfort. Always read the ingredient list and choose products with minimal added sugars.

4. Don't consume them without hydration

Protein metabolism requires water, and consuming protein shakes without adequate hydration can lead to dehydration, especially for those engaging in intense physical activity. Hydration is key for kidney function, muscle recovery, and general well-being.

By following these dos and don'ts, you can effectively incorporate protein shakes into your diet in a way that supports your fitness goals and overall health.

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

CM Calls For

sectors often goes unnoticed," he said. He stressed the economic potential of agriculture and allied sectors, stating, "I firmly believe that focusing on these sectors can significantly transform J&K's economy. We rely heavily on imports for many necessities, such as dairy products, meat, and oilseeds. Our efforts should aim to produce these locally through import substitution. If we achieve surplus production, we can sell it outside, leading to a positive shift in J&K's economy."

Omar Abdullah called for efforts to restore farming as a viable and respected livelihood for future generations.

"Our farmers must feel confident that their hard work on the land will generate income. However, it is disheartening that the younger generation is distancing itself from agriculture. Productive agricultural land is increasingly being used for non-agricultural purposes because our children hesitate to connect with agriculture and allied sectors. This mindset needs to change," he lamented.

Speaking about Jammu's agricultural potential, he said, "Multiple-farming, cultivating staple crops, and utilizing land for high-value products hold immense potential. Jammu is already renowned for its RS Pura Basmati, Rajma and Gucchi mushrooms from Kishtwar. Products like olives and exotic fruits, which were unheard of just a few years ago, are now becoming common in our homes. There is no scarcity of potential here."

He further emphasized the importance of undertaking research and ensuring that its benefits reach every corner of J&K.

"The practical implementation of research is crucial, and the responsibility lies in ensuring that its benefits reach every corner of Jammu and Kashmir. Farmers must be informed about the advantages of these practices so that agriculture becomes productive and attractive, even for the younger generation."

The Chief Minister also pledged his government's unwavering support to SKUAST, saying, "This four-day program is an excellent initiative for farmers and visitors to learn and benefit from. My government will fully support and assist the university in its endeavors. We stand shoulder to shoulder with you, and you will always find our doors open to help this institution thrive."

During the event, Omar Abdullah released several books on agriculture and research authored by various experts.

He also felicitated progressive farmers from Jammu division for their contributions to the sector.

Earlier, the Chief Minister inaugurated the National Agriculture Summit & Farmers' Fair-2024 in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary, Minister for Agriculture Production Javid Ahmad Dar, Vice Chancellor SKUAST-Jammu BN Tripathi, MLA RS Pura-Jammu South Dr. Narinder Singh Raina, and other dignitaries.

On the occasion, Omar Abdullah laid the foundation stone of the Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship Development at the main campus of SKUAST-Jammu and planted saplings of various fruit plants alongside the Deputy CM, Agriculture Minister, MLA, and VC SKUAST-Jammu.

The Chief Minister also inspected stalls set up by agriculture and allied departments, interacting with staff and farmers.

He inaugurated the Krishi Mela Rural Sports by blowing a whistle and witnessed a tug-of-war competition among boys and girls of different categories.

The event witnessed the participation of scholars, researchers, scientists, students, and progressive farmers, making it a significant platform for knowledge-sharing and capacity-building in agriculture.

not just entertainment but also influences the greater cause of service and human values. I believe a good film is one which strikes a balance between entertainment and social concern," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor exhorted film-makers that they possess a powerful medium of change which can play an important role in establishing equality, social justice and help in eradicating social evils.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor also spoke on the progressive Film policy of J&K and series of initiatives, including operationalization of Cinema Halls in Kashmir, incentives to film makers, Single Window portal, taken by the government to create a vibrant film ecosystem in Union Territory of Jammu Kashmir. He said that Jammu Kashmir will host the International Film Festival next year.

At the inaugural ceremony, the Lieutenant Governor paid homage to famous Theatre and Film personality of J&K, Shri Mushtaq Kak and recalled his outstanding contribution to the world of cinema and theatre.

The Lieutenant Governor also lauded the efforts of 'Vometh Organization' for promoting cinema in Jammu Kashmir and felicitated various stakeholders associated with the event. Renowned filmmaker and actor, Sh Pankaj Khajuria was conferred with the Mushtaq Kak award.

Ms. Yasha Mudgal, Commissioner Secretary, Tourism Department; Sh Shiv Kumar Sharma, DIG Jammu -Samba -Kathua Range; Sh Rohit Bhat, President Vometh and Festival Director of Jammu Film Festival & TIFFS; senior officials, participants of the Film Festival, industry professionals, prominent artists and cinema enthusiasts were present.

Srinagar Records

drop in the night temperature onwards. Director Meteorological department (MeT), Dr Mukhtar Ahmad said that as there is no forecast of any major wet spell, the night temperature may go further down in Kashmir including Srinagar in the coming days.

"In plains, it may go down and settle around -3 degree Celsius while in higher reaches, it may go down upto -5 degree Celsius," he said, adding that from November 22nd, there is a possibility of light snowfall in higher reaches and rains in plains, but as far as the forecast is concerned, no major activity is expected till November 25.

About the air quality index, he said that the present status is moderate, but in case the dry spell persists, poor AQI is expected in the Valley.

He also said that the foggy mornings can also be witnessed in the coming days in case the present dry spell gets extended—(KNO)

Massive Drop In

not proceed due to the non-payment of the fees.

Despite multiple extensions for submitting Hajj 2025 forms, Jammu and Kashmir's Hajj Committee has just remained with 3,602 applications, a decrease of more than 55% from the previous year.

According to the official data, the year 2024 received 8,147 Hajj application forms against the allocated quota of 8,200, while in the ongoing year with a tentative quota of around 8,000, a mere 3,602 have opted for the pilgrimage.

In 2017, 35,215 people planned to embark on the pilgrimage, followed by 32,330 applications from various districts in Jammu and Kashmir in 2018.

Hajj authorities received 21,566 applications for the pilgrimages in 2019, with 2020 witnessing no applications owing to the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown.

Despite the pandemic, the data reveals that more than 7,000 applications from various J&K districts were submitted in

2021 for the Hajj pilgrimage. However, the authorities subsequently cancelled the pilgrimage for a second year in a row due to the virus's continued spread.

Ideally, the demand for Hajj used to exceed the quota, after which a draw system was introduced for Hajj slot allocation for intending pilgrims.

The comparative data for 2024 and 2025 reveals a sharp decline in all districts of Jammu and Kashmir in the number of pilgrims applying to take up the Hajj 2025 journey, with only district Doda witnessing a nominal increase of over 9 per cent.

According to the data, Srinagar district, which received 2,607 Hajj applications in 2024, has registered a decline of over 64 per cent for this year. It has received just over 930 applications for the Hajj 2025.

Similarly, district Budgam, which received 873 applications in 2024, this year received over 320 applications, recording a decline of over 62 per cent.

District Anantnag and Bandipora too have recorded a decline of over 50 per cent in the number of people applying to undertake the Hajj, the holy pilgrimage. District Baramulla received over 345 applications against the 781 applications in 2024.

Any intending Hajj pilgrim embarking from Srinagar has to pay around 4.2 lakh rupees, while from Delhi, it is Rs 3.6 lakh only. The authorities are attributing the difference in amount to airfares.

Officials said the airfare from Srinagar embarkation is Rs 1.7 lakh, while from Delhi; it is Rs 1.1 lakh for pilgrims. However, they add that people are not bound to travel from any specific destination and are free to take up the Hajj journey from any embarkation of their choice.

Meanwhile, as per experts, economic realities are forcing many to deprioritise the pilgrimage in favour of essential expenses like healthcare, education and other family needs.

They attribute the decline in the Hajj applications to rising prices and economic strain in Jammu and Kashmir, saying the people in the region were struggling to make ends meet—(KNO)

Govt Determined

officials.

Addressing the officers, the Minister outlined that the present government is devoted to provide top notch medical care facilities to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. "Health sector is top priority for our government and we are determined to establish world class healthcare infrastructure in J&K", Sakeena said.

She underlined that AIIMS Awantipora will play vital role in ensuring best healthcare services to the Kashmir valley and surrounding areas, once operational. She added that AIIMS Awantipora will become a beacon of hope for people here, especially those in remote areas who have long faced challenges in accessing quality healthcare.

In order to ensure timely completion of the main hospital building and allied structures, the Minister instructed the Deputy Commissioner Pulwama to take monthly review meetings and submit regular progress reports.

The Minister directed the officers of project executing agency to mobilize men and machinery for timely completion of the project. She asked them to increase workforce so that the work is expedited on the project. She advised them to continue interior works of different blocks of the project during winter months also.

While reviewing other aspects of the project, the Minister asserted on completion of works on tube wells/bore wells and their smooth functioning by March 2025 to ensure seamless water supply to the hospital building and other blocks.

The Minister stressed on maintaining high standards in work quality and execution, ensuring adherence to deadlines. She urged all stakeholders to prioritize speedy construction of the main building. She asserted that no delays in work execution shall be entertained and instructed

all concerned agencies to work in tandem for timely completion of the project.

The Minister highlighted that establishment of AIIMS Awantipora is a milestone in the region's healthcare development as it will improve access to world-class medical care here. She added that it will also create job opportunities, enhance research and elevate J&K's healthcare ecosystem.

Earlier, the Chief Engineer CPWD briefed the Minister on current status of the project and issues pertaining to the project through a PowerPoint presentation.

J&K Records

accidents. In 2020, there were 728 deaths in 4,860 accidents.

The Traffic department has intensified its drive against traffic violators across the Union Territory, issuing 1,211,085 challans till October this year. Of these, 899,110 were court challans, while 311,975 were compound challans, according to official figures—(KNO)

JK to Receive

gaps created in the last 11 years. On being asked about winter preparedness, he said that officers in the administration are quite intelligent, but there are some deficiencies, which will be filled.

"All arrangements, like dumping of essentials, have been put in place. But, we need to stay alert to tackle any challenge," he added.

He added that the government will be giving a New Year gift to the people in the shape of increasing the ration quota and 12 gas cylinders to them.

The announcement comes a month after the new elected government took over in Jammu and Kashmir.

Prior to the government formation, the ruling National Conference (NC) had promised in its manifesto that the free 200 electricity will be given to the people. Besides, the ration quota will be doubled and also the 12 gas cylinders will be given to the people for one year—(KNO)

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Guyana, Barbados to honour PM Modi with highest national awards

IAN S

NEW DELHI : Guyana and Barbados are poised to bestow their highest national honours upon Prime Minister Narendra Modi, increasing his total count of international accolades to 19.

Guyana will present 'The Order of Excellence,' while Barbados will grant the esteemed 'Honorary Order of Freedom of Barbados' to the Prime Minister.

Prior to reaching Guyana, Prime Minister Modi wrapped up his trip to Nigeria, where he engaged in fruitful bilateral talks with President Tinubu. During this visit, Nigeria awarded the Prime Minister its top distinction, the 'Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger' (GCON).

The award, presented by Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, honours PM Modi for his leadership and the improvement of India-Nigeria relations. Notably, the Prime Minister is only the second foreign dignitary to receive the GCON, a recognition that was first given to Queen Elizabeth II in 1969.

"Nigeria values its excellent relationship with India, and we work to deepen and broaden the same to the mutual benefit of our two friendly countries. You represent a very strong commitment to democratic values and norms. You have been doing a good job historically; winning three consecutive elections in a complex society is a feat that



we respect so much," said Tinubu.

"I will confer on you today, the Prime Minister of India, Nigeria's National Honour, the Grand Commander of the Order of Niger. This to signify Nigerian appreciation and commitment to India as a partner," he added.

Earlier this week, Dominica announced its highest national honour, the 'Dominica Award of Honour,' for PM Modi in acknowledgement of his pivotal support during the Covid-19 pandemic and his commitment to fostering India-Dominica relations.

Dominica's President Sylviane Burton is set to confer the award during the India-CARICOM Summit in Guyana, which Prime Minister Modi will be attending personally in the coming week after wrapping up his engagements in the G20 Summit at Rio de Janeiro.

This would eventually take the number of civilian honours received by

PM Modi to a record 17, highlighting his leadership and India's growing stature on the global stage.

It is also a reflection of India's strengthened diplomatic relationships and the country's expanding influence.

PM Modi has been conferred highest civilian honours in Saudi Arabia (King Abdulaziz Sash, 2016), Afghanistan (State Order of Ghazi Amir Amanullah Khan, 2016), Palestine (Grand Collar of the State of Palestine Award, 2018), UAE (Order of Zayed Award, 2019), Russia (Order of St. Andrew the Apostle, 2019 - received by PM Modi in July 2024), Maldives (Order of the Distinguished Rule of Nishan Izzuddin, 2019), Bahrain (King Hamad Order of the Renaissance, 2019), US (Legion of Merit by the US Armed Forces in 2020), Bhutan (Order of the Druk Gyampo, 2021) Papua New Guinea (Ebakl Award, 2023), Fiji (Companion of the Order of Fiji,

2023), Papua New Guinea (Grand Companion of the Order of Logohu, 2023), Egypt (Order of Nile, 2023), France (Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour, 2023), Greece (Grand Cross of the Order of Honour, 2023).

In addition to these highest civilian honours, PM Modi has received several prestigious awards from renowned global organizations.

In 2018, he was awarded the Seoul Peace Prize Cultural Foundation in recognition of his contributions to global harmony and world peace.

In the same year, the United Nations honoured PM Modi with its highest environmental accolade, the Champions of the Earth Award, for his bold environmental leadership.

In 2019, PM Modi received the first-ever Philip Kotler Presidential Award, which is annually awarded to leaders who demonstrate outstanding national leadership.

20 teams hunt for slain Maoist Vikram Gowda's associates in K'taka forests

IAN S

BENGALURU : More than 20 teams of Anti-Naxal Force (ANF) and local police on Wednesday continued to hunt for the associates of slain Maoist Vikram Gowda in the thick forests of the Western Ghats in the coastal Karnataka region of Udupi and Dakshina Kannada districts.

Dreaded and most wanted Maoist, 46-year-old Vikram Gowda was shot dead in a police encounter on Monday evening by the state police. The police forces had launched combing operations after collecting inputs about the movements of Maoists in the region.

The drones and dog squads are being used for search operations in forests and isolated areas. A high alert has been issued in Sringeri, Koppa, Mudigere and Kalasa taluks of Chikkamagaluru district.

A combing operation in the Karkala region of Udupi district of the coastal region has also been launched. The inputs are being collected from local tribes who frequent forests, sources said.

The family of Vikram Gowda were making preparations to conduct the final rites of the body. The post-mortem of his body will be conducted at the KMC Hospital in the presence of a judge.

Suguna, the sister of Vikram Gowda who came to the mortuary to collect his body said, "The authorities have told us that they will hand over the body of our brother. We have decided to conduct final rituals to Vikram Gowda's body at our farm, where our house is also located."

"Me, Vikram Gowda and



another brother Suresh grew up in that house," she stated.

"We have our land and why Vikram Gowda's body should be burnt somewhere else like orphans. He had left home many years ago. He never came back to our family or stayed in touch with us," Suguna stated.

Praveen Gowda, a relative of Vikram Gowda stated, the family has decided to conduct final rituals at his place.

Sources stated that Vikram Gowda was killed when he came with his team to collect ration. The police had gathered information in this regard.

Vikram Gowda had fallen in love with Maoist Savithri and their marriage was conducted in the forests. However, after marriage, Savithri forced him to surrender before the marriage. Not agreeing to it, he had separated from her, sources stated.

Sources further stated that the Maoists are trying to create the base in the coastal Karnataka region and Malnad (hilly) regions of the state following the debate on the implementa-

tion of the Kasturirangan report, which recommends eviction of farmers to save the Western Ghats.

The farmers of the coastal districts of Udupi, Dakshina Kannada, Uttara Kannada, Malnad districts of Chikkamagaluru, and Shivamogga will be affected by the implementation of the report.

The Maoists are planning to encash the insecurity of farmers and people of these regions fearing their eviction after the implementation of the Kasturirangan report. The authorities had earlier gathered information that the team led by Vikram Gowda and Mundagaru Latha is meeting the families living on the fringes of the forest areas and conducting meetings.

The classification of 56,826 square kilometers of Western Ghat region including the area in Karnataka and other states as per the report of the Kasturirangan Committee by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests has raised stiff opposition in the state.

The Karnataka govern-

ment has already rejected the Kasturirangan Committee report and opposed the recommendations of the report. It is feared that the development of the region will suffer with the implementation of the report.

Former Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai had clarified in the virtual meeting with Bhubalender Yadav, former Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change that classifying the Western Ghat region as a sensitive zone will impact the life of people of the region and affect their livelihood. He also added that the proposal is opposed by the people as well as the state government.

Karnataka has one of the largest forest covers in the country. Experts have opined that opposition to the Kasturirangan Committee will be disastrous for ecologically fragile Western Ghats. The report proposes that 37 per cent of the total area of the Western Ghats, which is about 60,000 square kilometres, should be declared as an eco-sensitive area (ESA).

SC restores evidence-tampering case against former Kerala Minister

IAN S

NEW DELHI : The Supreme Court on Wednesday restored the alleged "underwear" evidence tampering case against former Kerala Minister Antony Raju.

A bench of Justices C.T. Ravikumar and Sanjay Karol set aside the order of the Kerala High Court which had quashed the criminal proceedings on the ground that for the offence in question, the courts below could not have taken cognisance based on a police report.

In its impugned decision, the Kerala High Court had clarified that its order would not be a bar on pursuing prosecution as per the provisions of Section 195(1)(b) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and left open the initiation of fresh action and prosecution against Raju for

falsifying evidence.

Now, the Supreme Court restored the trial court order taking cognisance of the police charge sheet and directed the completion of the trial within a year. The top court asked Raju to appear before the trial court on December 20.

The case dates back to 1990 when an Australian man named Andrew Salvatore Cervelli was arrested at the Thiruvananthapuram airport for allegedly smuggling 61.5 grams of contraband by concealing it in his underwear. Raju, who had just begun his political career and was a young lawyer practising in Kerala, represented Cervelli first before the trial court, which convicted him and sentenced him to 10 years imprisonment. However, when he moved the High Court in appeal, the underwear in ques-



tion was found to have been way too small to fit Cervelli and he was acquitted.

But things changed after a few years of Cervelli returning to his home country, and based on information received from the Australian National Central Bureau, the investigating officer in the smuggling case approached the High Court seeking a probe to find out if there was any tampering of evidence.

Soon, a criminal complaint was registered against Raju and a court clerk in 1994 and after 12 years of investigation, in 2006, the Assistant Commissioner of Police filed a charge sheet before the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Court, Thiruvananthapuram, alleging offences under charges of criminal conspiracy, cheating and dishonestly inducing deliv-

ery of property, and causing disappearance of evidence of the offence.

It was Raju's argument that the crucial piece of "underwear" evidence was in the custody of the trial court while it was allegedly tampered with and, therefore, it should have been the court in question that initiated the action, but in this case, the proceedings were initiated on the complaint of the police. His plea pointed out that the court took cognisance of the case upon a charge sheet by the police and the police have no authority to conduct an investigation in such cases. The police also cannot file a charge sheet before the court and the proceedings pending before the court is 'non-est' (one that can be ignored altogether) in the eye of the law, he had argued.

Bengal school job case

HC grants conditional bail to suspended TMC leader Kuntal Ghosh

IAN S

KOLKATA : A single judge bench of the Calcutta High Court, on Wednesday, granted conditional bail to the suspended youth Trinamool Congress leader Kuntal Ghosh who was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in January 2023 in connection with the cash-for-school job case.

The bail was granted by the single judge bench of the Calcutta High Court of Justice Suvra Ghosh in the case registered against him by ED in the school job case. However, despite being given bail, there is no chance for Kuntal to be freed from behind bars since his other bail plea in the case registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the same matter is yet to be granted.

While granting the bail in the case registered by ED in the morning, Justice Ghosh ordered Kuntal to submit his passport and mobile number to the court. Justice Ghosh also directed that the mobile number that will be submitted to the court cannot be altered.

At the same time, Justice Ghosh also directed Kuntal to be present in the regular hearing in the matter at a lower court. She also

observed that Kuntal should not make any attempt to influence the witnesses in the case.

Kuntal had initially approached the Supreme Court with his bail petition. However, the apex court referred the matter back to the Calcutta High Court.

Last week, the counsel of ED claimed at the Calcutta High Court that hefty amounts got credited to the accounts of Kuntal Ghosh even on dates after his arrest by the central agency officials.

The ED counsel informed the court that hefty amounts totalling over Rs 1.5 crore had been credited to the bank account of Kuntal Ghosh just a few days after his arrest on January 11, 2023.

Last week Justice Ghosh kept the judgement on reserve and finally on Wednesday granted conditional bail to Kuntal.

Kuntal, the former youth leader of Trinamool Congress, has serious charges against him, which include collecting hefty amounts to the tune of Rs 19 crore from various ineligible candidates for illegal selection for teaching and non-teaching jobs in different state-run schools in West Bengal. Days after his arrest Trinamool Congress suspended him from the party.

All 20.4 crore household ration cards digitized to ensure poor get food grains: Centre

IAN S

NEW DELHI : The ration cards of all the 20.4 crore households covering 80.6 crore beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act have been digitized with 99.8 per cent of the ration cards and 98.7 per cent of individual beneficiaries being Aadhaar-seeded to plug leakages in the delivery system and enhance efficiency, the Union Ministry of Food and Public Distribution said on Wednesday.

National Portability of ration cards under the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) initiative has ensured regular availability and accessibility of free foodgrains to all 80.6 crore NFSA beneficiaries in any part of the country, through the same existing ration card, irrespective of the state/district from where the ration card was issued, the official statement said.

Foodgrain distribution is operationalised through 5.33 lakh e-PoS devices, covering nearly all Fair Price shops in the country. These e-PoS devices enable Aadhaar

authentication of beneficiaries during the distribution process enabling rightful targeting. Today Aadhaar authentication is used for distributing around 98 per cent of total foodgrains, reducing leakages to ineligible beneficiaries and mitigating any risk of pilferage, the statement said.

The Supply Chain Management System has also been adopted and integrated for end-to-end operations and services at all levels of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) organisation, Development of Central Food Procurement Portal (CFPP) for streamlined MSP operations, implementation of Warehouse Inventory Network and Governing System (WINGS) application to automate tagging of mills with depots, as well as allocation of stack space in FCI, Vehicle Location Tracking System (VLTS) innovative with integration with Railways for online real-time tracking of food consignment and WDRA registration of all FCI Godowns. The government has also taken

extensive steps to ensure rightful targeting through the process of eKYC which validates the identities of beneficiaries with their Aadhaar credentials and ration card details leading to exclusion of ineligible beneficiaries.

As of today, 64 per cent of all PDS beneficiaries have completed their eKYC and the process is, in full swing to complete eKYC for remaining beneficiaries.

Digitalization and Aadhaar seeding have led to the removal of duplication of ration cards and approx. 5.8 crore ration cards have been removed from the PDS system, ensuring only eligible persons are included in PMGKYA/NFSA.

"Through digitization, rightful-targeting, and supply chain innovations, the Government of India has set a global benchmark for state-sponsored food security initiatives. The actions by the Government of India underscore its commitment to plug leakages in the system and minimize inefficiency," the statement added.

Madras HC orders CBI probe into Kallakurichi hooch tragedy

IAN S

CHENNAI : The Madras High Court has ordered a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy that claimed the lives of 68 people.

The tragic incident occurred on June 18 in Tamil Nadu's Kallakurichi district.

A division bench of the Madras High Court, comprising Justices D. Krishnakumar and P.B. Balaji, on Wednesday, directed the Crime Branch-Criminal Investigation Department (CB-CID) to transfer the case to the central agency.

The court passed the orders while hearing a batch of writ petitions filed by I.S. Inbadurai (AIADMK), K. Balu (PMK), B. Parthasarathy (DMDK), and A. Mohan Dass (BJP).

The petitioners argued that hooch tragedies have become a recurring issue in Tamil Nadu, and the CB-CID investigations in previous cases had failed to serve as a deterrent. The division bench

observed that since more than 60 lives were lost in this incident, the case was fit for a detailed CBI investigation.

Justice Balaji remarked that the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy should serve as a wake-up call for society to recognise the harmful effects of alcohol abuse.

The court criticised the police for allowing the sale of spurious liquor to go unchecked. The bench noted that the sale of methanol-laced hooch appeared to have taken place right under the nose of the local police, who chose to ignore it.

As a result, the court ruled that the investigation must be transferred from the CB-CID to the CBI for a comprehensive inquiry.

The deaths occurred after residents of Karunapuram -- mostly Dalits and economically disadvantaged daily wage labourers -- consumed methanol-infused liquor sold by a local bootlegger, Govindaraj, alias Kannukutti, on the night of June 18.

J&K artisans allege corruption, mismanagement by JKTPO at trade fair

JAHANGEER GANAIE

SRINAGAR: The livelihoods of handloom and handicraft artisans across Jammu and Kashmir are facing a severe threat due to alleged corruption and mismanagement by officials of the Jammu and Kashmir Trade Promotion Organisation (JKTPO), artisans have claimed.

Their concerns have come to the forefront during the ongoing 43rd India International Trade Fair, which is being held from November 14 to November 27, 2024, at the Bharat Mandapam Complex in New Delhi.

The primary objective of such trade fairs is to offer small manufacturers and artisans a platform to showcase their unique creations, connect with potential buyers, and gain from globalisation. However, artisans allege that a nexus between JKTPO officials and inauthentic traders is undermining these objectives.

Many artisans, claimed that the JKTPO is allocating stalls to fake artisans and traders after collecting hefty rental fees. "Despite receiving Rs 1.5 crore from the state government, specifically allocated to support the artisans' participation, the JKTPO has failed to facili-



tate their inclusion in the trade fair. Over 30 genuine artisans, who paid Rs 45,000 each in rental fees, have found themselves excluded or sidelined," they said, adding that there is no government guideline that mandates such exorbitant charges, making their participation increasingly difficult.

The high costs imposed by JKTPO, they say, have led to reduced participation, with stalls being largely occupied by traders who have no ties to the region's handloom or handicraft industry. According to the artisans, the JKTPO, under the leadership of its Managing Director and senior officers, seems more focused on generating prof-

its from external traders than on promoting Jammu and Kashmir's traditional crafts.

"The trade fair was intended to boost the visibility and economic prospects of local artisans, yet only a limited number of stalls have been allocated to them out of a total of 114 stalls at the fair. This is a direct contradiction to the very purpose of JKTPO, which was established to uplift and promote the local artisan community," the artisans said.

They added, "This alleged mismanagement began last year when JKTPO took charge from the Handicrafts and Handloom Department, the artisans said. As a result,

many of the region's traditional artisans have been left struggling to find opportunities to showcase their work, with the organisation's actions directly threatening their livelihoods."

In light of these allegations, artisans have called for immediate intervention from the Jammu and Kashmir government, particularly urging the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister, who is also overseeing the department, to launch a high-level inquiry into the matter. "The government must take swift action to ensure that future trade fairs prioritise genuine artisans from Jammu and Kashmir," they said—(KNO)

CS reviews achievements of Agri Deptt in advancing farmer welfare initiatives



GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Wednesday held a meeting of Agriculture Production Department (APD) to review progress achieved on different initiatives being taken for advancing farmers welfare and growth of agriculture sector in J&K.

Present in the meeting were Principal Secretary, APD, MD, HADP, Deputy Commissioners, HoDs, Convenor, UTLBC and other concerned officers of the department.

Dulloo, while assessing progress on establishment of Kisan Khidmat Ghars (KKGs) across different districts of the UT, emphasised upon the concerned to keep increasing services being extended through these KKGs. He observed that such steps would accentuate the

impact of these centres besides bringing efficiency in their functioning and utility for the farmers. He enjoined upon the Department to establish rest of the KKGs by January this year and make a dashboard to monitor the transactions regarding necessary advisories, sale of seeds and fertilisers by each of them.

The Chief Secretary also enquired from the respective DCs about the functioning of KKGs in their districts. He called upon them to make these centres active by establishing kiosks for each of them in the villages of their operation. He also took note of the hardware received by each DC and its distribution among the Kisan Udhymis (KUs) of their districts. He stressed on exploring ways and means to make all those KKGs functional for which

KUs had not been made available till date.

Principal Secretary, APD, Shaileendra Kumar, emphasised upon the field functionaries to ensure that all the 2000 KKGs are made functional before February this year. He directed for taking the registration numbers to at least 500 per KKG. He also enjoined upon them to convert the ongoing events of Kisan Sampark Abhiyan 3.0 and Block Diwas as the major camps for registration of farmers besides creating awareness among them.

It was further given out that under phase first a total of 501 KKGs had been established across different districts of the UT and 1499 are going to be made functional in phase 2. It was added that for each of the KKGs a science graduate is selected by the dis-

trict administration as Kisan Udhymis for running these centres here.

Later, the Chief Secretary reviewed the progress made by the Department in seeding of Aadhar and land details on PM KISAN portal. He directed the DCs to make all efforts to remove the pendencies with regard to completion of NPCI, e-KYC and land seeding pendencies.

He also enjoined upon the Revenue Department to synchronize their RoR data with that of the PM-KISAN details for generation of Agristack Ids in favour of all the farmers as per the GoI guidelines.

It was revealed that the IT has around 9.39 lakh active beneficiaries under PM-KISAN and these are also being given other benefits like KCC and services under Kisan Sathi portal developed in J&K.

Academic Council of JU

VC highlights skill development, student feedback as key drivers of excellence

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: The Academic Council of the University of Jammu, the apex decision-making body on academic affairs, was held today under the chairmanship of Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu, Prof. Umesh Rai.

The meeting witnessed deliberations on significant academic initiatives and policy matters aimed at enhancing the quality of education and academic matters.

At the outset, Prof. Rai expressed profound gratitude to the Hon'ble Chancellor, University of Jammu Shri Manoj Sinha, and Hon'ble Pro-Chancellor, University of Jammu Jb. Omar Abdullah for their visionary guidance, which have been instrumental in steering the University towards excellence. He acknowledged their support to promoting innovation, academic growth, and infrastructural development, which has significantly enhanced

the University's reputation on national and international platforms. The Vice Chancellor emphasized that their continuous encouragement inspires the entire University fraternity to achieve new milestones in education and research.

Prof. Rai also thanked the Deans/ Heads of various faculties/ departments who successfully completed their tenure and wished them good luck for their future endeavours. He also welcomed the new members who took the charge as Deans/ Heads. Prof. Rai also informed the members of the Academic Council about the recent appointments to key administrative positions within the University. These appointments include Dr. Neeraj Sharma as Registrar, Sh. Sanjeev Mahajan as Controller of Examinations, and Dr. Jitender Khajuria as Finance Officer. The Vice Chancellor expressed confidence in their dedication and commitment, emphasizing the pivotal role they will play in furthering



the University's vision of academic excellence.

On this occasion, Prof. Umesh Rai applauded the efforts of the Dean Students Welfare and the Director, Sports and Physical Education, University of Jammu, for successfully organizing "Display Your Talent" at the zonal level and for the pivotal role in bringing laurels to the university through

outstanding performances in various sports tournaments at the UT and national levels respectively. Prof. Rai also acknowledged the significant contributions of Prof. Satnam Kour, who has served the university in various capacities, including as Chairperson of Utsah and Head of the Department of Psychology.

Prof. Rai highlighted the

recent accomplishments of the University, including its improved NIRF ranking, 8th position of TBS in best in return on investment (ROI) and the 5th position of The Business School (TBS) among government B-schools, the sanctioning of various teaching positions, and the signing of multiple MoUs with renowned agencies and organizations.

Addressing the Deans, Rectors, Heads, and Directors, the Vice Chancellor reiterated the importance of integrating student feedback into both academic and administrative processes. He urged them to lead by example, nurture a culture of innovation, and prioritize the implementation of student-centric policies to ensure that students' voices shape a more dynamic and responsive learning environment. Stressing the need to align departmental objectives with the University's strategic vision, he encouraged proactive contributions towards transdisciplinary collaborations and research initiatives.

The Vice Chancellor highlighted the significance of skill-based education in equipping students to meet the evolving demands of the professional world. He emphasized the critical need to cultivate practical and interdisciplinary skills, incorporating student feedback to tailor academic pro-

grams that address real-world challenges effectively. Advocating for a more employment-oriented approach, he called for revising course structures to focus on employability and transitioning students from job seekers to job creators. Furthermore, he urged adopting a problem-solving approach to teaching, encouraging the move beyond traditional classroom methods to more innovative and experiential learning strategies. Through these measures, the university aims to enhance the educational experience and align its programs with global standards.

The Registrar, Dr. Neeraj Sharma presented various items for deliberation during the meeting. These items encompass proposals for curriculum revisions, the introduction of new academic programs, and policies to promote research and infrastructure development in the teaching departments.

YDS-IUST conclude Mega Theatre, Cultural Festival with Resounding Success

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: The Young Dramatists Society, in collaboration with the Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), successfully concluded its highly anticipated Mega Theatre and Cultural Festival, "JESHNI KALA SANSKRITI" sponsored by North East Zone Cultural Centre (NEZCC) under the scheme component of "Kala Sanskriti Vikas Yajna". Preservation and Development of Cultural Heritage of Himalayas 2022-2023 NEZCC, A Traditional Art Form of Kashmir & Training in Traditional Folk Art titled "DAASTAAN THEATRE" held from 7th to 13th November 2024 at the IUST campus.

This week-long festival brought together a celebration of arts, theatre, and cultural exchange, leaving an indelible mark on attendees and participants alike.

The event, organized under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, received critical support from the Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture, and Languages (JKAACL) as well as supported by Jammu



and Kashmir Bank Ltd. The festival showcased an array of vibrant cultural performances, theatrical productions, folk art displays, and traditional music sessions, capturing the rich heritage and diverse talent of artists from across the region.

With over 500 artists, actors, and musicians participating, the event served as a platform for emerging and established talent to share their craft. From engaging theatre productions that explored social and cultural narratives to enthralling folk dance performances that celebrated the unique traditions of Kashmir, the festival fostered a deeper appreciation for the performing arts.

The festival also included a series of workshops, panel discussions, and interactive sessions led by industry experts, offering insights into various aspects of the theatre production, scriptwrit-

ing, and acting. These sessions attracted a significant number of young enthusiasts, furthering the festival's mission to inspire and nurture the next generation of dramatists and cultural advocates.

Dignitaries, including officials from the Ministry of Culture, representatives from JKAACL, and executives from Jammu and Kashmir Bank, attended the concluding ceremony. They commended the Young Dramatists Society and Islamic University of Science and Technology for their dedication to promoting cultural heritage and applauded the overwhelming response from the local community.

The Young Dramatists Society extends its heartfelt gratitude to all sponsors, supporters partners, volunteers, and attendees who contributed to the success of this festival.

Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Shakeel Ahmad Romshoo, inaugurated the seven day Theatre and Cultural festival "JASHN-I-KALA SANSKRITI", its 19th Foundation Day celebrations with a weeklong cultural extravaganza. The event, curated by "JASHN-I-KALA SANSKRITI" supervised by Young Dramatists Society showcased exceptional 150 talented artists from students community IUST and 350 professional artists performed in Theatre Plays and mega cultural programmes.

The festival showcased the Theatre plays from famous Kashmiri Playwrights like Bashir Dada "Dama Koothar" and Dr. Sohan Lal Koul, "Pranawar" by Young Dramatists Society, Sheikh Mohammad Hanief "Sondar Maal" Kashmir Valley Theatre, Dildar Ashraf Shah "Penji Peth" Shahkaar Cultural Society, Gh. Udin Bahar, "Gatta Te Gaash" Mehboob Cultural society, Tahir Najar, "Su kar Yiyi" "Tulkul Arts and Media Collective under the directions of Gul Javed Khan, Zahoor Zaidi, Ravice Rashid, it was sponsored by CFPGS and SNA.

At Rs 62.5 cr project, historic Jawahar Tunnel nears completion

UMAISAR GULL GANIE

SRINAGAR: The historic 2.5-km-long Jawahar Tunnel, a vital link that served as the primary gateway to the Kashmir Valley for decades, is nearing completion of comprehensive renovation with state-of-the-art infrastructure upgrades.

Initiated in July 2023 under the Border Roads Organisation's (BRO) Project BEACON, the Rs 62.5 crore project aims to modernize the 5-kilometer twin-tube tunnel while preserving its historical and strategic significance.

Constructed in 1956 by the Government of India, the Jawahar Tunnel has long been an essential passage through the Pir Panjal range, connecting the Kashmir Valley with the rest of India.

The restoration, carried out by Mosh Varaya Infrastructure Limited, includes advanced safety measures and technological upgrades to enhance its functionality and user experience.

Although the Banihal-Qazigund four-lane tunnel, opened in 2021, now handles most civilian traffic, the



Jawahar Tunnel remains crucial for transporting fuel tankers, hazardous material trucks, and as an alternative route during emergencies or adverse weather conditions.

Commander 760 Border Roads Task Force (BRTF), Amiya Shrivastava, said: "Jawahar Tunnel is a twin-tube tunnel, which is 2.5 km long. It was constructed by the Government of India in 1956. As you know, it has been many years. It was necessary to renovate and rehabilitate this tunnel. So, we took up the task of rehabilitating Jawahar Tunnel. We wanted to incorporate all the new facilities that have come in the tunnels. In this regard, MoRTH had given us a budget, which is a part

of National Highway 44. So, the work of rehabilitation has been done with the help of an EPC contract of Rs. 62.5 crores. And its completion time was one year. This work started in 2023 and is almost ready in 2024."

He elaborated on the upgrades: "Earlier, there were no CCTV cameras, sensors to detect smoke, jet fans were not available. Apart from this, the problem of seepage, the surface on which the vehicles run on the pavement was also broken after a long period of use. After that, new work has been done on all of this. Tunnel monitoring and SCADA software has been installed in this. Tunnel monitoring will be done

in real-time from a control room, which we will keep an eye on. For any kind of smoke, fire hazard, state-of-the-art equipment for fire-fighting has been installed. CCTV cameras have been installed. A telebag facility has been installed. In addition to this, new facilities have been added for lighting, and some improvements have been made. So in this way, the tunnel has been completely renovated."

He added: "I can tell you that people will get a lot of convenience from this. Travel time will also be reduced because the road from Banihal to Qazigund has also been strengthened recently, this year. So, let's assume that the time it used to take a traveler from Banihal to Qazigund was 45 to 50 minutes, that time has been reduced to at least 20 to 25 minutes. So, it is done for the convenience of the common people. Not only will it save time, but the travellers who want to travel will have to pay toll tax, which is due to the passage of the Navvog Tunnel. Due to the passage of this Jawahar Tunnel, no toll tax has been paid."