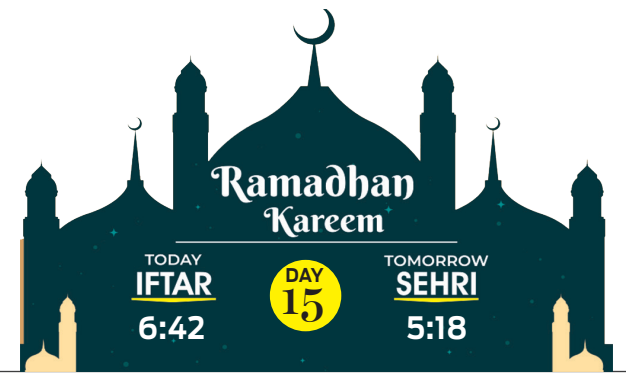


Good Morning Kashmir

16th Year Of Publication



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Fresh Snowfall In Kashmir's Higher Reaches



AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: Intermittent rainfall and snow continued to lash Kashmir for the fourth straight day on Saturday. The ongoing wet spell has recharged the water bodies to a large extent with the level in river Jhelum increasing to above 6 feet compared to -1.01 last month. According to reports, Shopian upper reaches received heavy snowfall, while Pulwama and other districts in South Kashmir witnessed moderate snowfall since this morning. The other higher reaches, including Gulmarg, a famous ski-resort, and Sonamarg also received snowfall for the fourth running day today. However, Srinagar,

the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, and other areas, received rainfall throughout the day. As per the details, Sadhna Top, Razdan top received a snowfall of 3 feet, Zojila top and Sinthan top received 2.5 feet, Peer ki Gali, Sonamarg and Z Gali received 2 feet while Gulmarg and Doodhpatri received 1 feet snowfall each. Notably, the Meteorological department (MeT) had issued a yellow alert for three days from March 13 to March 15. The wet spell has ended the rainfall deficiency as well. The river Jhelum at Sangam station was flowing at above 6 feet, which otherwise was flowing at -1.01 ft last month due to **•P-06**

Unemployment Rate Down From 6.7% In 2019-20 To 6.1% In 2023-24: Govt

AGENCIES

JAMMU: Unemployment rate in Jammu and Kashmir declined from 6.7 per cent in 2019-20 to 6.1 per cent in 2023-24, J-K government said on Saturday, highlighting the various steps taken in this regard, including the generation of 9.58 lakh livelihood opportunities through various schemes. This improvement is also reflected on the labour force participation rate (LFPR) and workers population ratio (WPR), which rose to 64.3 per cent and 60.4 per cent, respectively, in 2023-24, showcasing the enhanced employment opportunities and economic activities in the Union Territory, J-K minister Javed Ahmad Dar told the Assembly on Saturday. Replying to a question by National Conference MLA Mubarak Gul, Dar said on behalf of employment minister Surinder Choudhary that the unemployment rate did not increase drastically in Jammu and Kashmir since 2019. Quoting J-K's 2025 Economic



Survey report, Dar said the unemployment rate was 6.7 per cent in 2019-20, which fell to 5.9 per cent in 2020-21, 5.2 per cent in 2021-22, 4.4 per cent in 2022-23, and 6.1 per cent in 2023-24. "The steady decline in the unemployment rate together with the increases in LFPR and WPR reflects the success of targeted policies and initiatives aimed at boosting the labour market to sustain economic growth, further reduce unemployment, and elevate the overall quality of life for J-K citizens," Dar said. Referring to the steps taken to boost employment generation, Dar said 11,526 selections have been made by the J-K Public Service Commission

and J-K Services Selection Board in the past two years -- 4,836 (1,141 by JKPS and 3695 by JKSSB) in 2023, and 6,690 (1,034 by JKPS and 56,756 by JKSSB) in 2024. In the private sector, 45,688 unemployed youth were provided jobs in the industrial sector in 2022-23 (15,719) and 2023-24 (29,969), Dar said. **•P-06**

THE STEADY DECLINE IN THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE TOGETHER WITH THE increases in LFPR and WPR reflects the success of targeted policies and initiatives aimed at boosting the labour market to sustain economic growth, further reduce unemployment, and elevate the overall quality of life for J-K citizens,"

India Slams Pak's 'Fanatical Mindset'

Says Ranting On Kashmir Won't Justify Cross-Border Terror



AGENCIES

UNITED NATIONS: Denouncing Pakistan's "fanatical mindset", India's Permanent Representative P Harish has told Islamabad that ranting about Kashmir in international forums will not justify cross-border terrorism or change the reality of the region being an integral part of India. He was reacting on Friday to Pakistan's former Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua bringing up Kashmir during an informal meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the International Day to Combat Islamophobia. "As is their habit, former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan today has made an unjustified reference to the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir", Harish said. "Frequent references will neither validate their claim nor justify **•P-06**

Reservation System 'Rigged Against Kashmir': Sajad Lone

AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: In an analysis shared on social media, the Jammu and Kashmir People's Conference (J&KPC) President and Handwara MLA, Sajad Lone, has highlighted stark regional imbalances in the issuance of reservation certificates across the Union Territory, terming the findings a "shocker". The J&KPC said in a statement on Saturday. "According to data received through a question posed by Lone, from April 1, 2023, Jammu region has dominated certificate issuance across nearly all categories. Scheduled Caste certificates were issued exclusively in Jammu (67,112 certificates, 100 per cent), with none issued in Kashmir," the statement added. "The Scheduled Tribe category showed Jammu issu-

ing 459,493 certificates (85.3 per cent), while Kashmir issued only 79,813 (14.7 per cent). Similar imbalances exist in Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) (92.3 per cent Jammu and 7.7 per cent Kashmir), Actual Line of Control (94.3 per cent Jammu and 5.7 per cent Kashmir) and International Border categories (100 per cent Jammu). Even in the Reserved Backward Area category, Jammu led with 52.8 per cent of certificates versus Kashmir's 48.2 per cent," Sajad Lone said. Lone emphasised that these disparities reveal a greater loss of reservations to the Kashmiri-speaking population than previously anticipated, asserting that "the whole reservation concept is rigged against the Kashmiri-speaking population and against ST or EWS living in Kashmir". **•P-06**



Panel Examining Quota System Given 6 Months Time: CM Omar

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said on Saturday that the cabinet sub-committee formed by his government last year to look into grievances against the current reservation policy in the Union Territory will submit its report in six months. The decision came after Abdullah met a "concerned group of job aspirants". Abdullah said in a post on X, "The Cabinet sub-committee constituted to examine the complicated issue of reservations in recruitment has been given a six-month timeline to complete their report. This timeline was set by me after I met with a concerned group of job aspirants." "This timeline, however, was not in the initial order setting up the sub-committee. That



oversight will be corrected but, rest-assured, the committee is working to complete its task in the set timeframe," he added. Reservation has become a major issue in Jammu and Kashmir following the Centre's decision to add more communi-

ties to the reserved category and expand quotas in the Union Territory during the past five years. There are increasing objections to the Centre's move to push reservation to 70 per cent in Jammu and Kashmir. Earlier in the day, **•P-06**

NEP-2020 Implemented In All J&K Colleges: Minister

Says Job Oriented, Skill Based Courses Being Offered In Colleges To Enhance Employability Avenues



GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: The Higher Education department of Jammu and Kashmir government has successfully implemented the National Education Policy (NEP)-2020 in all Government Degree Colleges across the Union Territory, Minister for Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo said Saturday. She was replying to a question raised by Javid Riyaz in Legislative Assembly. The Minister informed the House that the colleges

of J&K are already offering job-oriented and skill-based courses to enhance students' employability and practical learning. She apprised that the Business Management programs are being offered in various colleges in J&K but Artificial Intelligence as a separate program has not been introduced as yet as the subject is a new and developing area of learning. She further said that Artificial Intelligence is taught as part of the curriculum of Computer Applications.

J&K To Increase Recruitment In Premier Healthcare Centres

AGENCIES

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Health Minister Sakina Itoo on Saturday said that the patient load at the OPD and the IPD in the Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), Soura in Srinagar is increasing day by day, amid a shortage of staff. "In this regard, the issue has been raised with the recruitment agencies concerned. Furthermore, the H&ME Department recently notified the Recruitment Rules, 2025, pertaining to the SKIMS vide S.O 29 dated January 23, 2025, which will pave the way for the promotion of staff in different categories and will cause further vacancies at entry level," she told the Assembly in response to a question by National Conference member Tanvir Sadiq.



Regarding the SMHS Srinagar, the minister said that the government hospital witnesses 3,500 patients on a daily basis in the OPD & IPD and it is a fact that the healthcare infrastructure in Srinagar is under severe stress. "The healthcare infrastructure is the first priority of the administration. Keeping in view the rise in patient

inflow, different projects like the construction of a theatre block with a project cost of Rs 5,024.74 lakh, a 30-bed ENT block with a project cost of Rs 499.00 lakh is under construction along with the upgradation of the medical casualty with an estimated cost of Rs 299.85 lakh and with a proposal for the upgradation of triage & **•P-06**

SPOs Cannot Be Dismissed Arbitrarily: HC

Says Special Police Officer Entitled to Same Protections as Regular Police Officers



AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir High Court has reinstated a Special Police Officer (SPO) who was removed from service without due process, terming the termination "illegal, unjust, and unconstitutional." The court reiterated that SPOs enjoy the same protections as regular police officers and cannot be disengaged from service without being provided a reasonable opportunity to show

cause and respond to the charges levelled against them. The petitioner Dilshada Begum was initially engaged as an SPO in District Ramban on June 8, 2013, under Order No. 369 of 2013, receiving a consolidated honorarium of 3,000 per month. However, she was abruptly removed from service just five months later, on November 12, 2013, through Order No. 805 of 2013, issued by the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Ramban. In her plea before **•P-06**

Jhelum's Carrying Capacity 41000 Cusecs In Srinagar: Govt



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government said on Saturday that the carrying capacity of Jhelum River has been enhanced to 41000 cusecs in Srinagar and over Rs 2000 crore has been earmarked for flood management of Jhelum and its tributaries under PMDP package of 2015 after the devastating deluge of September 2014. These details were shared by Minister for Jal Shakti, Javid Ahmad Rana in the assembly on Saturday. Rana, who was replying to a question raised by Farooq Ahmad Shah, informed that

the carrying capacity of river Jhelum has been enhanced from 31800 cusecs to 41000 cusecs in Srinagar Reach. The Minister said that the DPRs for flood management were subsequently framed for implementation in two phases, Phase I and Phase II for short term and long term flood measures. He further informed that Phase-I was approved for Rs.399.29 crore in 2015-16 by the Ministry for Water Resources (MOWR) and is nearing completion where as Phase II (Part-A only) was approved by MOWR in March 2022 for an estimated cost of Rs. 1623.43 **•P-06**

BUDGET SESSION

Legislators raise issues of public importance during Zero Hour

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: During Zero Hour in the ongoing Assembly session of Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Speaker, Abdul Rahim Rather, clarified that, as per established rules, the Ministers cannot be asked to provide impromptu responses to issues raised by the MLAs without prior notice.

He stated that without prior intimation, the concerned Ministers would be unable to present their positions on such matters. The session witnessed several pressing public issues being highlighted by the MLAs.

Dr. Narinder Singh Raina, MLA RS Pura, sought House's attention towards the notices served to 39 shopkeepers in Sattari for their relocation due to construction of the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway. He was joined by MLAs Vikram Randhawa and Sham Lal Sharma in demanding withdrawal of the notices until the affected shopkeepers are rehabilitated as per government assurances.

Dr. Bharat Bhushan, MLA Kathua, raised concerns over increasing accidental deaths in Kathua due to over speeding dumpers carrying construction material. He urged that these vehicles should be restricted from plying through town's interiors to prevent further



loss of lives. The issue of road blockages due to incessant rains and snowfall was one of the major issues brought up by MLAs Sajad Shaheen, Javid Mirchal and Qaisar Jamsheed Lone. They highlighted the plight of residents in remote areas such as MahuMangit, Gool, and Neel in Banihal, as well as Machil and Karnah in Kupwara district, who are facing hardships due to road closures. They urged for immediate measures to restore connectivity to these hilly regions. They also demanded quality power supply to these areas especially during sehri and Iftar timings.

Senior Assembly member, Ghulam Ahmad Mir demanded an extension in the deadline for

those constructing houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) in remote areas. He maintained that the people whose land falls under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) are unable to meet the current deadline of March 31, 2025, and should be granted a sympathetic extension, considering their tribal and economically weaker backgrounds.

MLA Bijbehara, Dr. Bashir Veeri, called for initiating the settlement of villages in Anantnag to facilitate modernization and updating of revenue records. He also pressed for immediate posting of Patwaris in his constituency, as people are facing difficulties in obtaining revenue extracts necessary for securing credit amid the

sowing season in the Valley. Later, MLA Habbakadal, Shamima Firdous, raised the issue of electricity curtailments to several consumers in her area who failed to pay fines being charged by the concerned Department. She demanded giving sympathetic consideration to their pleas in view of the holy month of Ramadan and restoring their power connections till they pay their bills.

MLA Chenani, Balwant Singh Mankotia, also raised an issue regarding a bridge declared unsafe in his constituency due to which one lakh population is being affected. He demanded for release of funds for undertaking the necessary repairs so that the people of vicinity would get relief.

DHSK orders probe on viral video regarding SDH Chadoora

GMK NEWS NETWORK

BUDGAM: In connection with a video that has gone viral on social media regarding alleged negligence at SDH Chadoora, in Budgam district, the Directorate of Health Services Kashmir has ordered an inquiry into the incident to ascertain the fact and take the guilty to task.

As per an official hand-out issued here, it has been given out that a committee has been constituted that will conduct in-depth analysis of electronic records, CCTV footage, duty rosters and conduct interviews of patients and staff members to ascertain the facts, fix responsibility on any errors of omission or commission, and recommend appropriate necessary action to ensure that such incidents do not recur in the future. Further it has been made

clear that the inquiry committee will also examine the possibility that the video was deliberately set-up or edited to defame a busy Government Hospital by some vested interests who have made earlier attempts to defame Government Hospitals and mislead patients and the public, as happened in the case of SDH Bijbehara and CHC Pattan where orchestrated/fake videos were uploaded on social media.

In such a case the committee will recommend action under the relevant sections of the law against the perpetrators of such nefarious attempts, if any, the statement read.

Directorate of Health Services Kashmir remains steadfast and completely committed to the highest standards of professionalism and will not tolerate any laxity at any level, a statement issued by the DHSK said.

Hiranagar to be covered under RTC's fleet once augmented: Sharma

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Minister for Transport, Satish Sharma, Saturday informed the House that the government is committed to cover all uncovered areas and provide seamless public transport services to the people in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister was replying to a question raised by Advocate Vijay Kumar in the Legislative Assembly.

He said that JKRTC is in process of augmenting the new fleet of buses and when it is augmented, due share of

buses to Hiranagar Constituency shall be allocated. He said that the fleet of e-buses available with the Corporation is only meant for City Operation as the said buses have only capacity to run on short distance routes covering a distance of 80 km to 90 Km once they are fully charged.

He informed the House, that at present, JKRTC operates following bus services in Kathua district including Hiranagar constituency are Jammu-Hiranagar-Pathankot, Jammu-Pathankot-Udhampur and Jammu-Bani-Lowang.

Master Plan for Reasi, surrounding areas on anvil: Sakeena Itoo

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, Saturday said that the Town Planning Scheme (TPS) for Ransoo village has been notified on 19th April, 2022.

The Minister was replying on

behalf of Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah, to a question raised by Kuldeep Raj Dubey.

She said that it is also a fact that the Master Plan for Reasi town and surrounding areas is on anvil and the government intends to seek suggestions from the general public.

Work cost revised to Rs 164.90 cr for completion of GMC Doda: Sakeena Itoo

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, Saturday said that the cost of civil works at Government Medical College Doda has been revised from Rs. 139.00 crore to Rs. 164.90 crore for completion of the balance works.

The Minister was replying to a question raised by Sajjad Shaheen in the Legislative Assembly.

Sharing details, the Minister informed that out of total Rs 189 crore approved and released under both Centre and UT share, an amount of Rs. 183.95 crore has been utilised on civil and machinery equipment components till March-2024. She informed that during the current financial year, an amount of Rs. 9.50 crore has been

earmarked under Capex Budget 2024-25, against which Rs. 7.60 crore have been released and Rs. 1.65 crore have been incurred.

She said that in order to improve the doctor-patient ratio and to give a fillip to the available medical services at secondary and tertiary level of treatment, the Ministry for Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Establishment of new Medical Colleges attached with existing referral/District Hospitals" sanctioned establishment of 05 new Medical Colleges at Anantnag, Baramulla, Doda, Kathua and Rajouri.

The Minister said that GMC Doda has infrastructure and staff in place, to function smoothly. However, as in the case of any new Medical Col-

lege, there is room for further improvement.

With regard to staff, the Minister said that all vacant faculty posts stand referred to the JKPCS for advertisement and selection of suitable candidates. Besides, faculty is being engaged on academic arrangement to meet the shortfall, if any. The Minister said Consultants/ Senior Consultants of Health Gazetted Services are also being deputed to GMC Doda on standard terms and conditions of deputation for utilization of their services in various Departments. Further, recruitment to vacant Non-Gazetted posts in respect of GMC Doda is under consideration.

Regarding the total sanctioned strength of both teaching and non-teaching staff, she informed that out of 267 gazetted category

posts; 144 are in position and 123 are vacant, in non-gazetted category; of 432 sanctioned strength 306 are in position and 126 are vacant and in MTS category; of 117 sanctioned strength 70 are in position and 47 posts are vacant.

The Minister said that two CT Scan Machines, One functional Fibroscan machine (Echosens 630) are functional in AH, GMC DODA.

She further informed that the GMC Doda intends to start PG / MD/MS courses in broad specialties from Academic year 2027-28. Moreover, DNB courses are being offered in the disciplines of Medicine, Surgery, Obst and Gynae, Paediatrics and Orthopaedics in GMC Doda. Shakti Raj Parihar and Mehraj Malik raised supplementaries.

Chief Justice visits District Court Complex, Anantnag

GMK NEWS NETWORK

ANANTNAG: Chief Justice High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Tashi Rabstan, Saturday visited the District Court Complex, Anantnag.

Principal District and Sessions Judge, Anantnag, Tahir Khurshid Raina, Deputy Commissioner Anantnag, Fakhurddin Hamid and Senior Superintendent of Police Anantnag, G V Sundeeep Chakravarthy were present on the occasion.

On his arrival, the Chief Justice was accorded guard of honor.

The Chief Justice interacted with the members of District Bar Association, Anantnag, addressing their concerns and assuring them of swift action regarding construction of the new court complex.

Acknowledging the urgent need for a modern judicial facility, the Chief Justice emphasised that the new complex would be equipped with spacious courtrooms, dedicated chambers for the judicial officers and advocates, waiting areas for litigants,



digital case management systems and enhanced security infrastructure.

The Deputy Commissioner and SSP Anantnag assured their full cooperation in ensuring smooth execution of the project.

Another key issue discussed during the visit was the requirement for a full-time NDPS Judge in

Anantnag. Recognizing the increasing number of specialised cases necessitating exclusive jurisdiction, the Chief Justice assured that necessary steps would be taken to facilitate the appointment of a dedicated NDPS Judge for the district.

Later, the Chief Justice held a meeting with the

judicial officers of Anantnag including Principal District & Sessions Judge, Tahir Khurshid Raina and his team comprising Additional District & Sessions Judge, Masarat Roohi, Special Judge UAPA, Manzoor Ahmad Khan, Secretary DLSA, Fozia Paul, Chief Judicial Magistrate, Feroz Ahmad Khan, Special Mobile Magistrate R. Lubna Sultan and Munsiff JMIC Arshad Aziz Oureshi.

The meeting was also attended by the Acting President and members of the Bar.

During the meeting, the Chief Justice directed the judicial officers to prioritise disposal of long pending cases and intensify efforts to reduce case backlogs. He further emphasised the importance of timely updation of all pending cases. He encouraged the judges to continue their commendable work in ensuring efficient judicial proceedings.

The visit concluded with a reaffirmation of the judiciary enhancing legal infrastructure and expediting justice delivery in Anantnag.

Div Com visits Bemina Grid Station, SLDC; reviews power scenario



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: In view of inclement weather and holy month of Ramadhan, Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Vijay Kumar Bidhuri Saturday visited Bemina Power Grid Station and Sub Load Distribution Centre (SLDC) to inspect overall power scenario, load monitoring and distribution system.

At SLDC, he reviewed division and district-wise details of power load and consumption and instructed for efficient allocation to minimize disruptions.

On the occasion, he was briefed regarding the cur-

rent demand, supply and consumption of electricity. Meanwhile, Div Com enjoined officers at Grid Station to ensure smooth operation of all the feeders for reliable electricity to the general public especially in peak hours of Sehri and Iftari.

He also directed restoration of service lines within the stipulated timelines in case of disruptions caused by prevailing weather.

Besides, Div Com also directed for the deployment of dedicated teams at the control room to monitor the overall scenario and asked them to respond immediately to any exigency.

VC LCMA reviews Dal, Nigen conservation plan



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Vice Chairman (V.C), Lakes Conservation and Management Authority (LCMA), Shahid Saleem Dar, on Saturday chaired a high-level meeting to review the Dal and Nigen lakes conservation plan and assess the status of ongoing developmental works under LCMA.

The meeting focused on various aspects of Dal and Nigen lakes conservation and management, including the status of works under Capex, recurring activities under GIA, and the integrated management plan for the conservation program of the Dal and Nigen lake ecosystem under CSS.

It was informed that out of 62 works taken up during 2024-25 under differ-

ent heads, 26 works stand completed till date.

During the review, plans in the pipeline were also reviewed. Concerned officers were instructed to ensure the timely completion of all developmental projects.

He further instructed LCMA officers to remain committed to timely delivery and transparent discharge of duties in result oriented manner.

The Vice Chairman also directed officers to incorporate clearing all water channels, beautification of all water channels, Trash Skimmers for collecting trash, new STPs, new MHA project, Ferris wheel on line of London Eye, Floating cafes, Theme park and Musical fountains in the upcoming execution plan.

Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER R&B DIVISION KUPWARA

NIT No.56-Kupwara/6911-20of 2024-25 e-tendering DATED:-14-03-2025

For & on behalf of Lieutenant Governor of J&K Union Territory, e-tenders (in single cover system) are invited on item rate basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with Union Territory J&K Govt. CPWD, Railways and other state/Central Governments for the followings works:-

| S. No | Name of Work | Est. Cost (Rs. In Lacs) | Cost of T/Doc. (In rupees) | Earnest Money (In rupees) | Time of Completion in days | Time & Date of Opening of Bid | Class of Contractor | Major Head of Account |
|-------|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 01 | Repair/ Renovation of office washroom in the Divisional Office SulkoteKupwara | 2.48 | 200/- | 5000/- | 10 days | 20-03-2025 | "DEE" | 3054-M&R |
| 02 | Providing/ Laying of wooden flooring and other allied items in the divisional Office SulkoteKupwara | 2.39 | 200/- | 4800/- | 10 days | 20-03-2025 | "DEE" | 3054-M&R |
| 03 | Up-gradation /Renovation of divisional Office SulkoteKupwara | 2.41 | 200/- | 4900/- | 07 days | 20-03-2025 | "DEE" | 3054-M&R |

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

| | |
|--|--|
| 01. Date of issue of Tender Notice | 14-03-2025 |
| 02. Period of downloading of bidding documents | From 14-03-2025 to 20-03-2025 (4.00P.M) |
| 03. Bid submission start date | 14-03-2025 from (10.00A.M) |
| 04. Bid submission end date | 20-03-2025 upto (04.00P.M) |
| 05. Date & time of opening Bids (on line) | 20-03-2025 at (6:00P.M) in the Office of the Executive Engineer RnB Division Kupwara |

Terms and Conditions :-

The Bidders are advised to read all conditions laid down in the NIT carefully before uploading softcopy any short fall found in the soft copy the tender shall be rejected.

- Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape Treasury Challan (Under Account Head 0059) (Treasury Challan) must be written boldly the Name of Work, Name of Contractor alongwith NIT No. & Sr. No of NIT) in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Kupwara (tender inviting authority) and Earnest money / Bid security in shape of CDR/FDR pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Kupwara. The Issuance date of the Treasury Challan and CDR/FDR must be in between the date of Downloading to Bid Submission end Date
 - The Successful Bidder has to produce an amount equal to 5% additional performance security deposit of the allotted cost. The same shall be released after successful completion of the defect liability Period of the work. The EMD of 2% successful bidders shall be released after receipt of 5% Performance Security.
- The bidders shall ensure that their bids shall be accepted only if their registrations cards are uploaded on https://jkwtdms.jk.gov.in portal in active Tab. as per circular instructions issued by Development Commissioner works vide No.PW/DCW/DB/668-72 DT.10-06-2022.
 - The GST-3B for last Quarter (Quarterly return) or Previous month for (Monthly return) Should be uploaded, irrespective of date of Tender
- Contractors Strictly Not Eligible**
- The bidders who has participated in 2023-24 and has not completed the works within stipulated time frame/who had left the work midway/who had not started /taken up the works are strictly not eligible. Any such participation may lead to cancellation of their bid and no claim shall be entertained in this regard.
 - Contractors who failed to execute the allotted work/ work during the previous final Year (2023-24) are note eligible before tendering for the current financial Year 2024-25
- All other terms and conditions shall be the same as per detailed and stock issue rates of 2024-25 circular instructions issued by the higher authorities from time to time.
 - The key construction material shall have to be arranged by the contractor of his own as per the quality/specifications.
- Cement = JKOPC Brand
 - Steel of all sorts = SAIL certified (The sail certificate shall have been produced /deposited in the division by the AEE concerned at the time submission of the work done bills). No extension in quantities/Cost is allowed in any case.

No. 6911-20
DT: 14-02-2025

DIPK-13076-24
DT: 15/03/2025

Executive Engineer
R&B Division Kupwara

Keran emerging as new tourist destination: Javed Dar



GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Minister for Agriculture Production, Javed Ahmad Dar, Saturday said that the Keran area in Kupwara district has recently emerged as a new tourist destination, where Rs 93.91 lakh tourism infrastructural development works have been undertaken. The Minister was replying on behalf of Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah,

to a question raised by Mir Saifullah in the Legislative Assembly. He said that the Tourism Department has undertaken development works under the Capex Budget during the financial year 2024-25 for upgradation of Keran as an off-beat destination. The Minister informed that the works taken up included shelter sheds/gazebo, public conveniences, signage, benches, lighting, selfie points, hiking trails, children recreation zone for facilitation of tourists. Besides, the Tourism Department is constructing a two bedroom hut at Keran. He said that the Keran area has recently emerged as a new tourist destination and a large number of tourists have visited Keran during the last two years. The Minister further stated that the destination

is nestled between the Line of Control (LoC) and the Kishanganga River. Keran offers visitors a unique blend of natural beauty, serene landscapes and a peek into the local culture, he added. He said that presently, there is no proposal under consideration for establishment of a Tourism Development Authority for Keran, Gumgand, Dedikote and Wogbal.

Incessant rains: DC Srinagar tours various City areas

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat Saturday undertook a tour of various City areas to take on spot assessment of the situation arisen due to incessant rains from the last couple of days in the district and the measures taken to combat water logging in low lying areas and major roads.

The DC, who is also the Chairman District Disaster Management Authority, visited various areas of the City viz. TRC, Aramwari Rajbagh, Airport Road, Humhama, Barzulla I.G Road, and other adjoining areas. He also inspected important installations and took stock of the progress of storm water drainage in low lying areas of the City.

On the occasion, DC directed the concerned Officers for immediate compliance with regard to the measures to be taken



for combating any inconvenience to the public and providing timely assistance to them. The Officers were also directed to put in place all requisite men and machinery at vulnerable spots, besides taking measures

for water logging of inundated low lying areas. DC asked the concerned to ensure that all dewatering and pumping stations are operational particularly at essential installations including hospitals, Power stations, besides in

inner habitations, lanes and by-lanes. During the visit, the DC was accompanied by the Chief Planning Officer, senior Officers from Irrigation & Flood Control, City Drainage, R&B, SMC, UEED and other Departments.

Govt focusing on consolidation of existing healthcare facilities: Sakeena Itoo

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, Saturday informed the Legislative Assembly that the government is working on consolidation of existing healthcare facilities rather than creating and constructing new infrastructure.

The Minister said this while replying to a question raised by Mushtaq Ahmad Guroo in the Legislative Assembly.

The Minister informed the house that in compliance to Government Order No: 628-HME of 2016 dated: 03-12-2016, NTPHC Barzulla was relocated to MMC Sanat Nagar Srinagar along with assets and manpower where it is presently functional. She added that the working hours of the Centre are in line with the other institutions i.e from 10.00 AM to 4.30 PM.

She informed that the MMC Sanat Nagar is functioning with G+1 structure and presently OPD and immunization facility



is being provided in the ground floor of the building, with the first floor of the building housing Youth rehabilitation and Mental Healthcare facility.

The Minister further said that as of now J&K is working on consolidation of the existing health facilities of around 4000 health institutes at various levels (Primary, Secondary and Tertiary). She informed that J&K is one of the top runners among large States/UTs in health institution density in the country, adding that these calculations worked as per the

report published in 2023 by MoHFW, GoI. She highlighted that J&K has a health institution for every 3500 souls against an average of 6000 souls at national level.

The Minister further informed the House that government has plans for future creations/upgradations as of now and same will be worked out once the austerity measures in terms of Government Order No. 10-F of 2025 dated 11.01.2025 imposed by the Finance Department are withdrawn and critical gaps as per IPHS, if any, are assessed.

'11,526 vacancies filled by JKPS, JKSSB during past two years'

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Minister for Agriculture Production, Javed Ahmad Dar, said that a total of 9.58 lakh self-employment/livelihood opportunities have been generated through schemes like Mumkin, Tejaswani, PMEGP, REGP etc. upto January 2025 in the past four years in J&K.

The Minister was replying on behalf of Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah, to a question raised by Mubarak Gul in the Legislative Assembly.

The Minister said that the unemployment rate has not increased drastically in the Union territory of Jammu & Kashmir since 2019 which stood at 6.7% in the year 2019-20 to 6.1% in the year 2023-24.

He informed that 11,526 selections have been made by the JKPS and JKSSB while 45688 private employment avenues have been generated in the industrial sector during the past two financial years. Besides, under MGNREGA, 3.01 crore person days have been generated upto January 2025 which provided

employment to 8.07 lakh households.

The Minister informed that the government has launched schemes like Mumkin, Tejaswani, Spurring Entrepreneurship, PARVAZ, Tourist Village Development Program and alike initiatives under the Mission Youth program.

The Minister informed that the Government of Jammu and Kashmir has initiated Mission YUVA for self employment and entrepreneurship to identify, support and empower 5 lakh identified potential entrepreneurs through a structured and tech-enabled approach. He said that the key goals of the initiative are to create over 1,37,000 new enterprises across sectors and generate more than 4,25,000 employment opportunities over the program's 5 years.

The Minister said that during the past four years 246 Job Fairs were conducted in which 4893 placements were made by 2760 companies and 6640 candidates were recommended for skill training. He said in order to

address the unemployment, the government has taken many initiatives including upgradation of Government Industrial Training Institutes through Public Private Partnership (PPP), Skill Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement (STRIVE), establishment of CIIT at Government Polytechnic Jammu and Government Polytechnic, Baramulla in collaboration with Tata Technologies.

He further informed that 3342, 3048, 1331, 7851 youth have been trained under CTDP, B2V4, PMKVY and Women SHGs respectively.

The Minister said that, out of 4429 enrolled candidates, 3249 candidates have been certified under SANKALP. He added that the government is smoothly and successfully implementing the Centrally Sponsored Schemes PMKVY and SANKALP. He said that the Union Government has also approved continuation of the Skill India Programme (SIP) until 2026, with a total budget of Rs 8,800 crore.

Rs 2083 cr earmarked for flood management of River Jhelum, tributaries: Rana



GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Minister for Jal Shakti, Javid Ahmad Rana, said that an amount of Rs. 2083 crore has been earmarked for flood management of River Jhelum and its tributaries under PMDP package of 2015 after September 2014 deluge.

The Minister, who was replying to a question raised by Farooq Ahmad Shah, informed that the carrying capacity of river Jhelum has been enhanced from 31800 cusecs to 41000 cusecs in Srinagar Reach.

The Minister said that the DPRs for flood management were subsequently framed for implementation in two phases, Phase I and Phase II for short term and long term flood measures. He further informed that Phase-I was approved for Rs.399.29 crore in 2015-16 by the Ministry for Water Resources (MOWR) and is nearing completion where as Phase II (Part-A only) was approved by MOWR in March 2022 for an estimated cost of Rs. 1623.43 crore with the objective to mitigate flood threat of 60,000 cusecs on river Jhelum.

The Minister said that the project is under execution and Rs. 114.293 crore from Central Assistance have been spent on it. He

added that a total of 30 bank protection works are being executed under this project, out of which, 29 have been tendered and 16 are complete. The progress of these works is 80% in aggregate.

He informed that DPR of "Comprehensive Flood Management works on River Jhelum and its tributaries- Phase-II" was framed at an estimated cost of Rs. 5411.54 crore and the same was submitted to the DoWR (RD&GR), MoJS, GoI for approval.

The Minister said that in-principle approval was accorded by the State Administrative Council with the stipulation that while the department may proceed with implementation of Part-A (estimated at Rs. 1684.6 cr.) utilising the available funds, with respect to the remaining i.e. Part-B, the department may explore financing options. Thereafter, in July 2022, Administrative Approval for Part A of Phase-II has been accorded for Rs. 1623.43 crore.

The Minister said that entry and exit gates in Hokersar wetland have been completed at a cost of Rs. 28.45 crore which is pivotal for rejuvenation of the Hokersar wetland.

365 Medical Officers posted in remote areas: Govt

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, Saturday informed the House that the government is making every effort to ensure healthcare services are provided across all areas of J&K.

The Minister said this while replying to a question raised by Mir Mohammad Fayaz.

She added that this is evident from the recent appointment of 365 medical officers, who have been posted to remote and underserved areas facing doctor shortages.

The Minister said that the Health and Medical Education department does not encourage attachments of doctors, instead, it is making every effort to ensure healthcare services are provided in all areas of J&K including far-flung and underserved regions.

The Minister further also informed the house that some deployments are being made due to compelling personal circumstances of the doctor, mostly on health grounds. She added that such adjustments are done with consideration for the well-being of doctors while still contributing towards the overall healthcare system.

PM e-Bus Sewa

CS chairs maiden UTLSC meeting to oversee arrival of 200 new e-buses

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Saturday chaired the maiden meeting of recently constituted UT Level Steering Committee (UTLSC) to take stock of the measures taken, so far, by the Housing & Urban Development Department to receive 200 more e-buses under PM e-Bus Sewa for both Jammu and Srinagar cities.

Other members of the committee who participated in the meeting included Principal Secretary, Finance; Commissioner Secretary, H&UDD; Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir/Jammu; Secretary, Transport; MD, JPDC; CEO, SSCL/JSLC besides other concerned officers.

The Chief Secretary took notice of the requirement of modalities and infrastructure to be raised to operate these buses in the twin cities of Jammu and Srinagar. He enquired about the costs to be incurred on development of the depots, charging stations and those to be made as operational expenditure to run this public transport system on per kilometre basis daily.

Dulloo further asked



about the kind of infrastructure and quantum of expenses to be covered under the central assistance. He advised for exploring all the options to secure funding for the operation of these buses besides the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) to assuage some burden of expenses from the local government.

He also examined the plans of the Department for establishment of depots for these buses at Bhagwati Nagar in Jammu and Bemina in Srinagar. He advised the Finance Department to examine the requirement of funds for operation of these vehicles so that the same is made available to the Department.

The Chief Secretary emphasised speedy com-

pletion of formalities like opening of bank accounts and making undertakings by the Finance and H&UDD for seamless progress on this scheme in J&K.

Earlier, Principal Secretary, Finance Department, Santosh D.Vaidya, also gave his inferences about the operation of these buses. He made out that the costs as per preliminary estimates could be around Rs 42 crore per year on their operation based upon the experience of running similar other vehicles in Jammu and Srinagar.

On the occasion, Commissioner Secretary, H&UDD, Mandeep Kaur, apprised the meeting that a Detailed Project Report (DPR) for development of the "Depot Infrastructure" costing Rs16.72 crore and for "Behind the Meter

Power Infrastructure" including 6.6-megawatt substation worth Rs 8.51 crore stands prepared for Jammu.

Similarly, SSCL has also prepared a Detailed Project Report (DPR) for development of the "Depot Development" costing Rs 14.50 crore and KPDC has prepared DPR for "Behind the Meter Power Infrastructure" worth Rs5.78 crore.

It was added that these DPRs had been prepared in accordance to the scheme regulations and all of them stands approved by the Central Steering Committee (GoI) to be taken up for execution here.

Giving details about the scheme, CEO, JSCL, Devansh Yadav, informed the meeting that the department is going to secure a fleet of 25 number

of 12 m buses and 75 units of 7m buses for Jammu. He added that 20 number of 12 m buses and 80 units of 9 m buses are going to be secured for Srinagar under PM e-Bus Sewa scheme.

It was further added that a Central Assistance (CA) for the operation of e-Buses on the PPP model in urban areas will be provided on a per kilometre (km) basis for 10 years or up to March 2037, whichever is earlier.

The rates of assistance would be Rs 24/ Km for 12m, Rs 22/Km for 9m and Rs 20/Km for 7m buses. Additionally, 100% central assistance for creation of 'Behind-the-meter Power' infrastructure and 90% for depot infrastructure, up to Rs 20 crore to be incurred on the ground.

Moreover, it was divulged that the total operational cost of this fleet in Jammu would be around Rs 628 crore with a subsidy amount of Rs 158 crore and earnings of nearly Rs 167 crore. Similarly, the costs estimated for Srinagar came up to Rs 686 crore with Rs 177 crore to be received as subsidy and Rs 167 crore as earnings over a period of 10 years thereby leaving a revenue gap of Rs 625 crore to be funded by the UT over this decade.

Rs 159.16 lakh released for maintenance of Kastigarh canal: Javid Rana

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Minister for Jal Shakti, Javid Ahmad Rana, Saturday said that Rs. 159.16 funds have been released for repair and maintenance of 20 km Kastigarh canal in Doda during 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial years.

The Minister was replying to a question raised by Shakti Raj Parihar in the Legislative Assembly. The Minister informed that out of Rs 159.16 lakh, Rs 108 lakh expenditure has been made, so far.

He said that Bhagwah Khul, Mandole Khul, Gai Khul, Ganika Khul and Dandi Khul are additional five minor canals, however, no funds have been utilised on these minor khuls during the past 02 years.

The Minister said that Kastigarh Canal was partially functional, however,

a portion of the canal was damaged due to landslide in July 2024 which was restored to provide smooth irrigation facility.

The Minister informed that the canal is benefiting the agricultural land in villages namely Kadlal, Malwa, Kuddhar, Manwhas, Parshal, Mundhar, Kastigarh, and adjoining areas.

The Minister said that the canal suffered damages at various spots due to rainfall, snowfall and forest fire during winter season this year. The matter stands taken up with the Deputy Commissioner Doda for release of funds under SDRF.

The Minister added that the audit for utilization of funds for these schemes has been conducted by the Directorate of Audit and Inspections J&K, however, no third party audit has been done.

Good Morning **Kashmir**

EDITORIAL

Embracing Compassion and Charity in the Holy Month of Ramadan

Ramadan, the blessed month of fasting and reflection, calls on Muslims to transcend the confines of daily routines and focus on the deeper spiritual and societal obligations.

This month, more than any other, underscores the importance of empathy, unity, and compassion. It is a time when the faithful are not only reminded to strengthen their bond with Allah but also to extend a hand to those in need, offering charity and support to the less fortunate.

For affluent Muslims, Ramadan serves as a poignant reminder of the societal responsibility they bear. While fasting during the daylight hours cultivates self-discipline and spiritual awareness, it also offers an opportunity to reflect on the struggles faced by the underprivileged. Those blessed with material wealth are urged to use this time to assist their less fortunate brothers and sisters by addressing their basic needs—be it food, shelter, or education.

One of the most profound aspects of Ramadan is the opportunity it provides to break down barriers, even those between adversaries. The essence of the month lies in fostering reconciliation and unity, not only with family and friends but with those we may have distanced ourselves from. Ramadan teaches us to rise above petty grievances, to extend compassion, and to rebuild relationships that may have been torn apart by misunderstandings or discord.

In addition to individual acts of kindness, the collective spirit of Ramadan can transform societies. The acts of charity, community iftar gatherings, and collective prayers serve as powerful reminders that humanity is interconnected, and the well-being of each individual is tied to the well-being of all. By dedicating time, resources, and energy toward uplifting others, Muslims are encouraged to examine their contribution to society, ensuring that their actions align with the values of justice, equality, and compassion.

As we navigate the days of Ramadan, let us remember the teachings it imparts: the importance of helping others, of reconciling differences, and of making a meaningful difference in our communities. It is not only a time for self-purification but also a chance to give back, to extend kindness, and to leave a legacy of charity that lasts far beyond the month itself.

Learn To Be Happy With What You Have



AUBAID AHMAD AKHOON

Life moves like a gust of wind—unseen, unstoppable. We run alongside it, believing we are in control, yet we are merely passengers in time's grand design. In our relentless pursuit of success, recognition, and a future that always seems just within reach, we often fail to notice the present slipping away.

Mornings turn into nights, weeks into years, and before we realize it, the hands of the clock have moved too far ahead. We plan for tomorrow, invest in dreams, and chase fleeting desires, assuming there will always be time for love, laughter, and peace. But does time ever wait?

The late Anwar Sadeed, a renowned Pakistani critic, researcher, and columnist, beautifully captured this truth in his couplet:

"Sail-e-zaman mein doob gaye mash-hoor-e-zamana log, Waqt ke munisif ne kab rakha qaa'im un ka naam."

"The tide of time has drowned even the greatest of names. When has time's judgment ever kept their legacy intact?"

The tide of time spares no one—kings, poets, warriors. Once celebrated, now forgotten. Their names, once etched in history, now fade like whispers in the wind. What, then, truly remains? Not wealth, for gold loses its luster. Not power, for thrones crumble into dust. What endures are the moments of kindness we shared, the love we selflessly gave, and the righteous deeds we performed—those that continue to benefit others, becoming our eternal legacy, our sadaqah jariyah.

Yet, in our relentless pursuit of success, we mistake motion for progress, forgetting that life is not measured by the milestones we reach but by the moments we cherish. We chase distant dreams, blind to the beauty already surrounding us—the rustling of leaves whispering secrets to the wind, the



silent comfort of a loved one's presence, the peace found in a whispered prayer. True fulfillment lies not in the relentless race for more but in the quiet embrace of what is already ours.

Another poet beautifully expressed this sentiment: "Haasil-e-zindagi hasrat ke siwa kuch bhi nahi, Ye kiya nahi, woh hua nahi, ye mila nahi, woh raha nahi." ("The essence of life is nothing but longing—What wasn't done, what didn't happen, what wasn't gained, what was left behind.")

How often do we count our losses instead of cherishing what we have? We mourn unfulfilled dreams, unsaid words, and untaken roads. But do we ever pause to appreciate the love we received, the small joys we lived, and the peace we found in quiet moments?

Live Now, Before Time Moves On

Why do we always believe happiness is waiting for us in the future?

We tell ourselves: "Once I have more money, I'll be happy."

"Once I get my dream job, I'll find peace."

But what if that one day never comes? What if, in waiting for the perfect moment, we lose the only moments that truly mattered?

This endless pursuit of desires is nothing new. The great Ghalib already captured this reality in his timeless couplet:

"Hazon h vahishen aisi ki har vahish pe dam nikle,

Bahut nikle mire arman lekin phir bhi kam nikle." "A thousand desires, each so intense that it could take my last breath away. Many were fulfilled, yet too few compared to those that remain."

No matter how much we achieve, our hearts always long for more. We chase after dreams, forgetting to cherish what is already in our hands. But true fulfillment is not in accumulating more—it is in appreciating the beauty of the present moment. Life is happening now. Not in some distant future, not in the memories of the past, but in this exact moment—the laughter of a loved one, the gentle breeze on our face, the warmth of a hug, the beauty of the sky. These little things, often ignored, are the real treasures of life.

Fly High, But Keep Your Feet on the Ground Soar with grace, embrace the sky, Yet dust we are, and dust we lie.

Ambitions and dreams are important, but not at the cost of losing yourself. Chase your goals, but don't forget to cherish what you already have. No matter how high we fly, we must remember that one day, we will return to the same earth.

So why let ego and pride consume us? Why not walk with humility and gratitude? Why not focus on love, kindness, and the things that truly matter?

Time Invested in Relationships Is Never Wasted

We often take our relationships for granted, assuming people will always be there. We prioritize work over family, phone screens over real conversations, and status over emotions. But when time takes these people away from us, we realize too late that we should have given them more of ourselves.

Give time to your loved ones. Listen when they speak. Hold their hands while you can. Apologize before it's too late. Love them fully, without conditions. Because once they are gone, no amount of regret can bring them back.

Gratitude: The Secret to a Fulfilled Life Fate gives us what is meant for us, and no force in the world can change that. But are we grateful for what we have? Or do we always focus on what's missing?

Instead of constantly wanting more, let's appreciate what's already in front of us. Let's stop living in what ifs and some days and start embracing what is.

Life is not about counting the years—it's about making the years count. There's a difference between merely surviving and truly living.

So, before life slips away, pause. Take a deep breath. Look around. Feel this moment. Live it—because once it's gone, it will never come back.

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The Science Behind Sleep

DR AFTAB JAN

In today's fast-paced world, where hustle culture glorifies sleepless nights, sacrificing rest for productivity has become the norm. But what if we told you that skipping sleep isn't just making you tired—it could be silently harming your brain?

Ground breaking research has unveiled that sleep is not merely a period of rest; it's an essential biological process that cleanses the brain, protects against neurodegenerative diseases, and enhances overall cognitive function.

When you sleep, your brain undergoes a deep-cleaning process, flushing out toxic waste products that accumulate during the day. Without adequate sleep, these toxins build up, increasing the risk of Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and dementia. In essence, quality sleep is your brain's natural detox system—and neglecting it comes with serious consequences.

How Toxins Accumulate in the Brain

Every second, billions of neurons in your brain fire electrical and chemical signals, controlling everything from thoughts and emotions to body functions. However, just like any high-powered engine, this activity produces metabolic waste, including:

- Beta-amyloid plaques—a sticky protein that clumps together and is strongly linked to Alzheimer's disease.
- Tau proteins—which, when misfolded, create tangles that disrupt brain function and lead to memory loss.
- Oxidative stress byproducts—which accelerate brain aging and impair cognitive function.

the lymphatic system to clear waste, the brain relies on a unique cleaning mechanism—the glymphatic system, which works almost exclusively during sleep.

How Sleep Detoxifies Your Brain

In a ground breaking 2013 study, neuroscientists at the University of Rochester injected a fluorescent dye into the brains of mice. Some were allowed to sleep, while others were kept awake. The results were astonishing:

- The sleeping mice flushed out nearly all the dye, indicating a powerful cleaning process.
- The sleep-deprived mice retained high levels of toxins, proving that the brain struggles to detoxify when awake.

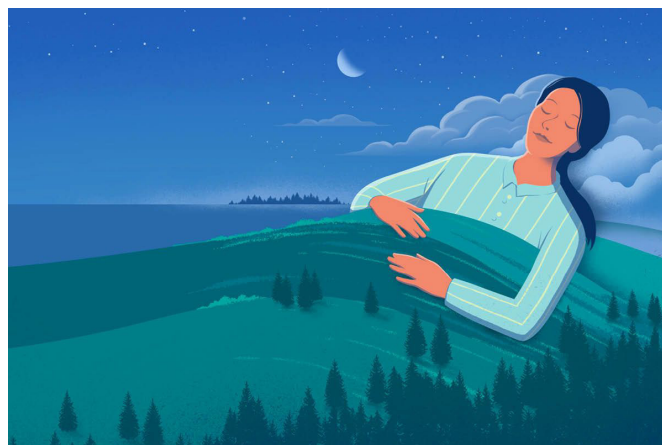
This experiment provided undeniable proof that sleep is critical for brain health. Here's how it works:

- Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) flows through specialized channels formed by astrocytes (brain cells).
- This fluid washes away harmful proteins, dead cells, and metabolic waste.
- The waste is transported out of the brain and eliminated from the body.

This self-cleaning system is most active during deep sleep, particularly in the slow-wave sleep (SWS) stage. When we don't get enough rest, our brains become clogged with toxins, accelerating cognitive decline.

The Devastating Effects of Sleep Deprivation on the Brain

Ignoring sleep isn't just about feeling groggy—it's about long-term brain damage.



Numerous studies confirm that chronic sleep deprivation significantly increases the risk of neurodegenerative diseases:

- A 2018 study found that sleeping less than six hours per night led to a 30% increase in beta-amyloid buildup—directly linked to Alzheimer's disease.
- A 2021 study revealed that people who consistently slept under six hours were at a higher risk of dementia in later years.
- A large-scale study of 8,000 adults found that short sleepers were twice as likely to develop memory disorders and early signs of brain shrinkage.
- MRI scans of sleep-deprived individuals showed shrinkage in areas responsible for memory, learning, and decision-making.
- The message is clear: If you're not getting enough sleep, your brain is aging faster than it should.
- How to Optimize Your Sleep for Maximum Brain Health
- Now that science has proven sleep is essential for brain detoxification, let's explore how to enhance sleep quality:

Maintain a Consistent Sleep Schedule

Going to bed and waking up at the same time daily strengthens your body's internal clock. Irregular sleep patterns disrupt the glymphatic system, reducing detox efficiency.

Deep sleep is when your brain removes the most toxins. To enhance slow-wave sleep:

- Avoid stress before bedtime
- Practice meditation or deep breathing
- Follow a wind-down routine
- Avoid Blue Light Before Bed

Electronic screens emit blue light, which blocks melatonin, your sleep hormone. To combat this:

- Use blue-light filters
- Wear blue-light-blocking glasses
- Avoid screens at least one hour before bed
- Engage in Regular Physical Activity

Exercise not only improves sleep quality but also enhances glymphatic system efficiency.

Studies suggest that aerobic exercises like running, cycling, and swimming promote deeper sleep. **Limit Caffeine and Alcohol**

Caffeine blocks adenosine (a sleep-promoting neurotransmitter), while alcohol disrupts deep sleep stages. Limit both, especially in the evening.

- Create a Sleep-Friendly Environment
- Your bedroom should be optimized for sleep
- Keep it cool (~18°C or 65°F)
- Use blackout curtains to block light
- Reduce noise with white noise machines

Conclusion: Sleep is Your Brain's Best Defense Against Disease

The outdated belief that "sleep is a waste of time" has been scientifically debunked. Sleep isn't just rest—it's a biological necessity for:

- Brain detoxification
- Cognitive longevity
- Memory retention
- Neuroprotection against dementia

Think of sleep as a nightly deep-cleaning cycle for your brain. Without it, toxic waste builds up, increasing your risk of neurodegeneration, memory loss, and cognitive decline.

So, the next time you're tempted to sacrifice sleep for productivity, remember this: A well-rested brain is a high-performing brain.

More sleep today means a sharper mind tomorrow. Prioritizing sleep is the ultimate act of self-care and intelligence. Make high-quality sleep a non-negotiable priority, and your brain will thank you for years to come.

Prioritize sleep today for a sharper, healthier, and longer life.

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Punishment: Does It Actually Deter Rape?

MAHMODUL SHESHEIR
DR. RASEL HUSSAIN

One of the most egregious crimes a person can do is rape. Rape victims suffer terrible physical, emotional, and psychic injuries that never go away. They must endure mental torment for no fault of their own. Their lives become a living torment, and they are frequently despised by society. However, what about the offender? What is to be done to the devil who breaks the victim's spirit?

"A man is said to commit 'rape' who except in the case hereinafter excepted, has sexual intercourse with a woman under circumstances falling under any of the five following descriptions: Firstly, Against her will. Secondly, Without her consent. Thirdly, With her consent, when her consent has been obtained by putting her in fear of death, or of hurt. Fourthly, with her consent, when the man knows that he is not her husband, and that her consent is given because she believes that he is another man to whom she is or believes herself to be lawfully married. Fifthly, With or without her consent, when she is under fourteen years of age. Explanation. Penetration is sufficient to constitute the sexual intercourse necessary to the offence of rape. Exception, Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under thirteen years of age, is not rape".

In the face of growing concerns about sexual violence around the world, societies are grappling with how best to protect rape victims by ensuring justice and prevent further assaults. Different countries across the world have strong laws against sexual assault to make their societies a safer place for their women. In the case of punishment for Rapist in Bangladesh Society, according to the Penal Code, 1860 the Punishment for rape (376) are "whoever commits rape shall be punished with 2[imprisonment] for life or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine, unless the woman raped is his own wife and is not under twelve years of age, in which case he shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both(CHAPTER XVI, OF OFFENCES AFFECTING THE HUMAN BODY; Of Rape)." Bangladesh's government has approved The Women and Children Repression Prevention (Amendment) Bill, 2020 that would allow for the death penalty in rape cases, as anger grows in the country over incidents of sexual assault. The bill says anyone convicted of rape will be punished with death or "rigorous imprisonment" for life. The existing provision stipulates a maximum of life in prison for rape.

Very Recently Bangladesh is witnessing and reporting a significant number of rape cases across the country and in most of the cases it was found the minor girls are the worst victims and sufferers. And in most of the rape case that are being filled as case in the police station also take long time to ensure justice which further hampering the social and lawful security of the victims both economically and psychologically.

After the mass upsurge across the country and long march for ensuring justice with the rape victims like Asia the current interim government is looking into the possibility of ensuring justice with the rape victims by



accelerating the rape case dealing processes and duration. Along with the lawful dealing, another most crucial discussions revolve around the issue is the potential usages of Islamic Sharia law to play a role in the legal punishment of rapists and to ensure justice with the rape victims. However, there are lots of debates regarding its application. For many, the severity of punishments such as flogging or even the death penalty may seem too extreme. However, given the devastating impact of rape on both the individual and society, it's worth considering whether such punishments might provide a stronger deterrent and serve justice more effectively than the lenient sentences often handed down by modern legal systems. In this article we are going to explain what is the Sharia law regarding rape and the punishment of the perpetrators.

1. Rape (Zina b'il-Jabr)

In Islam, rape is classified under the crime of "Zina b'il-Jabr" (forced adultery or sexual assault), where one person forces another into non-consensual sexual intercourse. It is considered an extreme violation of a person's body and autonomy.

In Islamic (Sharia) law, the punishment for rape is severe, as it is considered a grave crime that violates the dignity, safety, and rights of the victim. The punishment for rape under Sharia can vary depending on the circumstances and the legal standards of proof, but it is designed to both deter potential offenders and serve as a form of justice for the victim. Below is an explanation of the potential punishments and conditions:

a. Death Penalty (Qatl)

The death penalty is one of the most severe punishments prescribed for rape in Islamic law, particularly if certain aggravating circumstances exist. This could include cases where the rape is committed with extreme cruelty, the victim is killed, or there are multiple victims. The punishment can also apply if the rape is part of a

larger criminal act, such as kidnapping, human trafficking, or repeated offenses. Some interpretations of Sharia law suggest that the death penalty may be applied in such cases.

b. Flogging (Hadd)

Flogging (lashes) is another punishment that may be applied for rape in Islam, especially in cases where the crime involves less severe circumstances but still constitutes a serious offense. In some Islamic jurisdictions, a person found guilty of rape could be flogged with a set number of lashes (typically 100 lashes). This punishment is generally meant to deter the act and show society the severity of the crime. The victim's testimony plays a crucial role in this process, but there must be strong, unambiguous evidence to convict the accused.

2. Conditions for Conviction

Islamic law places great emphasis on the integrity of evidence, and as such, there are strict standards of proof that must be met before a punishment is carried out. These include Four witnesses and Confession. In traditional interpretations of Sharia, to prove the crime of rape, there must be four male witnesses who testify that they saw the act of intercourse taking place. This requirement ensures that the accusation is supported by clear and credible evidence. If the perpetrator confesses to the crime willingly and without coercion, they can be punished according to Sharia law, even without the requirement of witnesses. The confession is considered a strong form of evidence.

3. Justice for the Victim

Victims of sexual violence often face insurmountable psychological and emotional trauma. The effects of rape can haunt an individual for years, causing not just physical pain but deep emotional scars. Yet in many contemporary legal systems, victims often feel their trauma is not properly acknowledged, or worse, that their attackers are treated too leniently. In Sharia, the legal process places a sig-

nificant emphasis on victim justice. Not only does the law provide a clear structure for prosecuting rapists, but it also aims to protect the dignity and rights of the victim throughout the process. The victim's testimony is treated with high regard, and their psychological and emotional suffering is taken into account when determining justice. Islamic law's swift and clear response to the crime of rape aims to restore the victim's sense of security and dignity, something that is often lost in lengthy court battles in non-religious legal systems.

4. Human Rights Concerns: The Debate Over Severity

Critics of Sharia law often raise concerns about human rights, particularly the severity of corporal punishment and the death penalty. They argue that such punishments are inhumane and cruel. However, it's essential to recognize that the primary objective of Islamic law is not to enact vengeance but to protect the welfare of society. The system aims to prevent harm to the broader community, and punishments are only met up after careful consideration of evidence.

In the case of rape, Sharia's requirements for high proof standards (such as requiring four male witnesses or a confession) ensure that punishments are not arbitrarily handed out. This protects individuals from wrongful convictions and ensures that only those truly guilty are punished. At the same time, the victim's testimony is protected and treated with dignity, recognizing the profound trauma they've endured. Furthermore, Islamic law places great emphasis on the rehabilitation of both victim and perpetrator. It recognizes that individuals are capable of reform, and the ultimate goal is not just punishment but also the restoration of societal harmony and moral uprightness.

5. Balancing Justice and Mercy

One of the most misunderstood aspects of Islamic law is its balance between justice and mercy. While the

punishments for rape under Sharia are severe, they are never executed in an arbitrary or unjust manner. The possibility of repentance and the opportunity for offenders to reform are built into the law, showing Islam's recognition of the need for moral growth and personal accountability. However, this mercy does not extend to those who commit crimes as horrific as rape, especially when the victims suffer greatly. In these cases, Islam's approach is one of clear and firm justice, emphasizing that society must protect the vulnerable and deter those who might commit such crimes in the future.

6. A Necessary Discussion for Society's Safety

As we continue to struggle with the problem of sexual violence, it is essential to consider every avenue for justice and prevention. While the application of Islamic law may not be suitable for every society, the concepts of swift and certain punishment, protection of victims' rights, and moral deterrence should resonate universally. The harshness of the punishments prescribed under Sharia for rapists is not about cruelty, it is about ensuring justice for the victim, safeguarding society, and creating a system where individuals understand that the cost of committing such a heinous crime will be incredibly high. Only when the cost of such a crime is steep enough will we begin to see a true reduction in sexual violence.

It's time to think beyond our current systems and consider whether stronger deterrents or much enforcement and acceleration of the current legal procedures of dealing with rape cases by making special tribunal could lead to a safer and just world for our women and girls to lead a tension free, safe and sound life that is due for long time in the Bangladesh Society.

Mahmodul Shesheir, Associate Researcher at Yale University, United States, Dr. Rasel Hussain; Assistant professor, East West University, Dhaka, Bangladesh



Weight Loss Tips: Best Foods To Help Burn Visceral Fat

Visceral fat is a type of fat stored deep within the abdominal cavity, surrounding vital organs like the liver, pancreas, and intestines. Unlike subcutaneous fat which lies just under the skin, visceral fat is more dangerous because it releases inflammatory compounds and hormones that increase the risk of serious health conditions like heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and metabolic disorders. Burning visceral fat is essential for improving overall health, reducing inflammation, and preventing chronic diseases. Certain foods can enhance metabolism, regulate blood sugar levels, and promote fat-burning, making them effective in reducing visceral fat. Keep reading as we list some of the best foods to burn visceral fat.

These foods will help you burn visceral fat

1. Avocados
Avocados are rich in monounsaturated fats, which help reduce inflammation and prevent fat storage in the abdominal area. They also contain fibre, which keeps you full for longer and prevents overeating. The healthy fats in avocados help improve insulin sensitivity, reducing the chances of excess fat accumulation

around the organs.

2. Eggs
Eggs are an excellent source of high-quality protein, which supports muscle growth and boosts metabolism. They also contain essential nutrients like choline, which plays a role in fat metabolism. Eating eggs for breakfast helps control appetite throughout the day, preventing unnecessary calorie intake and promoting fat burning.

3. Leafy greens
Leafy greens are low in calories and high in fibre, making them great for reducing visceral fat. They help regulate blood sugar levels and prevent insulin spikes, which are linked to increased belly fat storage. The high water content in greens also helps in detoxifying the body and reducing bloating.

4. Berries
Berries are packed with antioxidants, fibre, and vitamins that help fight inflammation and regulate fat metabolism. The polyphenols in berries improve insulin sensitivity and reduce fat accumulation around the organs. Their natural sweetness also makes them a great low-calorie alternative to sugary snacks.

5. Greek yogurt
Greek yogurt is high in protein and probiotics, both of which contribute to fat loss.



The protein content helps build lean muscle, which in turn boosts metabolism, while probiotics improve gut health, reducing bloating and inflammation that contribute to visceral fat storage. Green tea contains catechins, powerful antioxidants that boost metabolism and increase fat oxidation.

Drinking green tea regularly helps the body burn fat more efficiently, especially when combined with a healthy diet and exercise. It also improves digestion and reduces bloating.

7. Whole grains
Whole grains provide complex carbohydrates and fibre, which regulate blood sugar levels and prevent fat accumulation. Unlike refined grains, whole grains keep you full longer and prevent insulin spikes that contribute to visceral fat storage. Quinoa and oats, in particular, are excellent choices for a fat-burning diet.

8. Apple cider vinegar
Apple cider vinegar helps control blood sugar levels and reduces appetite, which can contribute to fat loss. The acetic acid in apple cider vinegar has been shown to promote fat burning and prevent fat storage around the organs. Drinking diluted apple cider vinegar before meals may aid digestion and fat metabolism.

Incorporating these fat-burning foods into your daily diet, along with regular exercise and a healthy lifestyle, can help reduce visceral fat effectively. By focusing on nutrient-dense, anti-inflammatory foods, you can improve metabolic health and lower the risk of chronic diseases associated with excessive visceral fat.

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Fresh Snowfall

the less rainfall for the three straight months from December to February.

According to the details, the water level at Ram Munshi Bagh was above 5 ft at 6:00 PM while Asham was flowing at 2.40 ft today.

The nallahs were also flowing close to the warning level at multiple places with official data revealing that Vaishov Nallah in Khudwani was flowing at 1591.121m, which was 3m below the warning level.

Similarly, the other streams also recorded the rise in the water level amidst the intermittent moderate rainfall.

Moreover, the weatherman predicted intermittent brief spells of light rain and snow at few places towards Sunday morning & improvement towards afternoon.

Director MeT, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad said that generally dry weather is expected from March 17 to 25.

Moreover, the MeT issued an advisory, advising the travellers, tourists and transporters to follow administration and traffic advisory.

Farmers have been advised to suspend farm operations till March 16. The advisory also appealed to people to avoid visiting sloppy & avalanche prone areas and said that landslides, mudslides and shooting stones are expected at vulnerable spots—(KNO)

Unemployment Rate

In addition, 9.58 lakh self-employment opportunities were generated through schemes such as 'Mumkin', 'Tejaswani', Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) and Rural Employment Generation Programme (REGP) in the last four years, the minister said, adding that 2,99,266 livelihood opportunities were created in 2021-22, 2,83,664 in 2022-23, 2,38,675 in 2023-24 and 1,36,165 in 2024-25 up to January this year.

Under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 3.01 crore person-days were generated up to January 2025, providing employment to 8.07 lakh households, Dar said.

The minister said the government has also taken major initiatives with a focus on youth development, entrepreneurship, and livelihood generation.

The government has initiated 'Mission Yuva' for self-employment and entrepreneurship to identify, support, and empower five lakh potential entrepreneurs through a structured and tech-enabled approach, Dar said.

The key goals of this initiative are to create over 1,37,000 new enterprises across sectors and to generate 4.25 lakh employment opportunities over the five-year programme, he added.

In the last four years, 246 job fairs were organised in which 4,893 placements were made by 2,760 companies, besides recommending 6,640 candidates for skill training, Dar said.

The government is also facilitating self-employment opportunities to job seekers through various line departments, the minister said, adding that it has started imparting skill development training across the Union Territory.

India Slams

their practice of cross-border terrorism". "The fanatical mindset of this nation is well known, as also its record of bigotry", he said of Pakistan. "Such efforts will not change the reality that Jammu and Kashmir was, is and will always be an integral part of India", he declared.

Pakistan has been a voice in the wilderness at the UN when it comes to Kashmir. While it raises Kashmir at almost any chance its representatives get a chance to speak, no other

country has taken up the cause.

Janjua, who was Pakistan's foreign secretary from 2017 to 2019, spoke as one of the invitees to the meeting and not as a representative of Islamabad. She tried to link Kashmir to Gaza — a tactic of Pakistan — and asserted, "Islamophobia is a significant driver of the horrific killing killings of Muslims in occupied territories, such as in Indian occupied Kashmir, and in Palestine." She also obliquely mentioned "lynchings" linked to "Love Jihad" and "cow vigilantes".

Panel Examining

the Jammu and Kashmir government informed the assembly that no deadline had been set for the three-member sub-committee to submit its report.

Social Welfare Minister Sakeena Itoo shared the information in a written response to a starred question by People's Conference MLA Sajad Gani Lone, who had asked if a six-month deadline had been granted to the panel to review the existing policy.

Itoo informed the Assembly that no deadline had been set for the three-member Cabinet sub-committee—formed last year to look into grievances against the current reservation policy in the Union Territory—to submit its report.

The Cabinet sub-committee, headed by Itoo and including ministers Satish Sharma and Javed Rana, was constituted in December.

Reservation has become a major issue in Jammu and Kashmir following the Centre's decision to add more communities to the reserved category and expand quotas in the Union Territory during the past five years.

There are increasing objections to the Centre's move to push reservation to 70 per cent in Jammu and Kashmir.

"The Cabinet sub-committee stands constituted ... to examine the grievances projected by a section of aspirants for various posts regarding reservation rules. However, no specific timeline has been fixed for submitting the report," Itoo said in the House.

She said 5,39,306 (5.39 lakh) people from Scheduled Tribes (STs) -- 4,59,493 (4.59 lakh) in Jammu division and 79,813 in Kashmir division—had obtained certificates since April 1, 2023.

During the same period, 67,112 Scheduled Caste (SC) certificates have been issued in the Jammu region.

The minister said 1,379 villages in Jammu and 1,229 in Kashmir had benefited under the Reserved Backward Area while 551 villages of the Jammu zone benefited under the International Border category.

Similarly, 268 villages in Jammu and 16 in Kashmir have benefited under the Actual Line of Control category.

The government has issued 27,420 certificates to people from Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) in the Jammu division and 2,273 certificates in the Kashmir valley since April 1, 2023, the minister said.

Reservation System

He noted that even ST population residing in Kashmir are disadvantaged, comprising only 15 per cent of total applicants from the ST pool.

"While Residents of Backward Areas (RBA) figures appear more balanced, Lone pointed out that when adjusted for Kashmir's nearly seven per cent larger population, the region still lags behind Jammu proportionally," he added.

Lone also criticised the committee established by the National Conference-led government on December 10, 2024, to address these grievances, noting it lacks a specific timeline for submitting its report despite previous indi-

cations of a six-month deadline.

Earlier in his address to the Assembly on Thursday, the J&KPC President highlighted the growing marginalisation of Kashmiri-speaking residents due to what he described as a deeply inequitable reservation system.

Lone presented a data-driven argument showing the systematic decline in the representation of Kashmiri speakers in prestigious positions, asserting that the current reservation framework is creating a form of "social disempowerment" for the community.

J&K To Increase

augmentation of lifts," she said.

"These projects will provide further facilities like HD Waras (18-bed), pre-post-operative wards (37), drug/CSSD stores (2 each), blood bank, and gas bank which will enhance the healthcare facilities in the said hospital," she added.

Regarding the JLNH hospital in the Rainawari area of Srinagar, Itoo said that it is a fact that the hospital has witnessed a sharp rise in patient inflow, for which infrastructure is being developed by the H&ME Department, as an G+4 additional block is under process which shall be completed within a short period of time by the executive agency.

"Moreover, the CT scan has been installed recently. As far as the manpower is concerned, almost all the sanctioned posts of consultants, and medical officers are filled, but there are some posts of paramedics lying vacant in this hospital. However, such shortage is being compensated by the manpower provided under NHM," the minister said.

SPOs Cannot Be

the court, her lawyer argued that her disengagement was arbitrary, unilateral, and in direct violation of the protections afforded to SPOs under the J&K Police Manual and the Police Act of 1983.

Justice Rajesh Sekhri, while delivering the judgment, observed that Section 19 of the Police Act categorically states that SPOs are entitled to the same powers, privileges, and protections as regular police officers. The court also referred to Rule 359 of the J&K Police Rules, which mandates that no police officer can be dismissed, removed, or demoted without a reasonable opportunity to present their defense. The rule explicitly requires that the accused must be given a chance to respond both orally and in writing before any punitive action is taken.

The High Court underscored that the principle of natural justice is a fundamental pillar of legal fairness and is deeply embedded in Article 14 of the Constitution of India, which guarantees equality before the law. The court stated that a government authority cannot take adverse action against an employee without following due process, as it would set a dangerous precedent for arbitrary dismissals.

Significantly, the respondents admitted before the court that no inquiry or prior notice was served to the petitioner before her disengagement. Instead, they justified their action by citing a clause in her engagement order that allowed for termination at any time without notice. The court rejected this argument, stating that such a clause cannot override the fundamental right to a fair hearing.

In its ruling, the court quashed the termination order and directed the authorities to reinstate the petitioner as an SPO. However, it clarified that she would not be entitled to back wages for the period of her disengagement.

At the same time, the court granted the authorities the liberty to conduct a fresh inquiry into the allegations against her, but only in accordance with established legal procedures.

The inquiry, if initiated, must be completed within two months from the date of receiving the court's order. (KDC)

Jhelum's Carrying

crore with the objective to mitigate flood threat of 60,000 cusecs on river Jhelum.

The Minister said that the project is under execution and Rs. 114.293 crore from Central Assistance have been spent on it. He added that a total of 30 bank protection works are being executed under this project, out of which, 29 have been tendered and 16 are complete. The progress of these works is 80% in aggregate.

He informed that DPR of "Comprehensive Flood Management works on River Jhelum and its tributaries- Phase-II" was framed at an estimated cost of Rs. 5411.54 crore and the same was submitted to the DoWR (RD&GR), MoJS, Gol for approval.

The Minister said that in-principle approval was accorded by the State Administrative Council with the stipulation that while the department may proceed with implementation of Part-A (estimated at Rs. 1684.6 cr.) utilising the available funds, with respect to the remaining i.e. Part-B, the department may explore financing options. Thereafter, in July 2022, Administrative Approval for Part A of Phase-II has been accorded for Rs. 1623.43 crore.

The Minister said that entry and exit gates in Hokersar wetland have been completed at a cost of Rs. 28.45 crore which is pivotal for rejuvenation of the Hokersar wetland.

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India backs steps to boost labour welfare, quality jobs at ILO meet in Geneva

GENEVA : India came out strongly in favour of advancing labour welfare, quality employment and social justice worldwide at a meeting of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) being held here from March 10 to March 20.

The Indian delegation, led by Sumita Dawra, Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, made several interventions on key issues, showcasing India's achievements, learnings and perspectives to advance the shared agenda of promoting labour welfare, social justice and quality employment generation globally.

Social protection, responsible business conduct, living wages, AI and future of work, and fair global migration emerged as key areas of India-ILO collaboration. The ILO's 353rd Governing Body meeting brings together representatives from governments, workers and employers, to discuss crucial matters relating to the world of work and the governance of ILO. India extended its support to ILO on the organisation of the

UN led Second World Summit for Social Development in Doha, Qatar later this year, as it aims at reinforcing the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Social Development.

India's inspiring progress in promoting social justice and development was highlighted, as India has doubled its social protection coverage to 48.8 per cent, increasing the average global social protection coverage by over 5 per cent.

The contribution of India's flagship institutions and schemes such as EPFO (7.37 crore contributing members), ESIC (14.4 crore beneficiaries), e-Shram Portal (30.6 crore registered unorganised members), PM Jan Arogya Yojana (60 crore beneficiaries) and Targeted PDS (food security to 81.35 crore beneficiaries) was acknowledged in this context.

India, as one of the largest countries of origin of migrant workers and recipient of highest remittances, reiterated its support for greater global cooperation in promoting well-managed, skills-based migration pathways.

ILO was urged to enhance efforts towards generating global momentum for securing



social protection and rights for migrant workers through bilateral labour migration and social security agreements. Support was extended for ILO's proposal to convene the first Tripartite Global Forum on Migration under the ILO based Global Coalition for Social Justice, by India as a leading partner of the Global Coalition. India also reaffirmed its

commitment towards playing a leading role towards ensuring a planet free of harm from chemicals and waste, safeguarding workers, communities and the environment. The actions being undertaken by ILO in the follow up to the Bonn Declaration were acknowledged.

Besides, the Indian team also highlighted key initiatives taken by the country towards

safeguarding the health and safety of workers and communities including Factories Act, and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code and the capacity-building measures under the Viksit Bharat 2047 Action Plan towards ensuring workplace safety in Major Accident Hazardous (MAH) units. The Indian delegation also

held several bilateral discussions with the Director General and senior experts of ILO, and representatives of other countries on labour and employment matters of keen interest to India.

Sumita Dawra met Gilbert F. Houngbo, the DG-ILO and congratulated him for his flagship initiative the Global Coalition for Social Justice, which has emerged as a robust platform for global collaboration to promote social justice. She also reiterated the need for ILO to consider in-kind benefits while assessing social protection coverage.

This assumes significance as India has commenced a State Specific Data Pooling exercise in collaboration with ILO to get a more accurate assessment of India's social protection coverage.

DG-ILO appreciated India for playing a leading role in the Global Coalition by championing the key Coalition intervention "Responsible business for sustainable and inclusive societies," and successfully organising the first ever "Regional Dialogue on Social Justice" at New Delhi last month.

"This has inspired other countries to enhance their contribution to the coalition's

agenda," he remarked.

Houngbo invited India to participate pro-actively in the upcoming Annual Forum on Social Justice, and showcase best practices of Indian industry in terms of Responsible Business Conduct, payment of Living Wages, and harnessing AI for a socially just Future of Work.

The DG also expressed his appreciation for India's first ever voluntary financial support to ILO towards conduct of a feasibility study on development of international reference classification of occupations by ILO and OECD. This India led initiative will facilitate in galvanising global employment opportunities for Indian youth through benchmarking, and mutual recognition of skills and qualifications. Development of the international classification is a historic commitment made by the G20 leaders under India's G20 presidency of 2023.

India also discussed future collaborations in the pipeline with ILO on shared priorities including determination and operationalisation of living wages, gig and platform workers' welfare and decent work in value chains.

Political row erupts over Owaisi's remarks on Savarkar, Holi

NEW DELHI : AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi has stirred a political debate with his controversial claims that Veer Savarkar and former RSS chief Madhav Sadashivrao Golwalkar had "abused" Chhatrapati Sambhaji, ji.

He also stated that Muslims are not "cowards," criticising the calls for them to stay indoors during the Holi celebrations. Savarkar used to eat, what he used to drink, BJP would not be able to digest it, so I do not want to indulge in this controversy by opening these pages of history," Alvi told IANS.

Meanwhile, Delhi Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa slammed the AIMIM chief, stating, "Veer Savarkar made a significant contribution to this country. His services should not be viewed through the lens of any one religion. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is the pride of our country and our culture. If anyone wishes to view him through the lens of their own religion, it is their

perspective." The debate intensified over the Wakf Amendment Bill 2024, which Owaisi allegedly aimed to take away Waqf properties.

Addressing a gathering in Hyderabad on Friday, Owaisi said, "The RSS is after the graves of the Mughals and the Waqf properties. The new law seeks to give rights over Waqf properties to those who have encroached on them."

Alvi echoed Owaisi's concerns, calling the Bill "unconstitutional" and warning that it would allow the government to seize mosques and dar-



gahs. "This is why this law is being brought, and it is unfortunate and unconstitutional," he asserted.

Owaisi also hit out at calls for Muslims to stay indoors or cover themselves during Holi, saying, "We will not run, we are not scared. Those who were scared ran away to Pakistan. Some say if you're so scared, you should not offer Namaz and stay indoors. They say just like we have covered our mosques, we must cover ourselves also, or else stay indoors."

Responding to this, Sirsa dismissed the allegations of restrictions on Namaz but defended Holi celebrations.

"As far as stopping someone from praying Namaz is concerned, that is neither our country's culture nor our government's thinking. However, if someone has a problem with Holi, then they should refrain from coming out, as Holi comes once a year. There should not be a need for so many police personnel to be on duty just to ensure Holi can be celebrated. This kind of extremism is not part of India's culture," he said.

K'taka Cabinet consents for 4 pc quota to Muslims in tenders; govt prepares to present Bill

BENGALURU : The Karnataka government has decided to provide a 4 per cent reservation to Muslims in government contracts, along with oppressed and backward classes. Sources confirmed that the Cabinet has approved the proposal, and a Bill in this regard will be presented before the state legislature during the ongoing Budget Session.

The Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement (KTPP) Act, 1999, after amendment aims to provide 4 per cent reservation in tenders to Muslim contractors in government contracts up to Rs 1 crore, the sources stated.

The Cabinet has also approved the limit for the SC, ST community which has been extended from Rs 1 crore to Rs 2 crore. Minority leaders had submitted a request to reserve 4 per cent of contract works for Muslim contractors, similar to the reservations provided for SC, ST, and other backward communities.

Considering the request, the government has decided to implement the reservation. A Cabinet meeting was held under the leadership of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, where discussions were conducted regarding the introduction

already prepared the blueprint and Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K. Patil has also agreed to the amendment, the sources said.

However, slamming the state government, the BJP had stated that the move was against the spirit of the Constitution and nothing but the "peak of appeasement politics".

State BJP President, B.Y. Vijayendra, claimed that the Congress was leading the state towards strife.

Vijayendra said the state government has not released any funds for legislators and when no tender has been called and work allotted, what's the use of reservation? Hitting out at the Con-

gress, Vijayendra said: "Does the grand old party think that only Muslims constitute the minority group?"

"I urge CM Siddaramaiah, if he is real Ahinda (a Kannada acronym for Alpasankhyataru or minorities, Hindulidavaru or backward classes, and Dalitaru or Dalits) leader, he should have enabled marginalised communities and strengthened them economically," the BJP leader said.

"Madivala, Savita and many communities also exist and need support from the state. The government is not bringing these communities into the mainstream. Instead, the government is all set for Muslim appeasement, the people will have to teach them a lesson," he stated.

"Muslims alone have been granted reservations in education and employment based on religion, which goes against the constitutional spirit. Now, the government is planning to introduce a 4 per cent reservation for Muslims even in government contracts, which is the peak of appeasement politics," Vijayendra charged.



Mumbai police busts high-profile sex racket, rescuing four models

NEW DELHI : The Mumbai police have dismantled a high-profile sex racket operating out of a hotel in the Hiranandani area. They arrested 60-year-old Shyamsunder Arora and rescued four models from the hotel who work in the film industry.

The rescued women have been sent to a shelter home for support and assistance. According to information received from the Police, authorities were alerted to a sex racket operating out of a hotel in Hiranandani, Powai. As a result, the police reached out to a 60-year-old man named Shyamsunder using a fake customer identity.

Shyamsunder demanded between Rs 70,000 to Rs 1 lakh per model, with the models reportedly aged between 26 and 35 years.

The police contacted Shyamsunder, posing as a customer in need of girls. He subsequently sent pictures of four women, claiming they were associated with the film industry, and informed the fake customer that he would bring all four women to the hotel.

The police set a trap outside the hotel, and as Shyamsunder allegedly arrived with the women, the fake customer notified the police. They quickly raided the hotel, rescuing the four women and arresting Shyamsunder in the process.



During the raid, authorities seized eight mobile phones and Rs 3 lakh in cash from the hotel rooms.

Upon interrogation, Shyamsunder revealed that another individual residing in the Charkop area was also involved in the racket. The police are currently searching for this additional suspect.

The Powai Police have registered a case against Shyamsunder Arora under Section 143(2) of the Bombay Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act and Sections 4 and 5 of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (ITPA) and have arrested him.

'Jungle raj' in Bihar: Slain ASI's family members slam Nitish government

MUNGER : As an Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) died after being brutally assaulted by a group of villagers in Bihar's Munger district, family members slammed Bihar Chief Minister, Nitish Kumar's government and said "if you want to govern Bihar, do it right."

Santosh Kumar, 43, was the eldest son of the late Dineshwar Singh. The ASI leaves behind a wife, Anju Devi, and a young son, Kanhaiya Kumar, who is only six-years-old.

His family is struggling to cope with the sudden loss of a dedicated public servant, who had served in the police force for 15 years.

The shock is compounded by the tragic fact that his cousin, also a member of the armed forces, had lost his life during duty as well. The gravity of this loss has reverberated not only within his family but also among his close-knit circle of friends.

A childhood friend of Santosh, Jiyut Singh, described him as a man of principles and kindness. They implore the administration to provide protec-



He recounted that Santosh had recently arrived in the village to attend the 'tervi' (13th-day) ceremony of his grandfather, Lal Saheb Singh, before tragically struck.

Jiyut expressed his frustration with the Bihar government, particularly Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

"If you want to govern Bihar, do it right. Otherwise, step down. Every day, our soldiers and children are dying while you remain in power. What is happening to this state? What are you doing?" he asked.

Santosh's family and friends are demanding accountability, not just for the crime, but for the safety and well-being of his loved ones.

They implore the administration to provide protec-

tion and ensure that justice is served swiftly. They are also advocating for financial compensation for the family, with calls for employment opportunities for Santosh's son once he is of age.

Santosh's uncle, Gupteshwar Singh, relayed the anguish of receiving the disturbing news in the middle of the night. Initially, they had been told that Santosh had been injured and required a blood transfusion. But soon after, the devastating news arrived that he had passed away.

"We had hoped for a different outcome," Gupteshwar said. "But now, we are left with nothing but questions."

Meanwhile, the medical board that conducted Santosh Kumar's post-mortem has revealed grim details. Dr Raman Kumar,

Deputy Superintendent at Dr Raman Hospital, stated that the cause of death appeared to be a head injury, likely sustained from a sharp weapon.

The severity of the wounds was evident from the visible damage to the brain and multiple injuries on his body. The medical team has suggested that the attack may have been brutal, with the possibility of a sharp-edged weapon being used.

On their part, the police are conducting a thorough investigation to identify all those involved in the crime and bring them to justice.

This incident echoes a similar tragedy in Araria district on Wednesday night. ASI Rajeev Ranjan died following a scuffle between police personnel and villagers in the Lakshimpur area under Phulkaha police station. The Araria incident occurred when a police team attempted to arrest an individual, leading to a violent confrontation with protesting villagers.

The back-to-back murders of policemen in Bihar have sparked an intense political war in Bihar ahead of the elections this

Jharkhand: Clashes erupt during Holi procession; shops, vehicles set ablaze

GIRIDIH : Several people were injured, and multiple shops and vehicles were set on fire after a violent clash broke out between two groups during a Holi procession in Jharkhand's Giridih district.

The incident, which escalated into stone-pelting and arson, took place on Friday in Ghodthamba. The violence erupted when a section of locals objected to the Holi procession passing through their area, leading to a heated argument that quickly spiralled into chaos.

Both groups engaged in intense stone-pelting, prompting an immediate response from law enforcement.

As the situation worsened, Superintendent of Police (SP) Bimal Kumar, Deputy Development Commissioner (DDC) Smita Kumari, Khorimaha SDPO Rajendra Prasad, along with personnel from multiple police stations, rushed to the scene in an attempt to restore order.

According to reports, the Holi procession was proceeding as per tradition when it reached Ghodthamba Chowk. Tensions

flared as it moved towards the mosque street, triggering an argument that soon turned violent.

The police team deployed at the location tried to intervene, but the crowd grew uncontrollable. Within minutes, the situation spiralled further as miscreants resorted to arson.

Eyewitnesses reported that the confrontation lasted for about an hour before police reinforcements managed to disperse the rioters.

SP Bimal Kumar confirmed the incident, stating, "A clash between two communities took place in the Ghodthamba OP constituency during Holi celebrations. We are in the process of identifying those involved, and strict action will be taken. The situation is now under control, and no major injuries have been reported."

He also acknowledged that several vehicles were torched but assured that the fires had been extinguished promptly.

DDC Smita Kumari emphasised that law and order had been restored, attributing the unrest to anti-social elements attempting to disrupt peace.

Div Com Kashmir reviews implementation, disposal of PMEGP, J&K REGP cases through KVIB

Enjoins banks to facilitate applicants, bring down rejections

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Vijay Kumar Bidhuri today reviewed Bank & District Wise performance under Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) and J&K Rural Employment Generation Programme (J&K REGP) in a meeting held at Sanat Ghar Bemina.



The meeting, organized by J&K Khadi and Village Industries Board Kashmir Division Srinagar was attended by Ashutosh Sareen, General Manager Government Sponsored Schemes J&K Srinagar; DGM SBI, GDM UTLBC, MD J&K State Cooperative Bank, Director RSETI, Various Cluster heads of J&K Bank, Lead

District Managers from various Districts, Divisional Officer J&K KVIB KD and all District Officers of KVIB Kashmir Division. The meeting was informed that during the last three years 25864 units have been established against the assigned targets of 7372 units involving margin money of Rs 554.19 Crores against the target of Rs 183.64 Crores, thereby envisaging employment

opportunities for 2,01,702 persons. Besides, during the current year, J&K KVIB has sponsored 11,111 cases against the target of 2507 units. While against the sponsorship affected by J&K KVIB in Kashmir Division, banks have sanctioned 6347 cases involving a Margin Money outlay of Rs 122.33 Crores, thereby envisaging generation of employment opportunities

for 49,798 persons. Speaking on the occasion, Div Com stated that there has been tremendous response to the employment and micro industries schemes being implemented by J&K KVIB. He lauded the officers of J&K KVIB for their dedication and excellent performance and felicitated the role of J&K Bank. However, he enjoined upon the banks to facilitate applicants, bring down the rejection level of the cases & delay in processing of cases within the approved Turn Around Time (TAT) of 30 days, and advised that designated nodal agencies must immediately release the subsidy amount so that the employment generation units are established in time bound manner.

Inter-college Seminar on 'Message of Ramadhan in fostering Peace & Harmony' held at GDC Kupwara

GMK NEWS NETWORK

KUPWARA: Govt Degree College (GDC) Kupwara Saturday organised a one day inter-college seminar on the theme 'Message of Ramadhan in fostering Peace and Harmony'.

The seminar was marked by two special guest lectures by Mufti Bashir Ahmed Qasmi and Mufti Mohammad Ashraf Geelani and an inter-college speech competition. Prof. Mohdmmad Shafi Lone, Principal GDC Baramulla was the chief guest at the event.

Principal of the host college, Prof. (Dr.) Abdul Rashid Malik in his address spoke about the importance and objectives of the seminar. He highlighted how the month of Ramadhan aims at shaping ideal human beings following the principled life

of peace and harmony. A special lecture was given by Mufti Bashir Ahmed Qasmi who referred to the relationship of Ramadhan and the holy Quran in spreading the message of peace and harmony. He highlighted how the revelation of the holy Quran during the month of Ramadhan brought about a radical transformation in Arab society of the time by replacing anarchy and lawlessness with peace and harmony.

Quoting different verses and sayings of Prophet Mohammad (SAW), he highlighted how the month of Ramadhan aims at shaping human lives regulated by the values of peace, sympathy, and harmony. He emphasized the need of current society in following up the same values so that the world becomes a better place to live in.

This was followed by the inter-college speech competition in which students from various colleges participated. Student speakers were keenly evaluated by a jury comprising Dr. Gauhara Ahmed Wani, Assistant Professor Islamic Studies GDC Sogam, and two faculty members from the college Dr. Irshad Ahmad Lone, Head Department of Chemistry and Prof. Mudasar Agha, Assistant Professor Department of Urdu.

The speech competition was followed by another special lecture by Mufti Mohammad Ashraf Geelani. Referring to the theme of the seminar, he expounded how fasting during Ramadhan aims at character building of individuals by its insistence on practicing the values of discipline, patience and surrendering of one's ego.

He explained that man being at the centre of the universe can make the world a peaceful place to live in only by practicing the values of peace, cooperation, and discipline.

Chief guest on the occasion, Principal GDC Kupwara said the best message of Ramadhan for humanity is in making humans learn and respect the values of peace and contentment.

The lecture was followed by an award ceremony for student participants in inter-college speech competition. Rabia Khaliq from GDC Women's Kupwara, Naveed Ul Islam from GDC Kupwara and Nowsheen Zahoor from GDC Handwara bagged 3rd, 2nd and 1st positions respectively. Awards and Certificates were distributed among the position holders and other participants.

BUDGET SESSION 2025

House passes grants of PWD, I&C, Mining, Skill Development, Labour & Employment Deptts

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly today passed the grants amounting Rs. 7050.86 lakh for Mining Department, Rs.108603.20 lakh for Industries and Commerce Department, Rs. 528374.63 lakh for Public Works Department, Rs. 35344.46 lakh for Labour and Employment Department and Rs. 22561.03 lakh for Skill Development Department.

The grants were passed after a daylong detailed discussion in the House.

Winding up the discussion on Demands for Grants, Deputy Minister, Surinder Choudhary, said that currently, the Public Works Department is maintaining an extensive road network of 40,000 km with priority to provide high-quality roads and connectivity to the last unconnected village. However, maintaining such vast infrastructure requires continuous investment and strategic planning, he added. "The department is making every possible effort to ensure that the roads built with public funds stand the test of time. In 2025-26, we are targeting 4,000 km of road blacktopping under various schemes such as PMGSY, Cities & Towns, CRIF and NABARD, significantly improving travel conditions for the people of J&K", he added.

The Deputy Chief Minister said the department receives funding from three main sources; Centrally Sponsored Schemes like PMGSY and CRIF, NABARD Loan Assistance and UT Sector Funding for roads and bridges. "Through PMGSY, which started in 2001, we have successfully connected 2,132 out of 2,140 identified villages, laying down 17,585 km of roads and constructing 210 bridges at an investment of 10,939 crore. The remaining work will be completed by 2025-26. Under PMGSY Phase II and III, we have upgraded 1,927 km of roads and constructed 9 bridges, while the remaining 505 km of roads and 64 bridges will be completed soon", he elaborated.

To further strengthen the rural connectivity, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the Government of India has approved PMGSY-4 (2024-29), which will connect habitations with 250+ population as per the 2011 Census. This included special provisions for tribal-majority villages and Aspirational Districts. "A survey conducted through advanced technology has identified 2,508 road alignments and we are actively preparing Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) to secure approval for over 1,000 new projects in 2025-26", he added.

"Under the CRIF scheme, 294 projects worth 4,337 crore have been sanctioned by the Ministry for Road Transport and Highways, out of which, 194 have been completed including crucial road links like Koteranka-Khawas, Magam-Beeru and Khanabal-Pahalgam roads. Several important bridges are also under construction including 2,000-meter bridge over River Chenab at Indri Pattan Pargwal, a 270-meter bridge at Ramban and a 445 meter bridge

over River Ujh at Jothana" the Deputy Chief Minister maintained.

While referring to NABARD, the Deputy Chief Minister said that it remains an essential source of funding for rural road and bridge construction. Currently, 1,098 projects have been sanctioned under NABARD and 213 projects have already been completed in 2024-25, marking the highest ever achievement for the department in a single year, he added.

"The macadamization and resurfacing of roads remain a priority under UT Sector Funding. In 2024-25, we have already blacktopped 3,251 km of roads including 1,610 km of roads in cities and towns, with a final target of 4,000 km. Alongside roads, bridges are equally important for connectivity and 153 bridges are under construction with a total cost of 569 crore. So far, 83 bridges have been completed including the Gundbal Foot Bridge in Srinagar, Akhal Bridge in Kangan and Najwal Samba Bridge, with several others including Qamarwari Bridge in Srinagar which is nearing completion" the Deputy Chief Minister informed the House.

"The department is not only focusing on construction but also implementing modern reforms to improve efficiency and quality. The introduction of an Online Management & Payment System has enabled real-time project monitoring and direct contractor payments, reducing delays and increasing transparency" he added. The J&K PWD Manual 2021 has been updated after several decades to include the latest engineering practices, he maintained.

"The Road Maintenance Policy 2021 ensures timely upkeep, preventing early deterioration of roads. A Two-Tier Quality Control Mechanism has been introduced for strict monitoring and third-party inspections are now mandatory for all major projects", the Deputy Chief Minister said. He added that the Macadamization and Defect Liability Enforcement ensures that contractors are accountable for maintaining roads for a specific period after construction. Additionally, the J&K Road Gazette-2022 has documented all roads systematically and Online Contractor Registration has been implemented for better transparency.

To attract businesses, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the government has introduced 14 policies and schemes that provide financial support, tax benefits and land for industries. "A major initiative, the New Central Sector Scheme (NCSS) 2021, was launched with 28,400 crore to help industries set up and grow. This scheme offers investment incentives, tax relief and interest support. The response has been positive—971 industrial units have been approved, bringing in 10,471 crore of investment and creating 51,897 jobs" he added.

"Jammu and Kashmir's industries are mainly driven by small and medium enterprises which provide highest employment in the region. There are

7.10 lakh MSMEs in J&K, of which, 4.47 lakh have been registered on the Udyam Portal. This sector contributes 8% to economy of J&K and employs 90% of the people working in the industrial sector. Supporting MSMEs further will help create more local jobs and boost the economy", he maintained.

To provide more space for industries, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the government is building 46 new industrial estates in addition to the 64 existing ones. These estates will be ready from March 2025 onwards and will bring more businesses and jobs to J&K. He said that land for 15,994 additional industrial plots has also been identified for future development.

Referring to investment in industries, the Deputy Chief Minister said that in 2023-24, investments worth 3,389 crore were made creating 1,46,317 jobs, which is a 57% increase from the previous year. He added that in 2024-25, 381 new units have started production, adding 3,887 crore of investment and 10,715 more jobs. Over the past five years, 2,031 industrial units have started operations, bringing in 1,0,516 crore and employing 65,982 people, he elaborated.

He said that the Single Window Portal, where businesses can apply for approvals online, has received 8,537 applications, so far, proposing 1.69 lakh crore in investments and the potential to create 6.06 lakh jobs.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that the Handloom & Handicrafts sector is backbone of J&K's economy, employing 4.22 lakh artisans who make world famous products like Pashmina shawls, Kashmiri carpets, Basohli paintings, walnut wood carvings and embroidery items.

"To protect and promote these crafts, the government has introduced QR code based certification, allowing the buyers to verify the authenticity of J&K's handicrafts. Ten handicrafts including Pashmina, Kani Shawls and Sozni Embroidery have received the prestigious Geographical Indication (GI) tag. More eight crafts are in the pipeline while eleven new crafts are set to be registered in 2025-26", he maintained.

Referring to export of J&K's handicrafts, the Deputy Chief Minister said that these have doubled post COVID, in 2023-24 exports crossed 1,162 crore compared to 563 crore in 2021-22. He said that J&K has also improved its national Export Promotion Index ranking from 35th in 2020 to 17th in 2022, showing strong growth in trade and business.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that J&K's startup ecosystem is booming with the number of registered startups growing from 237 in 2020 to 1,011 today recording a 326% increase. Out of these, 373 startups are being led by the women. Additionally, over 1,600 startups have been registered with the EDI. Many startups are now receiving funding from the investors, proving the strength and potential of local entrepreneurs, he added.

"The New Startup Policy 2024-27, launched in February 2024, provides seed funding, venture capital, patent assistance, mentorship and infrastructure support to new businesses. A 250 crore Venture Capital Fund has been set up with 25 crore initially infused by the government to support startup growth" he maintained.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan is helping J&K improve infrastructure planning. He said that J&K ranks 3rd in the country for mapping infrastructure data on the national platform, making it easier to plan new roads, industries and projects efficiently. Besides, about 50 projects worth over 3,000 crore have already been mapped, he added.

Under the RAMP scheme, supported by the World Bank, 305 crore have been set aside to help small businesses grow, improve digital financing and market local products, the Deputy Chief Minister said. He added that the government has also approved two PM Ekta Unity Malls, one in Srinagar (130 crore) and one in Jammu (125 crore), where J&K's handicrafts and products will be sold under one roof.

"J&K is the first to fully integrate its Single Window Portal with the National Single Window System, allowing businesses to get approvals faster. Under the Business Reform Action Plan 2022, J&K has achieved 97% compliance, making it one of the top performers in India. The Incentive Calculator on the J&K Single Window Portal has been recognized as a best practice by the Government of India in 2023-24" he informed.

To improve governance in the mining sector, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the implementation of an e-auction system has made the allocation of mining blocks more transparent and competitive. Additionally, procedural reforms under the Ease of Doing Business initiative have simplified the process of obtaining mining leases and approvals, making it easier for businesses and entrepreneurs to participate in legal mining activities.

"The government has also placed significant emphasis on encouraging the local industries and small-scale mining operations, thereby creating employment opportunities and boosting economic growth. Environmental compliance remains a top priority with strict regulations in place to mitigate the impact of mining on forests, rivers and biodiversity" he said.

"In order to address illegal mining activities, the government is addressing these issues by integrating modern technology into the sector. Advanced surveillance techniques including drone monitoring, GPS tracking and real-time digital supervision are being employed to curb illegal activities and promote responsible mining", maintained the Deputy Minister.

To tackle the issue of illegal mining, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the government has

established Multi-Departmental District-Level Task Force Cells, headed by the respective Deputy Commissioners, with District SSPs as key members. He said that, additionally, Divisional Level Flying Squads have been created to conduct surprise inspections and enforce legal measures. Besides, penalties for illegal mining have been made stringent with first-time offenders being fined ten times the cost of the mineral extracted illegally, along with additional fines and royalties. For repeat offenders, the penalty increases and seized vehicles or machinery used in illegal mining are held for at least seven days before the release, he added.

"The government has also intensified its crackdown on illegal mining operations. In 2024 alone, 4,040 vehicles and machines involved in illegal extraction were seized and 153 FIRs were registered against the offenders. As a result of these strict measures, 10.12 crore have been collected in penalties, further reinforcing the administration's commitment towards eliminating illegal mining and ensuring compliance with environmental laws", the Deputy Chief Minister maintained.

"The department has made substantial progress in formalizing mining activities. So far, 202 mining leases have been granted through e-auctions while 08 leases have been allocated to the Public Sector Undertakings (JKPC and JK Minerals). Additionally, 06 mining leases have been sanctioned on private lands, along with 03 quarry licenses on private properties and 01 cluster quarry on state land. A total of 23 quarry licenses have also been issued for the government projects. To meet the demand for construction materials, the department has provided short-term and disposal permits to the government companies and traditional communities engaged in customary mining practices. These initiatives have contributed to revenue generation, with a record collection of 130 crore in 2024", the Deputy Chief Minister maintained.

To bring further transparency in the mining sector, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the government has introduced e-Challan system to track the movement of minerals from the source to their final destination, reducing opportunities for illegal transportation. Moreover, an e-Market web portal has been launched enabling the consumers to purchase minor minerals at government-notified rates, ensuring fair pricing and eliminating black-market activities, he added.

He added that a significant step towards enhancing surveillance is the upcoming Mine Surveillance System, developed in collaboration with the BISAG. This system, successfully implemented in other states for major minerals, is now being customized for the unique requirements of Jammu and Kashmir to strengthen real-time monitoring, he added.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that the department has also intensified efforts to boost

revenue generation through auctions of minor mineral blocks. He said that the Jammu and Kashmir Environmental Impact Assessment Authority (JKEIAA) has already approved the District Survey Reports in nine districts while reports for the remaining districts are under review and will soon be submitted for approval.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that the government has focused on addressing unemployment, which remains a major challenge due to the limited presence of large industries in J&K. He said currently, 3.77 lakh unemployed youth are registered with the District Employment & Counselling Centres. "To provide better career opportunities, the department is engaged in registration of unemployed individuals, career counselling, coaching, job awareness fairs and skill development training. A new initiative, Mission Yuva Udyami Vikas Abhiyan (YUVA), is all set to be launched to support the young entrepreneurs and create employment opportunities" he added.

Recognising the importance of entrepreneurship, the Deputy Chief Minister said the government has planned Mission YUVA, a landmark initiative that aims to create 1.37 lakh new enterprises and generate 4.5 lakh jobs over the five years. He said that to ensure its success, a detailed survey was conducted across J&K, covering 23.64 lakh households and 1.1 crore individuals, using a tech-enabled approach. "The findings will help in identifying potential entrepreneurs, understanding skill gaps and designing better training programs. In the upcoming financial year, 27,400 new enterprises are expected to be created, generating 85,000 jobs" he maintained.

"The J&K Building & Other Construction Workers Welfare Board was established to protect the rights of construction workers, ensure their safety and provide financial assistance for their well-being. During February 2025 alone, 4,236 new workers were registered under the board and in the current financial year, 44,988 workers have been added. A total of 5,903.25 lakh has been disbursed among 70,323 beneficiaries under various welfare schemes. The board ensures all payments are made through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode, ensuring transparency and efficiency" the Deputy Chief Minister added.

"A 24x7 helpline named "SHRAM MITRA" is being set up in Jammu and Srinagar to address worker's grievances. Additionally, the Night Shelter (Labour Sarai) project is being developed in Budgam, Anantnag and Pulwama, where land has already been identified and construction will begin soon, the Deputy Chief Minister informed.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that one of the major achievements of the Skill Development Department is that 83 trade units, previously affiliated only with the State Council for Vocational Training, are now

being recognized by the National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT). He said this change makes 1800 additional students eligible for the National Trade Certificate (NTC), which is valued worldwide. Now, 50 out of 53 Government Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in J&K are NCVT-affiliated and more than 9,000 ITI trainees have been successfully migrated to the Skill India Digital Hub Portal, he added.

"To boost employment opportunities, placement drives were organized in various polytechnics, where 15 companies visited and 261 students received job offers. The department also conducted two Industry-Academia meets, one in Jammu and the other in Kashmir, to strengthen collaboration between the educational institutions and industries. Under the Hunar-se-Rozgar Program, over the last two years, more than 1,000 candidates have been trained in short-term programs at the Food Craft Institute (FCI) Jammu, with 75% of them securing jobs", the Deputy Chief Minister informed.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that the Government ITI Srinagar has been upgraded to a Model ITI, where existing trades such as Electrician, Digital Photography, Tourist Guide, Computer Hardware & Network Maintenance, Electronics Mechanics, Refrigeration & AC Technician, Welder, Diesel Mechanic, Plumber and Health & Sanitary Inspector have been modernized. Additionally, new trades such as Solar Technician (Electrical), Smartphone Technician cum App Tester and IoT Technician (Smart City) have been introduced to keep pace with evolving industry demands, he added.

"The department has also established four ICT labs under the STRIVE scheme, which have helped in the training and capacity building of 396 officers. Alongside, modern infrastructure and updated curriculum are being introduced in polytechnic colleges under the Central Sponsored Scheme (CSS) "Setting up of New Polytechnics", the Deputy Chief Minister informed.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that under the SANKALP initiative, 2,867 candidates have received skill training through the District Skill Committees and 700 women have been trained under the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) program in collaboration with Central University Jammu and University of Kashmir. Certification for training programs at FCI Jammu has also been made QR-code based, making it one of the few institutions in India to adopt this system, he added.

"Jammu and Kashmir has excelled under the PM Vishwakarma Scheme, with 1,18,296 out of 1,34,535 registered beneficiaries successfully trained, making J&K the second-ranked region in the country under this scheme. Additionally, under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), thousands of youth have been trained and certified in skill development programs" he added.