

Good Morning Kashmir

17th Year Of Publication

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Empowered youth engineers the future and I believe intellectual depth, creative strength and innovative youth leadership is essential for national advancement. We must focus on shaping balanced minds and bold innovators for sustainable development.

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HPV VACCINE: A SHOT FOR PROTECTION A STEP FOR CARE

#UWIN
Register on the U-WIN digital platform to schedule your daughter's HPV vaccination.
Visit <https://uwin.mohfw.gov.in/home>
For more details, please contact your nearest health worker/ ANM at the nearest government health facility.

HPV vaccine is provided for free to all 14 year old girls at government health facilities.

Department of Information & Public Relations, J&K

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J&K Set To Shine As A Year-Round Global Tourism Destination: CM



GMK NEWS NETWORK

NEW DELHI: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Friday asserted that Jammu & Kashmir is poised to emerge as a year-round global tourism destination, backed by renewed confidence, expanded infrastructure and diversified tourism offerings.

He was addressing a grand promotional event held in New Delhi on Thursday eve-

ning, which was graced by the Union Minister of Tourism, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, along with diplomats, travel trade representatives and key stakeholders from the hospitality sector.

Highlighting Jammu & Kashmir's spiritual richness, breathtaking landscapes and vibrant cultural heritage, the Chief Minister said J&K embraces visitors from across India and **•P-06**

CM Positions J&K As India's Premier All-Season Tourist Destination

GMK NEWS NETWORK

NEW DELHI: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Friday visited SATTE 2026 at the Yashobhoomi Convention Centre, Dwarka,

Delhi and reiterated his Government's commitment to strengthening Jammu & Kashmir's position as the country's premier all-season tourist destination. **•P-06**

CIK Secures NBWs Against UJC Chief, His Deputy

AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: Counter Intelligence Kashmir (CIK) on Friday secured Non-Bailable Warrants (NBWs) against four key operatives of banned terror outfit Hizbul Mujahideen, including the chief of United Jihad Council (UJC) Syed Salahuddin and his deputy Ghulam Nabi Khan.



In a statement issued, a CIK spokesman said that NBWs against the accused is a significant step towards dismantling terror networks and reinforcing the rule of law.

"The NBWs have been secured in connection with FIR No. 05/1996 registered at Police Station CIK under Sections 121, 121-A, 153-A, 153-B of the Ranbir Penal Code, read with Section 13 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and **•P-06**

'Goonj 2026' Balanced Minds, Bold Innovators To Steer Nation Towards Sustainable Development: LG

Says Youth Hold Boundless Power To Steer Society, Nation Toward The Future

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: The Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday said that the youth hold boundless power to steer society and nation toward the future.

He emphasised on putting a dedicated focus on shaping balanced minds and bold innovators for sustainable development.

"Empowered youth engineers the future and I believe intellectual depth, creative strength and innovative youth leadership is essential for national advancement," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor was speaking at the inaugural ceremony of 'Goonj 2026', a



unique Youth Festival, hosted by University of Jammu.

The two-day event will offer distinctive platform to youth

from diverse disciplines to create one future. The festival will educate the mind, energize the body and ignite the innova-

tion.

The Lieutenant Governor said when young people kindle the flame of courage within themselves and step forward with unshakeable belief, then new pathways open up for society and the nation.

He exhorted the students to embrace innovation, pursue fresh research, experiment boldly, unlock nation-building doors.

"Honor your traditions, respect your past and connect with your roots. This will deepen the profound sense of identity, confidence, and self-awareness that no classroom can ever fully teach," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant **•P-06**

HONOR YOUR TRADITIONS, RESPECT YOUR PAST AND CONNECT WITH YOUR ROOTS.
This will deepen the profound sense of identity, confidence, and self-awareness that no classroom can ever fully teach,"

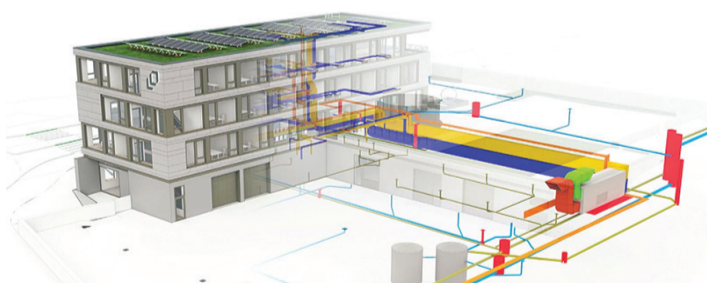
Urban Governance J&K Amends Building Bye-Laws To Introduce Digital Building Permission System

AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: In a significant development, the Jammu & Kashmir Government has amended the Unified Building Bye-Laws, 2021 (UBBL-2021), introducing a fully digital system for building permissions in the Union Territory.

The Housing & Urban Development Department has made key changes to the UBBL-2021 under powers vested in it by the Jammu & Kashmir Municipal Corporation Act, the Jammu & Kashmir Municipal Act, and the Jammu & Kashmir Development Act.

According to the amendments,



all building permission requests must be submitted online through the Housing & Urban Development Department's portal, along with computer-aided design-based building plans and other requisite documents,

through an empanelled Registered Technical Person (RTP).

The request will be submitted online through the empanelled RTP, who is registered with the Architects Organisation or such other authority as **•P-06**

...IFAC 2026 RBI Dy Guv Emphasizes Principled Performance For Viksit Bharat@2047

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: The Indian Institute of Management Jammu Friday began the 3rd International Finance and Accounting Conference (IFAC 2026) on the theme "Financial Strategies for Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth to achieve Viksit Bharat@2047" at the IIM Jammu.

The two day conference was inaugurated by Deputy Governor, Reserve Bank of India, Swaminathan J.

Dean Faculty and Research, IIM Jammu, Professor Ali along with Dean Academics, IIM Jammu, Professor Nitin Upadhyay presided over the inaugural

ceremony. Professor Pranab Ranjan, Conference Chair and Dr. Ashish Kumar, Joint Conference Chair, also graced the momentous occasion.

FINANCIAL
Strategies for Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth to achieve Viksit Bharat@2047"

In his keynote address, Swaminathan J highlighted Institute's growing stature as a premier academic institution in the country and across the globe.

Speaking to an **•P-06**

■ Tourism Rebounds In Kashmir

Bookings Rise Steadily As Reopened Destinations Witness Growing Footfall

SAJID RAINA

SRINAGAR: Tourism activity in Kashmir is showing signs of recovery nearly a year after the April 22 Pahalgam attack, with hoteliers and tour operators reporting a steady rise in bookings following the reopening of several major destinations.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration has reopened 14 prominent tourist spots in a phased manner after reviewing security arrangements. The move, announced by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha,



includes destinations such as Pahalgam, Yusmarg, Doodhpathri, the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden in Srinagar and Wular Lake in north

Kashmir.

The revival comes after a sharp decline in footfall in the immediate aftermath of the attack, which had led to tem-

porary closures and cancellations at the peak of the spring season.

Hoteliers in Srinagar said bookings have improved over the past few weeks.

Manzoor Ahmad, who runs a hotel near Dal Lake, said occupancy at his property has reached around 65 per cent. "There was uncertainty earlier, but enquiries have increased. Families from Maharashtra and Gujarat have confirmed bookings for the coming weeks," he said.

Tour operators **•P-06**

J&K Fully Prepared For HPV Vaccination

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Commissioner Secretary Health & Medical Education Department, M. Raju, Friday chaired a high level meeting of the State Task Force regarding rollout of the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccination Programme.

The meeting was convened to review the preparedness and finalize implementation strategy for the UT-level launch of the HPV Vaccination Programme, which is scheduled to be observed across the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir on 28th February, 2026, in consonance with the nationwide launch by the Prime Minister.

Director Family Welfare MCH & Immunization J&K presented a **•P-06**

Ranji Trophy Coming Home For First Time As J&K Near Historic Triumph CM Omar Abdullah Heads To Hubli To Cheer Team On Brink Of Glory



JAHANGEER GANAIE

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir stand on the cusp of history, inching closer to their maiden Ranji Trophy title after a commanding performance in the final at Hubli.

The atmosphere is charged with pride and anticipation as the team moves

within touching distance of a landmark victory.

In a show of support, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah travelled to Hubli, Karnataka, to witness the historic moment firsthand.

Sharing his excitement, the CM, said the team has already made "lakhs of people proud" by reaching the final and **•P-06**

DC Budgam reviews preparedness for National HPV Vaccination Campaign

GMK NEWS NETWORK

BUDGAM: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan Friday reviewed the preparedness for the National HPV Vaccination Campaign against Cervical Cancer in the district.

During the review meeting, arrangements related to micro-planning at health facility level, availability of vaccines, cold chain management, deployment of trained staff, U-WIN registration, IEC activities and AEFI preparedness were discussed in detail.

The DC directed that all eligible girls in the target age group be identified and covered strictly as per guidelines.

He emphasised that vaccination sessions shall be conducted



only at designated government health facilities with adequate

logistics and functional cold chain points.

The DC further stressed the need for advance U-WIN registration and digital consent to ensure smooth conduct of vaccination sessions. He directed to intensify awareness and mobilisation activities through ASHAs, AWWs and other frontline workers for achieving maximum coverage.

The DC called for close coordination among all concerned departments to ensure the smooth, safe and successful implementation of the HPV Vaccination Campaign in Budgam district.

Besides, PO, ICDS Budgam, Samar Naik; CMO Budgam, Dr. Gulzar; CEO Budgam, MS Budgam, all BMOs and other concerned officials were present in the meeting.

DC Anantnag chairs introductory meeting with officers

Says Public Welfare Utmost Priority Of District Administration

GMK NEWS NETWORK

ANANTNAG: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Anantnag, Dr. Bilal Mohiud Din Bhat, chaired the introductory meeting with all district and sectoral heads and other officers today at Khanabal.

The meeting was attended by Principal GMC Anantnag, ADCs, GM DIC, DPO, SEs Jal Shakti, PWD and KPDCL, Registrar Anantnag, ACR, ACD, SDMs, Principals of Degree Colleges, CPO, CMO, CEO, DFOs, CAO, CAHO, DyDEO, DTO, DFO, Exens of various engineering departments, Deputy Director Fisheries, ARTO, DMO, Tehsil-dars, DSHO, DSWO, AD FCS&CA, DEPO, DYSSO, BDOs, AD Tourism, Wildlife Warden, AD Handloom & Handicrafts, LMO, DRC, CEO MCA, BDOs, EO's MCs,



AD F&E, AD LDM, representatives of various programmes and projects and other officers of the district.

At the outset, the officers briefed the chair about working of their respective departments.

Addressing the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner said that public welfare is the utmost priority of the district administration and stressed upon the officers to work with commitment and dedication

for taking the district to newer heights of progress and development. He noted that proper team work and coordination are necessary for effective implementation of all government schemes, welfare initiatives and development projects.

Expressing confidence in abilities of officers, Dr. Bhat observed that enhancing access of offices and outreach activities help the departments to receive public feedback, ultimately leading to better public service delivery.

At the conclusion, the DC advised the officers to properly monitor the functioning of their respective departments so the subordinate offices work in sync and alignment with the district goals of public welfare and overall development.

DDC Kupwara chairs DLRC meeting



GMK NEWS NETWORK

KUPWARA: District Development Commissioner (DDC) Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, Friday chaired the District Level Review Committee (DLRC) meeting for the third quarter of 2025-26 to review the performance of banks and line departments in achieving financial inclusion and saturation of government schemes.

In his address, the DDC underscored the importance of universal coverage of flagship schemes, with particular focus on social security and self-employment initiatives. He directed banks and departments to work in close coordination to ensure that benefits reach the grassroots in a timely and transparent manner. Detailed deliberations were held on the progress of schemes including PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, PM Vishwakarma, PMEGP, KCC, PM-SVANIDHI, HADP, PMFME, NRLM, and PM Mudra Yojana.

The DDC also instructed the Lead District Manager and Cluster Head JK Bank to conduct daily reviews of branch-wise performance under Mission YUVA, ensuring accountability and accelerated implementation.

Highlighting the dis-

trict's progress under the Annual District Credit Plan (ACP) 2025-26, it was informed that Kupwara has already achieved 79.5% of its annual credit target, with disbursements amounting to 2279.7 Crores by the end of the third quarter.

The meeting also reviewed achievements under social security schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, and Atal Pension Yojana, reflecting the administration's commitment to inclusive welfare.

Expressing concern over the poor performance of certain banks in meeting key indicators, the DDC conveyed strong displeasure and directed them to improve outcomes in the final quarter. He reiterated that intensive efforts, transparency, and timely monitoring are essential to ensure full saturation of schemes and to maximize benefits for citizens.

The meeting was attended by CPO Kupwara, Parvaiz Ahmad Lone; LDM Kupwara, Tanveer Bashir Mir; LDO RBI, DDM NABARD, Cluster Head JK Bank, CAHO, DSHO, AD Fisheries, officers from line departments, and representatives of various banks.

DC Anantnag reviews Implementation Plan, Arrangements for HPV Vaccination

GMK NEWS NETWORK

ANANTNAG: Deputy Commissioner (Chairman District Task Force Committee), Anantnag, Dr. Bilal Mohiud Din Bhat, Friday chaired the meeting of DTFC to review and finalise the implementation plan and arrangements for the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) Vaccination Program which shall commence on 28th February in the district.

The meeting was attended by CMO, CPO, Dy CMO, CEO, BMOs, Hospital Superintendents, DIO NIC, representatives from ICDS and other concerned officers and officials.

Through a detailed presentation, the CMO briefed the chair about implementation plan and arrangements that have been put in place to ensure smooth vaccination of the target popula-

tion. It was informed that 14 Designated Vaccination Centres (DVCs) including major hospitals have been set up to immunize 11364 girls in age group of 14-15 years across the district.

Besides, nodal officers have been appointed for all DVCs and 370 workers including 216 vaccinators, 40 CCHs and 54 others received the necessary training for smooth and time-bound vaccination process.

Addressing the meeting, the DC impressed upon the officers to ensure seamless execution of the vaccination plan through proper coordination and monitoring. He further stressed on adherence to SOPs and cold chain facilities especially in remote and far off places adding that the eligible girls shall be adequately mobilised by the Education and ICDS Departments.

DC Shopian reviews progress of Smart Meter installation, RDSS works

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta Friday chaired a comprehensive review meeting at Mini Secretariat Shopian to assess the progress of Smart Meter installation and works under RDSS.

During the meeting, deliberations were held on the pace of smart meter installation and mobilization of field staff for improving the progress under the initiative.

Concerned agencies involved in

the project execution were instructed by DC Shopian to speed up the pace for improving progress while reviewing feeder-wise progress, emphasizing strict monitoring and regular field inspections.

The DC also took stock of the progress of works under Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS). He was informed that nearly 85% of the works under the scheme have been completed so far, making significant progress in strengthening the power infrastructure.

He emphasised for maintain-

ing close coordination among stakeholders for achieving desired results in the power sector upgrade.

Highlighting the importance of Suriya Ghar scheme initiative, the DC underscored the need to promote rooftop solar installation and ensure maximum beneficiary coverage in the district.

ADDC Shopian, Dr. Nasir Ahmed Lone; ACR, Shakoor Ahmad Dar; SDM, Zainapora, Bilal Ahmed; Executive Engineer, KPCL and other concerned officers and agencies representatives were present.

DC B'pora finalises arrangements for launch, implementation of HPV Vaccination

GMK NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, Friday chaired a virtual meeting to finalise arrangements for the launch and effective implementation of the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccination Programme in the district.

The meeting was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Bandipora, DPO ICDS, Chief Education Officer (CEO), Chief Medical Officer (CMO), and other concerned district and sectoral officers.

During the meeting, the CMO Bandipora delivered a detailed presentation delineating the identified target population for the HPV vaccination drive. It was informed that nine dedicated vaccination centres have been earmarked across the district to ensure systematic, safe, and hassle-free coverage. These centres include District Hospital Bandipora, CHC Sumbal, CHC Hajin, PHC

Ashtangoo, PHC Chuntimulla, PHC Sheikhpora, PHC Bagtor, PHC Badugam, SDH Dawar.

All girl children between the ages of 14 and 15 years are to be targeted during the vaccination round. The presentation also highlighted logistical preparedness, deployment of trained vaccinators, cold-chain management, mobilisation strategy, and monitoring mechanisms to ensure smooth rollout of the programme.

The Deputy Commissioner stressed the importance of achieving saturation of the target audience, directing all stakeholders to ensure that no eligible beneficiary is left out.

Emphasis was laid on conducting adequate awareness campaigns to sensitise parents and guardians about the benefits, safety, and importance of the HPV vaccine.

Highlighting the need for seamless coordination, the DC directed close collaboration between the Health,

Education, Information and ICDS Departments, along with field-level functionaries, for effective mobilisation and smooth conduct of vaccination sessions.

The DC further instructed that all prescribed medical protocols and safety guidelines be strictly adhered to during vaccine administration. Adequate arrangements for post-vaccination observation and prompt response to any adverse events were emphasised to ensure proper care and reassurance to beneficiaries.

Reiterating the importance of dignity and confidentiality, the DC directed that privacy of beneficiaries must be maintained at all stages, ensuring a safe, respectful and comfortable environment at vaccination sites.

The meeting concluded with a collective commitment to ensure successful launch and effective implementation of the HPV vaccination programme in mission mode across the district.

Stakeholders Chart Roadmap For Sustainable Future Of Cricket Bat Industry

GMK NEWS NETWORK

AWANTIPORA: A crucial one-day Stakeholder Workshop focused on the development and promotion of micro-enterprises in the cricket bat industry of Jammu & Kashmir was successfully convened here Friday. The event, organized by the SPVLG Artisans Foundation with support from the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), was held at the CIED IUST Foundation, Awantipora, and brought together the entire value chain of the iconic industry.

The workshop was presided over by Prof. Pervaiz Ahmad, Director of the CIED-CIED IUST FOUNDATION INNOVATION CAMPUS, who attended as the Chief Guest. In his keynote address, Prof. Ahmad set the tone for the deliberations by stressing the critical need for structured government policy interventions. He underscored that effective management of willow wood—the fundamental raw material for the industry—is paramount. "The future sustainability of the bat industry depends on collaborative efforts among government departments, financial institutions, research bodies, and industry stakeholders," Prof. Ahmad stated, calling for a unified approach to tackle the impending challenges.

The session was marked by the presence of key officials and a large contingent of industry insiders. Attendees included Shri Dheeraj Verma, AGM, SIDBI; Riyaz Ahmad Wani, Range Officer, Forest Department; Sajad Ahmad from the Craft Development Institute (CDI) Srinagar; as well as representatives from the Handloom and Handicrafts Department and various banking institutions. However, the heart of the



workshop was the active participation of numerous cricket bat manufacturers, unit owners, and association heads from the local bat cluster.

During a highly interactive session, manufacturers voiced their most pressing concerns. The primary issue raised was the precarious availability of willow plantations and the significant difficulty in accessing land for large-scale cultivation. They warned that without a consistent and expanded supply of raw material, the livelihoods of thousands dependent on the industry and its future generations would be at serious risk.

Responding to these concerns, Shri Dheeraj Verma of SIDBI outlined the bank's comprehensive strategy for the sector. He elaborated on SIDBI's interventions aimed at improving market access, strengthening enterprises, and extending financial support to micro and small units. "SIDBI is committed to providing every possible support through our implementation agency, the SPVLG Artisans Foundation," Shri Verma assured the gathering, emphasizing a focus on market linkage, capacity building, and overall enterprise sustainability.

Adding another dimension to the

discussion, Sajad Ahmad from CDI Srinagar delivered a detailed presentation on the Geographical Indication (GI) status of the Kashmir cricket bat. He highlighted that the GI tag is not merely a label but a powerful tool for brand protection, value addition, and securing global market recognition. Mr. Ahmad stressed that widespread awareness and strict enforcement of GI norms are essential to significantly enhance the incomes of local artisans and manufacturers.

The workshop proceedings were efficiently steered by Shri Ashraf Wani, Chairman of the SPVLG Foundation. In his concluding remarks, he presented a formal vote of thanks, acknowledging the valuable contributions of all dignitaries and stakeholders. He emphasized the need for more such stakeholder-driven engagements in the future to address policy gaps and encourage inter-departmental coordination.

The workshop concluded with a strong, unified consensus among all participants on the need for continued dialogue and periodic engagements to collaboratively protect and promote one of Kashmir's most cherished traditional industries.

DC G'bal chairs meeting to review preparations for launch of HPV Vaccination



GMK NEWS NETWORK

GANDERBAL: A meeting of the District Task Force for Immunization was held Friday under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore, to review preparedness regarding the launch of the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination campaign in the district.

The meeting was held in backdrop of the scheduled launch of the HPV vaccination drive by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Narendra Modi across the country.

At the outset, the meeting was apprised of the importance of the vaccine. It was noted that cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among women in India, often caused by HPV.

The DC was briefed about the completion of line-listing, block-wise ver-

ification, capacity building, and orientation sessions, as well as the status of vaccine logistics and cold chain management.

A total of 11 sites have been selected for the vaccination drive, with District Hospital Ganderbal serving as the primary center. Chief Medical Officer (CMO) informed that the program will run for 90 days.

The DC directed the Chief Education Officer (CEO) and Programme Officer, ICDS to increase awareness about the benefits among the general population and encourage beneficiaries in the target age group to get vaccinated.

The meeting was attended by Chief Planning Officer, Programme Officer ICDS, Chief Medical Officer, Chief Education Officer Ganderbal, Block Medical Officers and other officials from the health department.

DC Shopian chairs DLTFC meeting on HPV vaccination drive



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta Friday chaired a District-Level Task Force (DLTFC) meeting to review and strategize the implementation of the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination programme in the district.

At the outset, the DC took a comprehensive review of preparedness, target groups, availability of vaccines, cold chain management and awareness initiatives to ensure smooth rollout of the HPV vaccination drive.

The DC called for collective efforts to make the vaccination campaign a success and safeguard the health of adolescent girls in the district.

Stressing the importance of preventive healthcare, the DC underscored the need for coordinated efforts among Health, Education and allied depart-

ments for achieving maximum coverage.

Chief Medical Officer briefed the chair regarding the action plan, sensitization programmes and identification of eligible beneficiaries. He directed the concerned officers to intensify IEC activities to create awareness among parents and students about the benefits of HPV vaccination, scheduled to be administered on February, 28.

Emphasis was laid on maintaining proper records, ensuring timely reporting and monitoring progress on a regular basis.

The meeting was attended by ADDC, Dr. Nasir Ahmed Lone; SDM Zainapora, Bilal Ahmed; ACR, Shakoor Ahmad Dar, CMO, Arshid Hussain Tak; Dy. CMO, Tehsil-dars, BMOs, senior officers from Health, Education and other concerned departments.

Govt to strictly enforce e-challan at crushers to curb illegal mining in J&K: Dy CM

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, Friday directed for strict enforcement of e-Challan at crusher units, mandatory GPS tracking of all vehicles transporting mining material and implementation of the "One Parchi, One Load" rule to completely curb illegal mining across Jammu and Kashmir.

Chairing a high level meeting of the Mining Department at Jammu, the Deputy Chief Minister stressed the need for strengthening enforcement mechanisms in all districts.

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, Mining Department, Ashwani Kumar; Chairman, Pollution Control Committee; Director, Ecology, Environment and Remote Sensing; Deputy Commissioners (Chairpersons, District Level Task Force Committees) online; Director, Geology and Mining; MD, JKML; Special Secretary, Mining Department; Senior Superintendents of Police; Director Finance, Mining; DMOs and other senior officers.

Reiterating the government's zero-tolerance policy against illegal mining in both Jammu and Kashmir divisions, the Deputy Chief Minister issued strict instructions that no vehicle shall be allowed to transport mining material without a valid 'Parchi' (authorized e-challan).



"Only one load must be permitted against each Parchi and any misuse or duplication shall be invite strict action against the violator," he said.

Making GPS tracking mandatory, the Deputy Chief Minister ordered that all vehicles involved in mining operations must have functional GPS devices installed. "Vehicles operating without GPS shall be seized immediately and stern action shall be taken against defaulters."

Emphasizing strict adherence to approved excavation

limits, the Deputy Chief Minister asserted that no excavation shall exceed the prescribed depth and mining beyond authorized riverbed zones and illegal night operations shall be dealt with firmly.

Calling for stronger inter-departmental coordination, the Deputy Chief Minister stressed that collective responsibility and joint action are essential to eliminate illegal mining and prevent attempts to defame the administration. He assured

full administrative backing to enforcement agencies and gave a free hand to the District Level Task Force to act decisively against violators.

"I give DCs, who head District Task Forces and SSPs a free hand to take strict action against illegal mining offenders, including complicit officials. No external pressure will be tolerated while dealing with the offenders," he stated.

The Deputy Chief Minister strictly directed the Mining Department to intensify monitoring mechanisms

and strengthen ground-level enforcement to safeguard natural resources.

The Deputy Chief Minister directed the DCs to identify the mining blocks, environmental clearance, fair demolition of illegal units, information on mining fund utilization and compliance on ensuring complete ban on illegal mining in all Districts.

He instructed on clearance of pending power dues by the crusher units, suspension of MDLs and adopting best mining policies from other states and UTs to curb the mining operations in J&K.

During the meeting, the Deputy Chief Minister undertook a detailed review of measures, including the status of mineral blocks, e-auctions, GPS tracking and IMSS implementation, enforcement actions against illegal mining, compliance of crusher units, proposed amendments in royalty and penalties, progress under DMFT, mineral exploration activities and overall regulatory position of the Department.

During the meeting, Additional Chief Secretary, stressed on maintaining tight vigil and effective action be taken to address the challenge of illegal mining in J&K.

At the outset, Director Geology and Mining Department, briefed the chair about the overall functioning and measures taken to curb illegal mining operations.

Ashwani Kumar reviews infrastructure status, operational performance of PDD

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Power Development Department (PDD), Ashwani Kumar, who recently took charge of the department, kicked off his tenure with a thorough review of all sectors, holding a series of meetings.

He held detailed interactions with the officers and staff and took stock of the infrastructure status and operational performance of the power sector.

The meetings were attended by the Managing Directors of all the Corporations, Director Finance, Director Planning, Chief Engineers, Chief Electrical Inspector and other senior officers of the department.

With regard to power supply, it was informed that the department has successfully met a peak demand of 3350 MW during the current winter season, which is 7 percent higher than the peak demand met last year. An average demand of 2600 MW is also being consistently met.

The ACS was briefed about the sources from which J&K receives power. He stressed the need to ensure regular and uninterrupted power supply during the Iftar and Sehri periods. He directed for avoiding the unscheduled power cuts, if any. He also emphasized for establishment of a robust load monitoring mechanism, reduction of energy losses and strengthening of consumer grievance redressal systems.

The ACS emphasized for early roll out of smart meters under the Smart Metering Programme, prioritizing installation in commercial and indus-

trial sector and on distribution transformers. He directed the engineers to adopt an inclusive approach to integrate all connected components, noting that this reform would not only improve power supply but also enhance the financial sustainability of the sector.

Ashwani Kumar also reviewed major transmission projects across J&K and their timelines, which are expected to address the peak demand requirements of both the regions, summer in Jammu and winter in Kashmir. He stated that proposal for funding under central sector schemes or UT budget shall be pursued expeditiously. He directed that technical and infrastructure centric interventions are required to be fast tracked to address the low voltage issues in certain areas.

Regarding the power generation sector, the ACS was briefed about the progress of four major hydroelectric projects, Pakal Dul, Kiru, Kwar and Ratle. He stressed that pumped storage hydro projects should also be explored in coordination with the central agencies, considering their role in peak demand management. He further discussed policy interventions required to fast-track exploitation of the region's hydropower potential.

The ACS also reviewed the summer preparedness of both the regions by all the Corporations. He emphasised the need for an integrated and coordinated approach to ensure optimal utilisation of available resources. He directed for conducting a detailed review of summer preparedness shortly.

Graduate Engineers of PDD call on Javed Rana, seek resolution of issues

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: A delegation of Graduate Engineers from the Power Development Department (PDD) on Thursday called on Minister Javed Ahmed Rana and apprised him of several long-pending issues affecting the department and its engineering cadre.

During the meeting, the delegation submitted a detailed memorandum outlining key concerns impacting the morale, financial security and career progression of engineers.

Among the major issues raised were the regularization of In-charge Engineers, clearance of pending promotions stalled since 2015, timely credit of National Pension Scheme (NPS) contributions, promotion of engineers regularized in 2014, and implementation of the Assured Career Progression (ACP) Scheme.

The engineers highlighted that prolonged delays in convening Departmental Promotion Committees (DPCs) and processing promotion cases have resulted in professional stagnation and growing dissatisfaction among eligible officers.

Expressing concern over delays in the credit of NPS contributions, the delegation stated that irregular deposits undermine employees' long-term financial planning and



security.

Seeking the Minister's intervention, the delegation requested expeditious resolution of these matters in accordance with rules and seniority norms.

The Minister gave a patient hearing to the delegation and assured them that their genuine concerns would be examined on priority.

He stated that the issues raised would be taken up with the Chief Minister for appropriate consideration and necessary action as per established procedures. The Minister also informed them that PDD

has recently promoted several engineers and the Government is keen to streamline various cadres and ensure that service related issues of all employees are addressed in a proactive manner.

Reiterating the Government's commitment to fairness, transparency and prompt grievance redressal, the Minister emphasized that strengthening institutional mechanisms and ensuring timely career progression remain integral to improving the overall performance and service delivery of the Government led by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

2 drug peddlers arrested in North Kashmir: Police

GMK NEWS NETWORK

Srinagar: Continuing its sustained drive against drug trafficking, Police have arrested two drug peddlers in North Kashmir and recovered contraband substances from their possession.

According to a statement issued, a police party from Police Post Palhallan established at a checkpoint established at Gundbal near Government Primary School, intercepted a suspected individual person who after noticing police party, attempted to flee from the spot. However, he was tactfully apprehended by the alert police team. He has been identified as Mohd Ahsan Ganaie son of Ab Ahad Ganaie resident of Shahgund, Hajin. During search, 115 grams of charas-like substance, one mobile phone, and cash amounting to 40,000 were recovered from his possession. Meanwhile in Sopore, a Police team at a checkpoint established at Naseerabad, Chinkipora Sopore, intercepted a vehicle (truck) bearing registration number JK02BQ-6164. During search, substantial quantity of poppy straw was recovered and seized as per due procedure. The accused driver has been identified as Shamdin son of Sarajdin resident of Dhirti, Katra.

Accordingly, cases under relevant sections of law have been registered investigation has been initiated to ascertain the source and wider linkages involved. J&K Police reiterate their zero-tolerance policy against drug trafficking and reaffirm their commitment to sustained enforcement to safeguard youth and society from the menace of drugs.

OFFICE OF THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OFFICER POSHAN PROJECT BIJBEHARA

Merit/Tentative Selection list who have applied for the post of Sanginis (Anganwadi Worker's) of Anganwadi centres advertised vide Notice No:03 of 2025 Dated: 27.12.2025 is shown below for wide publicity for general public for objection, if any then objection should be submitted to the office of Child Development Project Officer Poshan Project Bijbehara within 10 days from the date of Publishing of the below mentioned tentative Merit list

No: CDPO/Poshan/Bij/2025-26/753-767

Dated: 24 .02.2026

S.No	Name of Candidate	Parentage/Spouse Name	Residence	Date of Birth	AWC for which Provisionally Selected/Tentative	Ward	Qualification	Max Marks as per 10th class	Marks Obtained	%age	Addl.02 points as per HR Policy	Total Merit	Remarks
1.	Azmat Ali	D/o Ali Mohammad Bhat W/o Ajazul Haq	Kandipora	10.03.1995	29 years 09 Months	05	12 th	500	451	90.20 %	0	90.2	Tentatively Selected
2	Binish Farooq	D/o Farooq Ahmad Bhat W/o Prince Anan Muzaffar	Kandipora	05.03.1998	26 years 09 month	05	12 th	500	436	87.20 %	0	87.20	
3	Maroofa Rashid	D/o Abdul Rashid Bhat	Kandipora	03.01.2003	21 years 11 months	05	12 th	500	356	71.2 %	0	71.2	
4	Shabnum Rashid	D/o Abdul Rashid Lone W/o Iqbal Illahie Bhat	Kandipora	16.03.1996	28 years 09 months	05	12 th	500	320	64.0 %	0	64.0	
5	Sumaira Jan	D/o Ghulam Mohammad Mir W/o Arif Hassan Bhat	Kandipora	04.03.1993	31 years 09 months	05	12 th	500	287	57.40 %	0	57.4	
6	Sayma Akhter	D/o Abdul Rashid Bhat	Kandipora	06.07.1999	25 years 05 month	05	12 th	500	252	50.40 %	0	50.40%	
1	Snoby Mushtaq	D/o Mushtaq Ahmad Bhar	Marhama	11.11.2000	24 years 01 months	2	12 th	500	447	89.40 %	0	89.4	Tentatively Selected
2	Roohie Ibrahim	D/o Mohd Ibrahim Bhat	Marhama	11.09.2000	24 years 03 months	2	12 th	500	385	77.00 %	0	77	
3	Nesha Nazir	D/o Nazir Ahmad Bhat	Marhama	02.11.2004	20 years 1 month	2	12 th	500	382	76.40 %	0	76.4	
4	Aaliya Jan	D/o Ghulam Nabi Bhat	Marhama	11.11.2005	19 years 1 month	2	12 th	500	309	61.80 %	0	61.8	
5	Saima Akhter	D/o Nazir Ahmad Bhat W/o Suhail Ahmad Dar	Marhama	10.09.1996	28 years 3 month	2	12 th	500	258	51.60 %	0	51.6	
6	Bismah Jan	D/o Habib ullah Bhat	Marhama	15.11.2000	24 years 1 month	2	12 th	500	231	46.20 %	0	46.2	
01	Simran Bashir	D/o Bashir Ahmad Sheikh	Dupatyar	25.04.2003	21 years 08 month	05	12 th	500	371	74.20 %	0	74.20	Tentatively Selected
02	Nazima Rashid	D/o Ab Rashir Shiekh	Dupatyar	05.06.1998	26 years 06 month	05	12 th	500	308	61.60 %	0	61.6	
03	Shugufra Manzoor	D/o Manzoor Ahmad Bhat W/o Wakeel Ahmad Teeli	Dupatyar	15.03.1991	33 years 09 months	05	12 th	750	425	56.60 %	0	56.6	
04	Heena Sajad	D/o Sajad Ahmad Sheikh	Dupatyar	4.10.2005	19 years 02 month	05	12 th	500	271	54.20 %	0	54.20	
05	Asifa Rasool	D/o Gh Rasool Thoker W/o Nawaz Ahmad Sheikh	Dupatyar	05.06.1995	29 years 06 months	05	12 th	500	259	51.80 %	0	51.8	
06	Mehak Bashir	D/o Bashir Ahmad Khan W/o Suhail Ahmad Mir	Dupatyar	12.02.1999	25 years 10 months	05	12 th	500	248	49.60 %	0	49.6	
07	Nazia Akhter	D/o Ghulam Qadir Dar	Dupatyar	04.05.1995	29 years 07 months	05	12 th	500	233	46.60 %	0	46.6	

SD/=

Child Development Project Officer
Poshan Project Bijbehara
Member Secretary

DIPK - 11427/25 DATED 27/02/2026

CONDOLENCE



With profound grief and sorrow, we inform the demise of **Ab Rashid Dar S/o Ab Rehman Dar R/o H.No 136 Lane No 5 Badshah Shah Colony Sanat Nagar Srinagar**. He left for heavenly abode on Friday, 27 February 2026, corresponding to 9 Ramadhan 1447AH. Mourning will be observed only for 3 days i.e, till Sunday, 1st March 2026 and no congregational Fateh Khawani will be held. All are requested to pray for the departed soul. May Allah (SAW) give him highest place in heaven.

Please note: Maintain the sanctity of Ramadan, don't bring any kind of fruit or eatables with you.

BEREAVED FAMILY

PH. NO.: 7006018526, +91 7006016501

Good Morning Kashmir

Faith, Freedom, And Campus Conscience

A llegations of harassment faced by students from Jammu and Kashmir at a government nursing college in Kurnool raise serious questions about tolerance, constitutional values, and the responsibility of educational institutions in a diverse country like India.

According to the complaint addressed to N. Chandrababu Naidu, several Kashmiri students—many admitted under a central scholarship scheme—were allegedly prevented from observing Ramadan freely. Denial of basic arrangements for Sehri and Iftar, restrictions on bringing food for fasting, intrusive questioning about religious practices, and reported pressure on female students regarding hijab are not minor administrative lapses. If true, these actions strike at the heart of fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

Educational campuses are meant to be spaces of learning, inclusion, and mutual respect—not arenas where cultural or religious identities are policed. Students who travel far from home to pursue education already face social and emotional challenges. Subjecting them to discrimination only deepens alienation and undermines national integration.

The silence so far from the college authorities and the Andhra Pradesh government is troubling. In matters involving constitutional freedoms—especially freedom of religion—swift clarification and transparent inquiry are essential. Delays only fuel mistrust and send a damaging signal to students from minority or peripheral regions. India's strength lies in its pluralism. Ramadan observance, like any other religious practice, should not become a cause for suspicion or punishment within academic institutions. Colleges are duty-bound to accommodate reasonable religious needs, provided academic discipline is maintained—something thousands of institutions across the country manage without controversy.

This episode must serve as a reminder: unity cannot be enforced by uniformity. Respect for diversity is not a favour extended by authorities; it is an obligation. Ensuring a safe, inclusive, and fear-free academic environment for all students—regardless of region or faith—is not just good governance, it is a constitutional imperative.

District Development Councils

A Period Of Promise, Participation And Lessons For Future



MANZOOR WANI

The District Development Council (DDC) elections held on 28 November 2020 marked a historic political and administrative milestone in Jammu and Kashmir. Conducted for the first time after the constitutional changes of 2019, these grassroots-level elections were widely described as the beginning of a new democratic phase under the revised governance framework. The tenure of these elected councils is now set to conclude on 28 February 2026, bringing an important five-year chapter to a close.

A Historic Beginning with Mixed Participation

The 2020 elections witnessed encouraging participation in many districts, where people came forward to elect their representatives and place trust in decentralized governance. Several DDC members across the region worked sincerely, focusing on infrastructure, public welfare, and developmental planning for their constituencies.

Experience from Ganderbal

In Ganderbal, DDC representatives were elected like elsewhere. Taking the example of Tullamulla, a vast area comprising four Panchayat Halqas, the people also elected their DDC member with hopes of consistent public outreach and development. Yet, when many residents reflect honestly on these five years, they feel that interaction with their elected representative remained limited. People often saw their DDC only during planning exercises or official engagements, rather than through regular public connection. Since the essence of the DDC system lies in staying closely engaged with grassroots concerns,



this perceived distance created disappointment among sections of the population.

For some communities, this tenure felt like a missed opportunity though it must be acknowledged that this experience was not universal. Many DDCs in other parts of the region demonstrated dedication, ensured implementation of schemes, and maintained strong public contact. The contrast shows that outcomes depended greatly on local participation, accountability, and leadership.

Lessons Learned from the First DDC Cycle

As the first-ever DDC tenure comes to an end, it leaves behind valuable lessons:

- Democracy cannot succeed without participation. Boycotts create leadership vacuums rather than solutions.
- Accountability grows when representatives face real electoral competition.
- Continuous public engagement is essential for grassroots governance to function effectively.
- Development is a shared responsibility between elected members and the citizens who empower them.

The Role of Youth in the Upcoming Electoral Phase

With fresh elections approaching whether for Panchayats, Sarpanchs, BDCs, or DDCs there is a strong need for renewed civic responsibility. The future of governance depends not only on candidates but also on voters, especially young and educated citizens.

India is home to one of the world's largest youth populations, and in Kashmir nearly three-fourths of the population consists of young people. If this majority remains disengaged, progress

will inevitably slow. But if youth participate actively by voting, contesting, and contributing ideas local governance can become more transparent, dynamic, and development oriented.

A Call for Responsible Participation

The conclusion of the 2020-2026 DDC tenure is not merely an administrative transition; it is a moment for reflection and renewal. The coming elections must not be taken lightly. Indifference today can lead to regret tomorrow, while participation can shape better roads, schools, healthcare, employment opportunities, and social harmony. Your vote is your strength. Use it wisely for accountability, for development, and for a better future for your society.

The writer is a Social & RTI Activist and the National Organising Secretary of the J&K Students Association. He can be mailed at manzoornabi57@gmail.com

Bottled Water: A Profound Failure Of Public Water Governance

The Thirst For Water Is Not Only Natural But Also Policy-Orientated

DR. SATYAVAN SAURABH

The growing reliance on bottled water in India is not just a story of changing consumer behavior, but also clearly points to deep-seated, multi-layered systemic problems in public water governance. Tap water, once considered a basic right for citizens and a state responsibility, is now becoming a symbol of distrust, insecurity, and inequality. From cities to towns and even rural areas, people are increasingly relying on plastic bottles for drinking. This trend not only increases the economic burden but also raises serious questions about the environment, social justice, and the concept of democratic governance.

The water crisis in modern India is often attributed to lack of rainfall, climate change, or a growing population. While all of these factors are important, the root cause of the popularity of bottled water lies much deeper than this. The real problem is that citizens' trust in public water supply systems is steadily eroding. Doubts about the quality of tap water, lack of regular supply, and a lack of transparency have driven people to seek alternative sources. When the state fails to fulfill its basic responsibility, the market fills the void—often at a profit.

The use of bottled water has rapidly increased in urban India. In metropolitan cities, it has almost become a way of life. Large jars and bottles are a common sight in offices, schools, hospitals, and even government offices. This situation is ironic, as these cities boast the most developed water infrastructure. If, despite such facilities, citizens cannot drink safe tap water, it is a clear evi-



dence of administrative failure. Poor plumbing conditions, mixing of sewage and drinking water lines, and lack of regular testing—all these problems have been known for years, but solutions have remained incomplete.

The situation in rural areas is different, yet equally worrying. Bottled water use is relatively low there, but as private companies expand their reach into rural markets, this dependence is also increasing. In many areas, high levels of fluoride, arsenic, or iron in groundwater have led people to fear local water sources. State-provided community taps and hand pumps are often out of order or undrinkable. Therefore, those with the financial means purchase bottled water, while the poor are forced to drink contaminated water. This situation creates deep water inequality.

The expansion of the bottled water industry raises many questions. While this industry promises "purity" and "safety," its regulation is severely flawed. It has often been found that even bottled water available on the market

does not meet quality standards. Despite this, consumers consider it safer than tap water. This perception itself questions the credibility of public water institutions. If citizens

The water crisis in modern India is often attributed to lack of rainfall, climate change, or a growing population.

do not trust the state-certified and controlled water supply system, it also threatens the credibility of democratic governance.

From an environmental perspective, the reliance on bottled water is extremely destructive.

Plastic bottles are turning into mountains of waste. Recycling rates are extremely low, and most plastic ends up in rivers, lakes, and oceans. Furthermore, bottled water production consumes enormous amounts of water and energy. This means that an artificial solution is being offered by over-exploiting the very resource that is being talked about. This contradiction exposes the short-term thinking of policymakers.

The problems of public water administration aren't just technical; they're also institutional and political. Departments responsible for water management often struggle with resource constraints, a lack of skilled manpower, and coordination. Furthermore, a basic service like water supply often lacks political priority. While election promises include large dams, river-linking projects, and smart cities, relatively little attention is paid to improving everyday water supply. As a result, small but significant problems remain unresolved for years.

The growing trend of privatization is also exacerbating this crisis. When public systems are weak, private companies are brought forward as a solution. While this has increased efficiency in some cases, the benefits often accrue only to those who can pay. Market-based distribution of an essential resource like water is contrary to the principles of social justice. Bottled water is the most obvious example of this privatization, where clean water becomes a consumer good rather than a fundamental right.

The most worrying aspect of this entire situation is that dependence on bottled water is gradually becoming normalized. People are beginning to

see it as a solution rather than a symptom of the problem. This reduces public pressure and weakens demands for administrative reform. When citizens themselves create alternative arrangements, the pressure on the state to be accountable decreases. This tacitly accepted failure could lead to even greater crises in the future.

There is a need to re-establish water as a public good. This requires ensuring the quality and consistency of tap water, first and foremost. Transparent water testing, public availability of results, and effective grievance redressal systems can restore citizens' confidence. Furthermore, investment in water infrastructure—whether it's pipeline repair, sewage management, or modernization of water treatment plants—must be prioritized.

Public awareness is also crucial. People must understand that bottled water is not a long-term solution. Consumer behavior can be changed by increasing awareness about the environmental and social costs. Schools, community organizations, and local governments can play a key role in this.

Ultimately, the growing dependence on bottled water is a warning. It shows that if public water governance is not strengthened, even a basic necessity like water can lead to deep inequality and crisis. It is time for the state, society, and citizens to collectively reconsider this trend and bring water back into the realm of trust, equity, and public responsibility. Only then will India be able to quench its growing thirst in a just and sustainable manner.

Dr. Satyawan Saurabh, PhD (Political Science), is a poet and social thinker.

Beyond The Textbook: Judiciary, Education, And The Balance Of Critique

LALIT GARGG

Once again, an issue related to education has taken center stage in the national discourse. The Ministry of Education and the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) recently came under scrutiny after the Supreme Court of India expressed displeasure over a chapter titled "The Role of the Judiciary in Our Society" in a Class VIII Social Science textbook. The chapter reportedly mentioned corruption within the judiciary and the problem of pending cases. The Chief Justice's observation that "no one will be allowed to defame the judiciary" was not merely an emotional reaction but a clear assertion of institutional dignity. Subsequently, the decision was taken to withdraw the concerned chapter and recall the books from the market. This episode raises a fundamental question: Was this merely an editorial oversight, or does it reveal a deeper structural deficiency within our educational framework? What purpose is served by informing schoolchildren about "corruption in the judiciary" without adequate context? At the same time, it is undeniable that firm measures are necessary to curb corruption wherever it exists, including within judicial systems.

It must first be acknowledged that concerns about judicial backlog and instances of misconduct are not entirely imaginary. The number of pending cases in Indian courts runs into millions—this is a matter of public record. On certain occasions, judicial conduct has also come under scrutiny. However, it is equally true that the Indian judiciary has repeatedly safeguarded democracy through its independence, transparency, and proactive interventions. In recent years, steps such as the voluntary public disclosure of assets by senior judges have strengthened institutional accountability. Therefore, the real issue is not whether problems exist, but how they are presented—through what language, with what balance, and from what educational perspective. The purpose of education is not merely to transmit facts but to cultivate vision. If children are taught that corruption exists within the judiciary, they must simultaneously be taught how the judiciary has fought corruption, restrained executive excesses, and delivered historic judgments to protect fun-



damental rights. Education should include criticism, but not cynicism; it should present facts, but with balance. When institutional shortcomings are highlighted without equal emphasis on corrective efforts, constitutional values, and exemplary precedents, the result may be the sowing of distrust rather than the nurturing of informed citizenship.

This controversy also prompts a larger inquiry: How does such content pass through multiple layers of textbook review and still reach publication? Is there a lack of diversity in editorial boards? Is coordination among legal experts, educationists, and psychologists insufficient? In a democratic society, institutional criticism cannot be taboo. Yet there exists a fine line between critique and denigration. It is the responsibility of bodies like the Ministry of Education and NCERT to recognize and respect this distinction. It must also be remembered that corruption is not confined to the judiciary. According to Transparency International's recent Corruption Perceptions Index, India ranks 91 out of 182 countries, reflecting a marginal improvement over the previous year but still indicating systemic challenges. Corruption is a structural,

social, and administrative issue. If students are to learn about it, they should do so within a comprehensive framework: understanding why such problems arise, what constitutional safeguards exist, what role citizens play, and what reforms are possible. Isolating a single institution as the focal point of criticism neither does justice to educational integrity nor aligns with constitutional balance.

The dignity of the judiciary is a matter of profound importance. Democracy rests upon three pillars—the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary. If young minds are instilled with distrust toward one pillar without adequate analytical context, the long-term consequences for democratic culture may be detrimental. Yet preserving dignity does not mean silencing discussion of challenges. Dignity and transparency are not adversaries; they are complementary. The judiciary's true stature is enhanced by its capacity to endure criticism, its willingness for self-correction, and its moral resolve. In this context, a reimagined educational framework seems necessary. Textbooks could adopt a structured approach to institutional study, presenting three dimensions: the constitutional mandate, practical

challenges, and reform initiatives. A chapter on the judiciary, for example, should include its landmark judgments, the evolution of public interest litigation, and its role in protecting fundamental rights—alongside balanced discussion of case backlogs and reform recommendations. Such an approach would nurture neither blind reverence nor habitual skepticism, but responsible citizenship.

The Ministry of Education, too, should view this episode as an opportunity for introspection. Removing a chapter may offer an immediate remedy, but it is not a lasting solution. What is needed is an independent, multidisciplinary review mechanism involving legal scholars, former judges, educationists, sociologists, and child psychology experts. A tradition of public consultation could also be developed so that textbooks become not merely government publications, but documents reflecting broader social consensus. The judiciary, for its part, could respond constructively by promoting judicial literacy programs in schools and universities, providing accessible and balanced educational resources about court functioning. Greater transparency and engagement would further strengthen its credibility and public trust.

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Ultimately, this controversy compels us to reflect on the kind of civic consciousness we wish to instill in our children. Do we aim merely to acquaint them with problems, or also to inspire them toward solutions? Should we teach them to distrust institutions, or to participate in their reform? The future of democracy is shaped within the lines of textbooks. Therefore, education must present truth—yet balanced; criticism—yet constructive; and reform—while preserving institutional dignity. Corruption is undeniably a serious national challenge. But its resolution does not lie in placing institutions in the dock; it lies in making them more accountable, transparent, and resilient. The true task of education is to cultivate this equilibrium. If this controversy leads us toward a more mature, dialogic, and responsible educational order, it may well mark the beginning of a new direction, a new vision, and a renewed institutional framework. The real strength of democracy lies in harmonizing critique with self-correction—and that very balance must be reflected in our textbooks.

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AI In Action

Startups Showcase Practical Solutions For India's Everyday Challenges

The India AI Impact Summit 2026 unfolded as another energetic day at Bharat Mandapam. Thousands of visitors filled the halls, moving from one stall to another, asking questions, watching demonstrations and exchanging ideas. Conversations between innovators, policymakers, students and industry leaders gave the venue a steady buzz.

A clear message echoed across the exhibition floor: Artificial Intelligence is no longer limited to experiments or prototypes. It is being applied to real systems that people use every day.

The focus of the Summit was simple. It highlighted how AI is being shaped into practical public solutions, reflecting the Government's emphasis on turning emerging technologies into tools that serve citizens. Ideas were not just displayed on screens; they were demonstrated, tested and discussed with real-world use in mind.

One of the busiest stalls featured SATHEE (Self Assessment, Test and Help for Entrance Exams), an initiative by the Ministry of Education and IIT Kanpur, launched in 2023. The platform offers free AI-powered preparation for eight major competitive exams: JEE, NEET, CLAT, ICAR, CUET, SSC, RRB and IBPS.

Students gathered around a live dashboard as the system was explained. Dhruv Garg, Software Engineer at IIT Kanpur, said, "We realised students don't always study from 10 to 6. So, we added AI features such as AI Conventional Tour, Mnemonics and memory aids especially helpful for Gen Z learners and AI Visual Problem Solver so they can study at home, anytime."



SATHEE provides AI-based doubt resolution, personalised study plans, confusion detection tools and automatic transcript summaries. Students can generate plans based on the hours they have available. The platform extracts key formulas from lectures and highlights recurring conceptual confusion. Content is available in 13 Indian languages, with further expansion underway. Early use in selected government schools has shown

encouraging results, including up to a 50 percent increase in JEE qualifiers and an 80 percent increase in NEET qualifiers. The aim is to widen access, especially for students who may not be able to afford private coaching.

At another stall, attention shifted to security systems. Gurugram-based iiris: Value Catalysts demonstrated how AI can strengthen traditional surveillance. Zia Ahmad, Manager - Security Design, explained, "Let's say you

have a warehouse or real estate property. We begin with a comprehensive security risk assessment and design AI based security solutions tailored to the requirements."

Zia added, "Earlier, surveillance systems relied heavily on manual monitoring. If an incident occurred, the entire recording had to be reviewed, making the process extremely time-consuming and resource-intensive."

According to him, with AI-enabled

tools, a single command can retrieve all relevant information at once. Intelligent filtering can narrow footage instantly by attributes such as clothing colour or time span. Integrated systems linking cameras and sensors generate real-time alerts, improving response time and efficiency. The company is also conducting security risk assessments for major infrastructure projects, including the Vrindavan Chandrodaya Mandir in Mathura.

He added, "Let us say fish plates are missing, bolts are absent, or there are other structural defects, the system will detect them all." According to him, this increases inspection efficiency by up to 200 percent compared to manual methods.

Standing nearby, Nischal Ranjan, Operational Manager at RailLabs, spoke about ChakrVue, a wheel shelling prediction system already operational in 20 LHB and Tejas coaches across cities including Mumbai, Agartala and Ranchi. "By identifying potential wheel defects before failure, the system strengthens preventive railway safety," he said.

He emphasised the importance of early detection: "Even a crack above two millimetres can be dangerous."

As the day progressed, the Summit maintained its steady rhythm. Screens glowed, machines operated quietly and discussions continued. The event did not promise overnight transformation. Instead, it showed how AI is steadily being integrated into classrooms, transport systems, infrastructure and public spaces — practical, grounded and focused on everyday impact.

Courtesy: Press Information Bureau

J&K Set To Shine As

around the world. He emphasized that the government is actively working to broaden the tourism canvas beyond traditional destinations.

CM Omar Abdullah announced the development of new tourism circuits and the identification of nine emerging destinations aimed at offering fresh experiences to travellers.

Reflecting on recent challenges, the Chief Minister said the government has drawn important lessons from past experiences. "Have lessons been learned from what happened last year. The fact that it took us so long to open many of our closed destinations is indicative of the lessons we have learned," he remarked, adding that the focus now is firmly on the future and on building a more resilient and responsive tourism ecosystem.

The event was organised by the Jammu & Kashmir Tourism Forum under the leadership of noted hotelier Mushtaq Chaya. Honorary Secretary General of the Forum, Wahid Malik, described the gathering as a historic moment in positioning Jammu & Kashmir as a safe and vibrant all-season tourism hotspot.

Mushtaq Chaya termed the present phase as one of "unprecedented progress and development," assuring visitors of world-class hospitality and improved facilities across Jammu and Kashmir.

The event witnessed the presence of Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani; MLAs Pirzada Farooq Ahmad Shah, Tanvir Sadiq and Altaf Ahmad Wani; Director Tourism Jammu Vikas Gupta; ambassadors from several countries; travel association leaders; senior government officials; and prominent tourism stakeholders, making it a landmark occasion in the promotion of Jammu & Kashmir tourism.

CM Positions J&K

At SATTE 2026, the Chief Minister visited the Jammu & Kashmir Pavilion (Hall-1A) and was accompanied by his Advisor Nasir Aslam Wani; MLAs Pirzada Farooq Ahmad Shah (Gulmarg), Tanvir Sadiq (Zadibal) and Altaf Ahmad Wani (Pahalgam); and Director Tourism Jammu, Vikas Gupta.

He undertook a guided walkthrough of the pavilion, interacted with tourism stakeholders and leading travel and tour operators, and spoke to media highlighting Jammu & Kashmir's evolving tourism landscape.

On the sidelines of the exhibition, the Chief Minister held further detailed interactions with tourism stakeholders in New Delhi, reiterating the Government's resolve to enhance tourism infrastructure, improve connectivity and promote sustainable tourism across all regions of Jammu & Kashmir.

During his engagement with industry leaders, he emphasized that Jammu & Kashmir today offers a diverse and expanding tourism portfolio — ranging from adventure tourism and rich heritage experiences to pilgrimage circuits and world-class MICE opportunities. He invited travellers and investors alike to discover an open, vibrant Jammu & Kashmir, ready to welcome the world with renewed confidence and warmth. On the occasion, the Chief Minister also toured the exhibition area.

Jammu & Kashmir's participation at SATTE 2026 featured nearly 70 tourism stakeholders as co-exhibitors, showcasing destinations,

services and promotional material highlighting the region's tourism, heritage, adventure & pilgrimage tourism potential. Live performances by traditional folk musicians added cultural vibrancy to the pavilion and attracted significant visitor interest.

Officers of the Tourism Department shall be engaging with travel trade representatives during the exhibition, with the objective of strengthening tourism promotion and increasing tourist footfall in Jammu & Kashmir.

Balanced Minds, Bold

Governor observed that the purpose of education is not merely the acquisition of knowledge but creation of enlightened citizens who are sensitive towards their duties.

"True education prepares youth to forge entirely new answers and solutions that the world has not yet imagined.

Students enter campuses not merely for degrees, but to nurture culture, explore new ideas, choose bold paths, and courageously drive societal progress," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor said that the pace at which the world is changing is almost beyond comprehension and technological explosion has quietly transformed both educational institutions and industries alike.

He directed the faculty members to make their higher education campuses the manufacturing hubs of new ideas.

"The effort must go beyond curriculum. Let there be genuine dialogue across disciplines. Let every lecture in every classroom become a doorway to new possibilities," he said.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor also launched the Podcast "JU Vaachan", an initiative of Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Jammu University.

Prof. Umesh Rai, Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu, Shri Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; Prof. Neelu Rohmetra, Dean Research studies; Prof. Prakash Anthal, Dean Students Welfare; Heads of Departments, faculty members, senior officials and students in large number were present.

Padma Shri Dr Jitendra Udhamपुरi; Padma Shri Dr SP Varma; Padma Shri Romalo Ram; Shri Ashok Bhan, former DGP, and prominent citizens from different walks of life also attended the inaugural ceremony.

Day Temperatures

low of 1.0 degrees Celsius. Pahalgam recorded a maximum of 16.2 degrees Celsius, 7.7 degrees above normal, while the minimum dipped to minus 2.1 degrees Celsius.

Kupwara recorded a high of 20.1 degrees Celsius, 8.7 degrees above normal, and a low of 0.4 degrees Celsius. Kokernag registered a maximum of 18.8 degrees Celsius, nine degrees above normal, with the minimum at 3.6 degrees Celsius.

The famous ski resort of Gulmarg recorded a maximum of 9.7 degrees Celsius, 7.3 degrees above normal, and a minimum of minus 1.4 degrees Celsius.

In the Jammu region, Jammu city recorded a maximum of 26.3 degrees Celsius, 3.2 degrees above normal, and a minimum of 12.9 degrees Celsius. Banihal registered a high of 20.8 degrees Celsius, 7.4 degrees above normal, while Batote recorded 20.4 degrees Celsius, 7.2 degrees above normal.

Katra recorded a maximum of 26.0 degrees Celsius, 5.1 degrees above normal, and Bhadarwah registered 20.9 degrees Celsius, 6.5 degrees above normal.

There was no significant rainfall reported across the Union Territory during the past 24 hours, except for a trace recorded at Bhadarwah. Relative humidity levels remained moderate across most stations.

The MeT department has forecast mainly dry weather

over the next few days—(KNO)

CIK Secures NBWs

Sections 2/3 of the E&IMCO Act," it added.

The statement said that The court of Additional Sessions Judge TADA/POTA (Special Judge designated under the NIA Act), Srinagar, after hearing the prosecution as well as IO and carefully examining the case record, has issued NBWs against the following four accused:

"Mohammad Yousuf Shah also known as Syed Salah-ud-din, son of Ghulam Rasool Shah, resident of Soibugh, Budgam. "The absconding accused is the chief of the so-called United Jihad Council (UJC) and the proscribed terrorist organization Hizb-ul-Mujahideen. He is a known terrorist operator and instigator. The absconder is involved in several terrorist related FIRs registered in various police stations across the Kashmir Valley".

"Ghulam Nabi Khan also known as Amir Khan, son of Ghulam Rasool Khan, resident of Liver Srigufwara, Anantnag, J&K. The absconding accused is the Deputy Supreme Commander of the proscribed terrorist organization Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) and is a known terrorist handler. The absconder is involved in other numerous terrorist related activities which includes and not limited to recruitment into terrorists ranks, coordination of terrorists related activities and FIRs stand registered against him in various police stations across the Kashmir Valley, and in central investigation agencies as well," the statement said.

"Sher Mohammad also known as Bahadur /Riyaz, son of Sher Ahmad, resident of Malangan, Bandipora, J&K.

The absconding accused is a commander of the proscribed terrorist organization Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM). He is also involved in variety of terrorists related activities and cases have been registered against him under the provisions of the UAP Act, and provisions of the EIMCO Act as well," the statement said.

"Nasir Yousuf Qadri son of Mohammad Yousuf Qadri, resident of Sheeltang, Dar Mohalla, Habbakadal, later at Abu-Baker Colony, Bemina, Srinagar. The absconding accused is associated with the proscribed terrorist organization Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) and is working for the terror narrative machinery. The absconder is also involved in operating Kashmir Media Service (KMS), which is engaged in disseminating false narratives against the Indian State and issuing general threats against communities and individuals," the statement said.

It said, "The case originated on 05 April 1996 following credible information received at Police Station CIK, Srinagar, revealing that Pakistan-based terrorist handlers and intelligence agencies were actively motivating and facilitating Kashmiri youth to undergo terrorist training in PoK/PAK with the objective of waging war against the Union of India. During the course of investigation, substantial material evidence was gathered establishing prima facie involvement of the accused affiliated with banned terrorist organization Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) in unlawful and anti-national activities, including radicalization, recruitment, and facilitation of terrorist operations."

It said, "Despite sustained and continuous efforts by CIK to apprehend them, the accused have remained absconding and have deliberately evaded arrest."

"Upon careful consideration of the evidence presented by CIK, the Court observed that the offences alleged are grave in nature, directly pertaining to waging war against the State and activities prejudicial to national security. The Court further held that custodial examination of the accused is essential for effective investigation and for securing the ends of justice. Being satisfied that sufficient grounds exist, the Court allowed the application and directed the issuance of Non-Bailable Warrants, instructing the Station House Officer/Investigating Officer of Police Station CIK, Srinagar, to execute the warrants and produce the accused before the Court at the earliest," the statement said.

It said, "This decisive legal action underscores CIK's sustained and uncompromising resolve to pursue terror-related cases to their logical conclusion, irrespective of the passage of time. Counter Intelligence Kashmir remains steadfast in its mission to safeguard national security and ensure that individuals involved in activities threatening the sovereignty and integrity of the nation are brought firmly within the ambit of law."—(KNO)

J&K Amends Building

notified by the Housing & Urban Development Department.

Applications for permissions will be automatically scrutinized for compliance with the Master Plan/Zonal Plan, Unified Building Bye-Laws, Development Control Regulations, and other applicable norms.

The automatic scrutiny will also verify adherence to mandatory parameters including plot size, setbacks, ground coverage, FAR/F.S.I, height restrictions, parking requirements, and permissible land use. A scrutiny report will then be generated, highlighting compliance and deviations, if any, for applicant and authority review.

"In case of any deficiencies, discrepancies, or shortfalls observed during automated scrutiny, the system shall communicate the same online to the applicant through the Building Permission Portal. The applicant shall be required to submit the compliances or rectify the shortfalls within fifteen (15) days from the date of such online intimation," the amendments state.

According to the bye-laws, low-risk buildings (such as small residential houses up to G+2 floors on plots under 500 sqm, or small commercial buildings up to 15m height on plots under 300 sqm) can be approved on the basis of self-certification and third-party certification by the RTP.

"Upon acceptance of a complete application accompanied by a valid Self-Certification and Auto Approval Certificate, the Competent Authority shall be exempted from conducting mandatory pre-construction or during-construction site visits for verification of parameters certified in the certificate for low-risk buildings stated above," the amendments read.

The amendments also provide that No-Objection Certificates (NOCs) from departments such as Revenue, PHE, Power, Forest, Fire Services, Railways, and Airports Authority will be processed online through the designated portal of the Housing & Urban Development Department.

The new bye-laws provide that applicants must apply online for the occupancy-cum-completion certificate upon completion of construction. The Building Permission Issuing Authority (BPIA) will issue the certificate online within 15 days of application submission, after conducting field verification of the site (unless exempted under the bye-laws) and obtaining the digital inspection report from the designated inspection team—(KNO)

RBI Dy Guv Emphasizes

audience of distinguished experts and MBA students, he framed his address as a conversation with the future leaders, emphasizing that the financial system India builds towards 2047 must rest on three pillars: safety,

fairness and reliability. He underscored that development extends beyond GDP to quality of life and that finance, at its core, is a people-centric enterprise built on trust, clarity and integrity.

Encouraging principled leadership, he highlighted key lessons for sound decision-making: respecting customers, understanding financial sustainability, encouraging constructive challenge and discussing risks transparently. He stressed that in an era where technology scales rapidly, both value and vulnerabilities multiply, making responsible design and fair customer outcomes critical for inclusive growth.

He concluded that achieving Viksit Bharat@2047 demands principled performance and platforms like IFAC 2026 connecting academic learning with real-world financial transformation.

Professor Jabir Ali, Dean Faculty and Research, IIM Jammu, emphasized that education must transcend classroom learning to foster a deeper understanding of public policy and its real-world impact, particularly in advancing inclusive and sustainable economic development.

Underscoring the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, he highlighted the critical role of higher education institutions in shaping responsible leaders and policy thinkers who can contribute meaningfully to India's growth journey. He reaffirmed that IIM Jammu is committed towards setting the tone for this national vision through research-driven insights, strong academia-industry-government collaboration and ethical leadership rooted in innovation and sustainability.

Referring to collaborative engagements with the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, he noted that such platforms as IFAC 2026 enable students to develop a holistic understanding of industry, governance and economic transformation.

Professor Nitin Upadhyay, Dean Academics IIM, acknowledged the guiding influence of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in shaping India's financial architecture. He appreciated the conference's timely and forward-looking theme, "Financial Strategies for Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth to achieve Viksit Bharat@2047."

He emphasized that the deliberations at IFAC 2026 would explore multiple dimensions of finance and accounting, offering valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners to design robust mechanisms that contribute meaningfully towards the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

During the interactive question and answers session with the students, Swaminathan J addressed queries on monetary policy transmission, global spillovers, financial sector vulnerabilities and the balance between growth and inflation management, encouraging young scholars to contribute meaningfully to India's financial policy ecosystem.

Professor Pranab Ranjan Das, Conference Chair, IIM Jammu, while presenting the theme, Financial Strategies for Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth to achieve Viksit Bharat@2047, highlighted the financial reforms, sustainability and strategic pathways for long-term transformation. He expressed confidence that the conference would generate actionable policy insights and emphasized collaboration among academia, industry, and policymakers to build a resilient, future-ready economy aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Dr. Saugata Bhattacharya, Member, MPC; Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda; CMA Dr. S K Gupta, MD, ICMAI Registered Valuers Organization; Prasanna Balachander, Executive Director, ICICI Securities; Dr. Narendra Ahlawat, MD & CEO, MCX Clearing Corporation Ltd. and Akshay Panth, CIO, SBI Ventures, along with Tamal Bandyopadhyay, Consulting Editor, The Business Standard, also graced the inaugural ceremony.

The discussion offered a multidimensional perspective on India's financial transformation toward Viksit Bharat@2047, highlighting structural shifts in global savings and liquidity amid quantitative tightening and the imperative for India to compete effectively for limited global capital while deepening domestic financial markets.

Panelists drew attention to slowing deposit growth and the migration of retail investors toward capital markets, underscoring the importance of strengthening the savings ecosystem alongside sustained credit expansion.

The panel converged on a clear message that India's journey toward inclusive and sustainable growth will require adaptive institutions, deeper and more diversified capital markets, strengthened domestic savings, and principled financial leadership aligned with long-term national development goals.

IFAC 2026 continued with concurrent technical sessions featuring research presentations by the scholars and practitioners, reinforcing IIM Jammu's commitment to academic excellence, policy engagement and national development.

Bookings Rise Steadily

attribute the uptick to improved security measures and sustained outreach by the administration led by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

Nisar Ahmad, a tour coordinator, said warmer weather has also contributed to the rise in arrivals. "People are calling regularly to check packages for Gulmarg and Pahalgam. The situation is much better compared to a few months ago," he said.

Shopkeepers in tourist hubs echoed similar views. Abdul Rashid, who runs a handicrafts store in Lal Chowk, said sales had been hit badly after the incident. "Now we see customers walking in again. Even if business is not at its peak, there is hope," he said.

Tourists visiting the Valley said they felt reassured by the visible security presence and local hospitality.

Ritu Sharma, a visitor from Delhi, said her family decided to go ahead with their trip after speaking to friends who had recently returned. "We felt safe and welcomed. The natural beauty is as breathtaking as ever," she said.

Another tourist, Aditya Menon from Bengaluru, said Kashmir remains on the bucket list for many travellers. "Incidents can happen anywhere, but the arrangements here are professional," he said.

Officials said the tourism sector contributes significantly to the Union Territory's economy and expressed hope that a sustained inflow of visitors will further stabilise livelihoods linked to the industry—(KNO)

J&K Fully Prepared

PowerPoint Presentation highlighting all operational aspects regarding launch of HPV Vaccine including microplanning, availability of HPV Vaccine across all 20 districts, training of vaccinators and supervisors, robust cold chain management through eVIN, logistics distribution, AEFI (Adverse Events Following Immunization) surveillance mechanisms and digital registration and certification through the U-WIN portal.

Target age group was also discussed viz. 14 year old girls (those who have celebrated their 14th birthday but have not yet celebrated their 15th birthday). Girls who will turn 15 years within 90 days of the launch will also be eligible for vaccination during these three months campaign period.

It was informed in the meeting that a total of approximately 1,35,340 eligible beneficiaries have been identified for vaccination across the Union Territory.

Besides, roles and responsibilities of state, district and block-level stakeholders were discussed in detail. Special emphasis was laid on interdepartmental coordination, especially with the Education Department and ICDS for beneficiary mapping and community mobilization.

Key messages for caregivers were also highlighted, including the safety and efficacy of the vaccine, the need to wait for 30 minutes post-vaccination for observation, awareness about minor self-limiting AEFIs and availability of vaccination certificates through U-WIN.

The Secretary reiterated the importance of supportive supervision, daily monitoring, timely reporting and functional AEFI committees at all levels. He also directed the Joint Director Information to spread awareness regarding the vaccination. He stressed the need for consistent communication to counter misinformation and ensure community confidence.

The Secretary directed all the stakeholders to ensure seamless implementation of the programme, robust monitoring and 100% coverage of eligible girls across the Union Territory. He also expressed satisfaction over the preparedness made by the concerned departments.

The meeting concluded with a collective commitment to make the HPV Vaccination Campaign a success in J&K and contribute towards the long-term goal of eliminating cervical cancer as a public health problem.

The meeting was attended by Commissioner, Municipal Corporation Jammu/Srinagar; Mission Director, National Health Mission, J&K; Director, SKIMS Soura; District Development Commissioners J&K and Director, Health Services Jammu/Kashmir; Director, Family Welfare, MCH & Immunization, J&K; Director, School Education Jammu/Kashmir; Joint Director, ICDS, J&K; Joint Director, Information Jammu, Deputy Director, AYUSH, J&K; Principals of Government Medical Colleges and Principal, SKIMS Medical College Bemina along with their Medical Superintendents; Chief Medical Officers; State Immunization Officer J&K; Surveillance Medical Officer WHO Jammu/Kashmir and State Programme Officer, UNDP, among other senior officers.

Ranji Trophy Coming Home

expressed eagerness to cheer them from the stands as they close in on a famous win.

"On our way to Hubli to cheer the J&K cricket team as they play the final of the Ranji Trophy. They've already made lakhs of people so very proud of their achievements by reaching the final. I'm really looking forward to spending the day tomorrow in the stands cheering them on." Abdullah said in a post on 'X'

The Chief Minister is accompanied by his advisor Nasir Aslam Wani, MLA and NC Spokesperson Tanvir Sadiq and MLA Pahalgam Altaf Wani.

On the field, Jammu and Kashmir maintained complete dominance, leaving the Karnataka cricket team struggling to find momentum. After securing a massive 291-run first-innings lead, J&K consolidated further in their second innings.

Despite an early setback at 11/2, Qamran Iqbal steadied the innings with a composed 94, anchoring the side during a crucial phase. He built important partnerships with Kanhaiya Dogra and Abdul Samad, frustrating the opposition and pushing J&K firmly into control.

By stumps, the lead had swelled to an imposing 477 runs, with Sahil Lotra holding firm at the other end, underlining J&K's authority in the contest.

Earlier, J&K's bowling unit set the tone for dominance with a clinical display. Led by Auqib Nabi, who claimed his seventh five-wicket haul of the season, the side dismantled Karnataka's batting lineup with precision.

Though Mayank Agarwal stood tall with a resilient 130 off 207 balls, the lack of support from the rest of the batting order left Karnataka in deep trouble. Regular breakthroughs ensured they never recovered from early setbacks.

Union Minister Jitendra Singh commended the players' discipline and determination, while also acknowledging the role of the Jammu & Kashmir Cricket Association in ensuring transparency in team selection.

Best wishes to the spirited team of #JammuAndKashmir for their outstanding performance in the ongoing Ranji Trophy.

Your grit, discipline and determination on the field have made the entire region proud. The way you have showcased talent and resilience at the national stage is truly inspiring.

"Equally deserving of appreciation are JKCA's Brig Anil Gupta and Sh Mithun Manhas, who have painstakingly sought to introduce a culture of fair, transparent team selection in J&K.... and the results are there for everybody to see." Dr Jitendra Singh said in a post on 'X'.

Meanwhile, Waheed ur Rehman Para described the achievement as more than just a sporting milestone, calling it a symbol of unity, resilience, and hope for the youth of the region.

"Winning #RanjiTrophy by the Jammu & Kashmir Cricket Team is not just about lifting a trophy. It's not just about winning, it's about showing the way.

At a time when so much around us feels fractured, when institutions become flashpoints, when young people feel unheard, when debates over religion, region, and identity grow louder, this victory feels different. It feels personal to all of us.

On the field, there were no divisions. Hindus and Muslims stood shoulder to shoulder, playing for one badge, one dream. They transcended religious, regional, and geographical divides, taking on and defeating elite teams from across the country. That's no small feat.

The J&K Cricket Association, once weighed down by controversy and allegations of corruption, now reflects something far more powerful: renewal. Change. A system slowly finding its feet again.

But what truly makes this special is the emotion behind it. These young men didn't just play cricket. They played with pride. With a quiet determination that said: we belong here. Every run, every wicket, every dive on the field carried more than sporting intent; it carried hope.

And among them shines Aqib Nabi, a name that now echoes beyond the boundary ropes. A symbol of resilience and raw promise from a land that has endured so much. Your journey inspires not just aspiring cricketers, but an entire generation searching for light.

This is more than sports news. This is a story coming from a region where many young people battle anxiety, uncertainty, and hopelessness. And yet, here is a team that chose belief over bitterness. Effort over excuses. This is about turning despair into determination. Turning doubt into dignity. Turning hopelessness into hope." He said in a post on 'X'

With just one day remaining, Jammu & Kashmir are firmly in the driver's seat. Even in the event of a draw, their substantial first-innings lead puts them in a commanding position to be declared champions—potentially securing their first-ever Ranji Trophy title in over six decades.

As the team prepares for the final push, all eyes remain on Hubli, where Jammu and Kashmir stand just one step away from scripting a golden chapter in their cricketing history—(KNO)

India's Trade Pacts In 2026 Signal Decisive Shift Toward Deeper Global Economic Integration

IAN S

NEW DELHI: India's trade partnerships in 2026 signal a decisive shift toward deeper global economic integration, supported by a broad network of modern and outcome-oriented trade agreements, an official statement said on Friday.

Landmark agreement with the European Union, alongside other strengthened partnerships, are expanding market access, boosting exports, attracting investment, and creating new employment opportunities across sectors.

"Complemented by domestic policy, financial, and regulatory measures to strengthen exporter competitiveness, India's trade ecosystem is becoming

more resilient and globally integrated," said the statement.

Notably, several major economies are currently engaged in active negotiations with India to deepen trade and investment ties through FTAs and comprehensive economic partnerships.

India reached a framework understanding with the United States in February for an Interim Agreement aimed at promoting reciprocal and mutually beneficial trade.

The framework reaffirms the countries' commitment to the broader US-India Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) negotiations, which will include additional market access commitments and support more resilient supply chains.

Moreover, India and Israel



signed the Terms of Reference for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in November. Subsequent

ly, the first round of FTA negotiations was concluded this month, establishing a structured frame-

work for discussions on identified areas to enhance trade and economic cooperation.

"Discussions for the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) is also underway, which holds potential to unleash the full economic potential of the member countries and further strengthen regional cooperation," said the statement.

Notably, India and Mexico meetings have been centred on strengthening bilateral trade and investment relations, with discussions focused on expanding trade, investment, expanding economic cooperation, fostering business collaborations, and exploring opportunities across diverse sectors.

With Canada, India continues discussions on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, supported

by agreed terms of reference.

The proposed agreement aims to raise bilateral trade to around \$50 billion by 2030 through tariff reductions and clearer frameworks for services and investment.

According to the statement, the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the India-GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA) were signed this month, followed by the signing of a Joint Statement formally launching negotiations for a comprehensive and mutually beneficial agreement.

The FTA will enable seamless flow of goods, and services and attract investments while expanding job opportunities and fostering food and energy security for the region, elevating deep economic ties.

Gujarat To Host Semiconnect 2026 As Rs 1.24 Lakh Crore Semiconductor Projects Advance



IAN S

GANDHINAGAR: Gujarat will host the SemiConnect Conference-2026 on March 1 and 2 in Gandhinagar, as the state advances semiconductor projects worth approximately Rs 1.24 lakh crore and positions itself as a key manufacturing base in India's chip-making ambitions.

Addressing a press conference in Gandhinagar, state Science and Technology Minister Arjun Modhwadia said the conference forms part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's broader objective of making India a global semiconductor hub.

He said the disruption of global supply chains during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in semiconductor production, had severely affected industries worldwide and underscored the strategic importance of domestic chip manufacturing.

"Considering that challenge as an opportunity, the Prime Minister decided to make the country a semiconductor hub. As a result, today the nation is leading in semiconductor and fifth-generation smart manufacturing," Modhwadia said.

He referred to the India AI Impact Summit-2026 held in New Delhi last week under the Prime Minister's leadership, where around 88 countries issued a joint declaration on the ethical use of artificial intelligence.

He said, "Gujarat was emerging as a national hub for semiconductor production, supported by large-scale investments currently under development."

The two-day conference will be attended by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, Union Minister for Information and Technology Ashwini Vaishnav and Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi.

Modhwadia said the event is being organised as the state's flagship semiconductor platform, bringing together global and domestic partners across the electronics value chain.

He said the initiative would help establish Gujarat as a centre for memory packaging and advanced semiconductor manufacturing, strengthening India's electronics production and strategic technology base.

The conference aims to facilitate collaboration between high-technology chip manufacturers, supply chain partners and domestic industries to sup-

port long-term ecosystem development.

According to the minister, the third edition builds on the momentum of the 2024 and 2025 events, which brought together stakeholders including fabs, foundries, equipment and material suppliers and design ecosystem partners.

More than 2,500 registrations have been received so far from over eight countries, including industry representatives, foreign institutions, researchers, investors and students.

Key investors expected to attend include Dr Randhir Thakur of Tata Electronics, Sanjay Mehrotra of Micron Technology, G. C. Chaturvedi of CG Power and Industrial Solutions, Ramesh Kannan of Kaynes Semicon and Ajay Manocha, President and Chief Executive of SEMI.

Modhwadia said announcements related to new investments and skill development initiatives in Gujarat's semiconductor and electronics sector are planned during the event.

The programme will include panel discussions on next-generation semiconductors, logistics and infrastructure in hubs such as Dholera and Sanand, semiconductor financing through GIFT IFSC, research and workforce development, and strengthening India's electronics ecosystem from printed circuit board manufacturing to component supply chains.

Country-focused roundtables with Taiwan and Japan, a Micron ecosystem roundtable, and a session titled 'From Silicon to Students' on workforce development are also scheduled.

Selected one-to-one meetings between senior industry leaders and government officials will take place alongside the formal sessions.

On March 2, delegates will visit Dholera Semiconductor City, where meetings with Tata Electronics and senior officials are planned.

Participants will be briefed on the plug-and-play industrial infrastructure, utilities and logistics preparedness supporting semiconductor-related developments.

The conference is being supported by international and national knowledge partners including SEMI, JETRO, KOTRA, the India Semiconductor Mission, ELCINA, IESA, ICEA, MEDEPC and Invest India.

Officials including Yu Yoshida of JETRO, Mr Kim of KOTRA and Homer Chang of TECC are expected to attend

India Clocks 7.8 Per Cent GDP Growth In Q3 FY26 In New Series Data

IAN S

NEW DELHI: India's real GDP growth rate for the October-December quarter (Q3) of the financial year 2025-26 is estimated at 7.8 per cent in the new series with 2022-23 as the base year, data for which was released by the Ministry of Statistics on Friday.

The projected annual GDP growth rate for the full financial year 2025-26 has been pegged at 7.6 per cent compared with 7.1 per cent for 2024-25, according to the advance estimates, which were also released along with the data.

Real GDP is estimated to attain a level of Rs 322.58 lakh crore in the FY26, against the first revised Estimate of GDP for FY25 of Rs 299.89 lakh crore.

The manufacturing sector has been the major driver in contributing to the resilient performance of the economy in three consecutive



financial years after rebasing with a double-digit growth in FY 2023-24 and FY 2025-26.

The Indian economy has exhibited steady performance to register real GDP growth rates of 7.2 per cent and 7.1 per cent, respectively, during FY 2023-24 and FY 2024-25.

The revision of the National Accounts' Base Year to 2022-23, the new series of Quarterly GDP estimates incorporating a revision in estimation methodology, includes new high-frequency indicators and an improved deflation strategy to

effectively capture the progress in the economy within respective years. Besides, there has been an improvement in the granularity of estimation, the official statement said.

In the earlier advance estimates release in January, based on the old series, the real GDP growth was projected at 7.4 per cent in FY 2025-26, up from 6.5 per cent during FY 2024-25, according to the advanced estimates.

The buoyant growth in the services sector has been found to be a major driver with a robust growth of 9.9 per cent at constant prices in FY 2025-26 for financial services, real estate, professional services and public administration.

Manufacturing and construction in the secondary sector were estimated to achieve a growth rate of 7 per cent, while the agriculture sector growth rate is estimated at 3.1 per cent.

'Destroyed Evidence': Delhi BJP Chief On Lack Of Proof Against Kejriwal

IAN S

NEW DELHI: Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva on Friday criticised the AAP celebrations over the judgment of a Delhi Special Court offering a reprieve to Arvind Kejriwal in the "liquor policy scam", accusing the accused of destroying SIM cards and other evidence.

The court's decision is based on the technical ground of "lack of evidence" and in no way amounts to a "clean chit" to Kejriwal, said Sachdeva.

He added that the investigating agency has repeatedly maintained that Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) National Convener and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and former Deputy CM Manish Sisodia were involved in destroying evidence.

Sachdeva said that details regarding SIM cards and mobile phones that were allegedly destroyed have not been provided to date, and this has also been mentioned in the court's decision.

The Delhi BJP chief said that Kejriwal still does not have answers to many questions.

"If the excise policy was appropriate, why was it withdrawn



immediately after the investigation began? What was the objective behind increasing the commission percentage for contractors? Why was a 'buy one, get one free' scheme introduced?" asked Sachdeva.

He alleged that Kejriwal is "corrupt" and claimed that there is no proof to establish his innocence.

He also stated that the people of Delhi have already delivered their verdict after the Assembly elections by removing him from power, thereby accepting that Kejriwal is corrupt.

Sachdeva accused Kejriwal of attempting to gain public sympathy by appearing before the media and "acting emotional", which, he claimed, reflects his political theatrics.

He alleged that it was these same "theatrics" through which Satyendra Jain was portrayed as deserving of the highest honours.

The BJP leader added that the

liquor policy issue is not the only matter, and that there is a long list of alleged scams in which Kejriwal, according to him, has clearly been exposed as corrupt.

Earlier in the day, the Rouse Avenue Court discharged Kejriwal and his closest aide Manish Sisodia, along with 23 others in the excise policy case, also clearing them of charges of alleged corruption and wrongdoing, stating that there was "no overarching conspiracy or criminal intent".

The case pertains to the Delhi Excise Policy, formulated by the AAP government in November 2021, to revamp and bring a structural overhaul of liquor businesses and regulation in the national capital.

Within months of policy rollout, it found itself in the throes of controversy with the BJP accusing the AAP dispensation of colluding with the liquor mafia to fill its coffers. The policy was subsequently scrapped a year later in 2022.

A case was lodged following a report by the then Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar to Lieutenant Governor (L-G) Vinai Kumar Saxena in July 2022, which pointed at multiple "procedural lapses and lacunas" in policy formulation.

TRAI Seeks Feedback On Ratings Of Properties Based On Digital Connectivity

IAN S

MUMBAI: The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on Friday released a consultation paper on 'Review of the Rating of Properties for Digital Connectivity Regulations 2024,' proposing to refine the rating scale by introducing additional half-star levels.

As a significant proportion of data consumption occurs inside buildings especially after the deployment of advanced mobile technologies such as 4G and 5G, making in-building digital connectivity a critical determinant of User Experience and Quality of Service (QoS).

The new framework on rating properties based on digital connectivity aims to "promote collaboration among Property Managers, Digital Connectivity Rating Agencies (DCRAs), Service providers,

and other stakeholders, while ensuring transparency, accountability, and self-sustainability," an official statement said.

To better differentiate performance, TRAI proposed expanding the existing five-star scale to nine levels by introducing half-star increments.

These refinements are aimed at improving transparency for consumers, addressing practical issues faced by Property Managers and DCRAs during implementation, and ensuring that the framework remains aligned with on-ground realities, without altering its core intent, principles, or assessment methodology.

TRAI had notified the 'Rating of Properties for Digital Connectivity Regulations, 2024' on October 25, 2024 for rating of properties based on their digital connectivity readiness.

Further, the Rating Manual to operationalise them was issued in 2025.

The consultation paper proposed a design-stage assessment and certification mechanism for under-construction properties, which would allow early evaluation while preserving final ratings until completion, the statement said.

The final Digital Connectivity Rating shall continue to be awarded only after completion of construction and 'Due Diligence Stage-II', thereby preserving assessment integrity, it added.

Further, TRAI proposed to enable Optional Digital Connectivity Audit mechanism, whereby property managers may engage a registered DCRA to undertake a digital connectivity audit against the prescribed criteria and sub-criteria for evaluation and improvement purposes.

Kolkata And Adjacent Districts Jolted By Earthquake, Citizens Panic



IAN S

KOLKATA: Kolkata and its adjacent districts were jolted by two consecutive earthquake tremors on Friday afternoon, sending people rushing out of homes and offices in a panic.

Tremors were felt throughout the city and its adjacent districts at 1.22 p.m.

Several high-rise buildings in the city shook for several seconds.

The epicentre of the earthquake was Khulna in Bangladesh. The magnitude of the tremor was 5.5 on the Richter scale.

This time, the tremors are much more persistent. Many people have shared videos of the tremors on social media.

Although no official statement on the impact of the earthquake has been issued by the state administration yet, a state Secretary 'Nabanna' source said that different district headquarters are being contacted to get more information on the matter.

However, the state administration had issued an appeal to the people not to panic.

Midnapore, and West Midnapore, among others.

On February 3, at 9.05 pm, a large area of Kolkata shook following an earthquake. People immediately took to the streets. Initially, it was reported that the source of the tremor was Myanmar.

Before that, Kolkata and a large part of South Bengal also shook last year in November. The source of the earthquake was near Narsingdi in Bangladesh, and its depth was 10 kilometres. The magnitude of the tremor was 5.7 on the Richter scale.

However, at the time the report was filed, there had not been any report of any major disaster following the tremors. Besides Kolkata, the tremors were felt mainly in the districts of South Bengal.

The districts where the tremors were felt the most included South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas, Howrah, Hooghly, East

...Money Laundering Case ED Attaches Properties Worth Rs 3 Crore Of Myron Rodrigues

IAN S

PANAJI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached immovable properties worth Rs 3 crore in Goa in connection with a major money laundering probe linked to alleged fraudulent investment schemes operated by Myron Rodrigues and others, an official statement said on Friday.

The action was taken by the ED's Panaji Zonal Office on February 18 under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002.

The investigation was initiated on the basis of FIRs registered by the Economic Offences Cell, North Goa, and the MHB Colony Police Station in Mumbai under Sections 406 (criminal breach of trust) and 420 (cheating) of the IPC, 1860.

According to the ED, its probe revealed that Myron Rodrigues and his associates allegedly lured multiple investors with promises of high and assured returns through investments in the stock market and other business ventures.

Investors were reportedly induced to trans-

fer substantial sums via RTGS, NEFT, and other banking channels, the ED said.

"The funds so collected were dishonestly retained and diverted for personal use and for acquisition of various assets," the agency said.

The ED stated that its investigation under the PMLA has identified the generation of 'Proceeds of Crime' amounting to approximately Rs 14.82 crore.

These proceeds were allegedly used to acquire assets such as bank deposits, fixed deposits, and immovable properties. The assets were then projected as untainted to conceal their illicit origin.

Earlier, the ED had issued a Provisional Attachment Order dated November 25, 2024, attaching movable and immovable properties valued at around Rs 2.98 crore in the same case.

With the latest attachment of properties worth Rs 3 crore, the total value of assets attached in the matter has gone up to approximately Rs 5.98 crore.

Further investigation into the case is underway.

'On His Way To National Colours'

Ganguly Lauds Auqib Nabi's Impressive Show In Ranji Trophy Final

IANS

HUBLI: Former India captain Sourav Ganguly lauded Jammu and Kashmir pacer Auqib Nabi for his impressive show in the Ranji Trophy, saying the right-arm fast bowler is on his way to donning national colours and could begin his international journey in England.

Ganguly also lauded Jammu and Kashmir's remarkable journey and fighting spirit in the ongoing Ranji Trophy, where they are putting up a strong show against eight-time champions Karnataka in their maiden final appearance.

"J&K has shown the world what effort and intent can do. They have made that region so proud of them. Tough environment makes tough people. Auqib Nabi on his way to national colours... England is the place to start in the summer," Ganguly wrote on X, tagging the BCCI and chief selector Ajit Agarkar.

India will play five T20Is and



three ODIs in England in July. The tour will be crucial for preparation for the upcoming 2027 ODI World Cup, which will be played in South Africa. Ganguly feels that Auqib should be part of the tour.

Auqib has been brilliant with the ball in the ongoing Ranji Trophy Final played at the Hubli Cricket Ground. He has taken the seventh five-wicket haul of the season, which helped J&K bowl out Karnataka for 293 despite Mayank's fighting 160 off 266 balls and take a 291-run first-innings lead, which could be crucial in the

outcome of the match.

Earlier, former Indian wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthik also heaped praise on Auqib for his amazing performance.

Karthik loved the determination of Auqib, who played all the matches in the ongoing tournament, weathered different conditions and has taken 60 wickets so far.

"Watching this Ranji Trophy campaign and following it closely, one thing I can say for certain, for all the young boys and girls out there playing this sport and wanting to represent the country, do it the AAQIB NABI way.

Can't think of any pacer/player in a long time doing what he's done," he wrote on X.

Karthik also feels that Auqib's focus and hard work in the domestic league can take him to the national team. He also said that Auqib is a champion and sent his best regards for the future.

"Domination from start to end and almost single-handedly winning the domestic tournament that matters the most to get into the national side," he wrote.

"Fitness across the whole campaign, bowling those long spells and across different soils and weather conditions and whether there's been any help for a pacer or not, he's been there for his team with the belief every time he's had the ball to STRIKE for his team.

"Hats off to you, AAQIB, you're an absolute champion and hope you get a lot of success that comes your way and may you be the lesson on how it's done to break the doors through sheer will power, skill and resilience," he added.

...T20 WC

What Will Happen If The India Vs West Indies Super 8s Clash Is Washed Out?

IANS

KOLKATA: Defending champions India will face West Indies in a virtual quarterfinal at the Eden Gardens on Sunday. The semifinal equation is quite simple for both teams; the winner of the encounter will reach the next round along with South Africa from Group A. However, things can get complicated if the match gets washed out or abandoned.

Unlike actual quarterfinals, the reserve day is not available for the match. So if rain or any other calamity affects the match, then the teams will share one point each and will finish at the same points.

According to the rules, in that case, the semifinal berth will be decided based on Net Run Rate (NRR). If that happens, West Indies will move to the semifinal on the virtue of their superior net run rate of +1.791, compared to India's -0.100, and the hosts will be eliminated. So, the Men in Blue need to win this match at any cost and can't afford



to see it abandoned.

However, the weather forecast has brought some good news for the fans as there is no rain prediction in Kolkata on Sunday. Temperatures will hit 34°C during the day. They will drop to a comfortable 25-26°C by match time.

India are coming to the contest after registering a dominant 72-run win against Zimbabwe in their second Super 8s match played at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Thursday. They lost the

first clash against South Africa and have two points from two matches.

While the West Indies is coming to the do-or-die match after suffering a nine-wicket defeat against the T20 World Cup 2024 runner-ups, South Africa, in their second Super 8s match played at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Thursday. Shai Hope's team registered a big win in their first Super 8s match vs Zimbabwe. The Caribbean side also has two points in two matches.

...DY Patil T20 Cup

Tripathi, Iyer Efforts Go In Vain As BPCL Suffers Narrow Loss

IANS

NAVI MUMBAI: India batters Rahul Tripathi and Shreyas Iyer's efforts went in vain as they could not prevent BPCL from suffering a narrow two-wicket defeat at the hands of Income Tax in the DY Patil T20 Cup at DY Patil Stadium in Nerul on Friday.

After being put into batting first, BPCL posted 151/8 in their 20 overs. Tripathi top-scored with 48 off 37 balls with four boundaries and two sixes. He also shared a 62-run fifth wicket stand with left-arm spin bowling all-rounder Anukul Roy. The other big contributor with the bat for BPCL was their skipper Shreyas Iyer (32).

For Income Tax, the best bowlers were Saurabh Dubey (4-26) and Pankaj Jaiswal (2-28). In reply, Income Tax were taken to victory by wicketkeeper-batters Anuj Rawat and Harvik Desai, as they put on a partnership of 55 runs for the second wicket.

India's left-arm spin bowling all-rounder Shahbaz Ahmed played a vital hand of 24 runs, as Income Tax overhauled the target with two wickets to spare. Anukul chipped in with 2-19 for BPCL while Akhil Herwadkar ended up with figures of 2-31.



At the DY Patil University ground, thanks to Kunal Singh Rathore's 93 not out, Nirlon upstaged the Indian Navy by a massive 105 runs. The tournament will now be on a break on the weekend, with the final round of Group matches slated to be staged on Monday.

Brief Scores:
At DY Patil Stadium - Group D: BPCL 151/8 in 20 overs (Kunal Singh Rathore 93 not out, Nirlon 48, Shreyas Iyer 32; Saurabh Dubey 4-26, Pankaj Jaiswal 2-28) lost to Income Tax 152/8 in 17.2 overs (Anuj Rawat 32, Harvik Desai 30; Anukul Roy 2-19, Akhil Herwadkar 2-31) by two wickets

At DY Patil University - Group C: Nirlon 227-6 in 20 overs (Kunal Singh Rathore 93 not out, Amogh Bhatkal 44) beat Indian Navy 122 in 14.5 overs (Nakul Sharma 40 not out, Shubham Rohilla 29; Varun Rao 4-22, Dhruvil Matkar 2-18) by 105 runs

'Cricket Was Never The Plan'

Jitesh Sharma Opens Up On His Unplanned Journey

IANS

NEW DELHI: India wicketkeeper-batter Jitesh Sharma has opened up about his unconventional journey into professional cricket, revealing that the sport was never part of his original life plan and that a chance decision at school trials set him on the path to international cricket.

Speaking on a podcast hosted by former South Africa captain AB de Villiers, Jitesh traced his journey from manifesting dreams of joining the Indian Armed Forces to becoming one of the Indian Premier League's trusted finishers.

Jitesh revealed that his entry into cricket was purely accidental, driven by a state government incentive rather than ambition. "Growing up, cricket was never part of the plan. I always wanted to go into defence. I was very fascinated and fond of the Army, Air Force. It was a state government rule, offering students 25 extra marks for representing their state in sport, that nudged a few of my friends and me into attending school trials. Spotting only one name listed under the wicketkeeper column, I picked up the gloves on the spot. At that moment, I wore those gloves for the first time. And it came naturally to me," he recalled.

Reflecting on the mentors who played a defining role in his development, the Indian cricketer cred-



ited local coach Pritam Gandhi and senior India wicketkeeper-batter Dinesh Karthik for shaping both his mindset and skills.

"I think in the beginning, it was Pritam Gandhi, who was the local coach, who played a very big role in my life, because he was ahead of his time. He told me that I have to evolve. Because the place from where I belong it's a typical red ball cricket environment here. Elbow, shoulders, head and everything. That time was very crucial in my life, I feel. And after that, I met Dinesh Kartik. I think these two people played a huge role in my life," Jitesh recalled.

Speaking candidly about his strengths and weaknesses, Jitesh highlighted his constant desire to learn as both a virtue and a

potential drawback. "My biggest strength is that I always ask for new things. I'm always ready to learn. I'm not stubborn about it. And that same quality is my weakness. Sometimes in the process of learning, I cross that line. Sometimes you should know that this is enough. You can do much better in this skill, also. Sometimes I push myself so much that I cross the line," added Jitesh Sharma.

Jitesh also spoke about his growth during his time with Royal Challengers Bengaluru, where he believes the management's backing unlocked his fighting instinct.

"The fighting instinct was always there; it was the franchise's belief in me that gave it room to flourish. I had the skill, but before RCB, no one had faith in me. In RCB, the management spoke about it and showed belief. Sometimes, one statement that you can do and we've got your back is enough for a cricketer. That changed everything," he said.

Jitesh also revealed the mindset that allows him to thrive under pressure in high-stakes situations.

"I always want to create something magical. I always visualise playing such innings in my life. I'm that kind of person, but at the same time, I believe in staying present and focusing on my breathing. I look at the scoreboard and assess what's required and what's not. I keep calculating the situation.

Rinku Left For Delhi From Chennai At 5:00 AM: BCCI Secy Saikia

IANS

CHENNAI: Secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Devajit Saikia expressed condolences to left-handed batter Rinku Singh and his family after the cricketer's father, Khanchand Singh, died following a prolonged battle with liver cancer.

Rinku, who is part of India's T20 World Cup squad, left Chennai at 5:00 am to rush to New Delhi and is now believed to be on his way to his hometown Aligarh for the last rites of Khanchand.

Saikia also confirmed that Rinku will not travel with the team to Kolkata for their next Super Eights fixture against the West Indies, to be played on Sunday.

"I would express my deepest condolences on behalf of BCCI to Rinku Singh and his whole family at this hour of crisis. He left for Delhi from Chennai at 5am to rush to the hospital in Greater Noida, where his father was undergoing treatment.

"So, he will not be travelling with the Indian team to Kolkata in the flight scheduled for this afternoon. Once we get any updated information on Rinku, we'll let you know," said Saikia to IANS.



Khanchand had been admitted to Yatharth Hospital in Greater Noida on February 21 after his condition deteriorated significantly. He was placed on ventilator support before passing away in the early hours of Friday.

Rinku had previously been by his father's side when his condition worsened but rejoined the squad ahead of India's match against Zimbabwe at the MA Chidambaram Stadium on

Thursday, though he did not feature in the playing eleven as Sanju Samson got the nod to play and open the batting alongside Abhishek Sharma.

Defending champions India face the West Indies in a virtual knockout clash on Sunday, with a semi-final berth on the line. The winner of Sunday's match will join South Africa for the semi-finals from Group 1.

Zimbabwe Bowlers Could Have Executed Defensive Plans Better, Admits Raza

IANS

CHENNAI: Zimbabwe captain Sikandar Raza admitted his bowlers had failed to execute their defensive plans, which led to them suffering a 72-run loss to India in the Super Eights clash at the MA Chidambaram Stadium on Thursday. Zimbabwe didn't have the discipline with the ball as India slammed their way to making 256/4.

"Certainly, I think we could have executed our defensive play slightly better as well. I think we ended up going at them with hammer and tongs, and unfortunately, there was a lot of mixed execution when we were bowling from all the bowlers, and they ended up getting a lot of those runs.

"Once the train gets going at that, it's hard to bring it back. So I thought, if one thing I would say is, I think we could have executed our defensive plans better. That would have given us a better chance to restrict them to maybe 210, 220, and



you never know from there," said Raza in the post-match presentation ceremony.

India's batters had feasted on that wayward execution throughout their innings as Abhishek Sharma struck 55 off 30 balls, Hardik Pandya blazed his way to an unbeaten 50 off 23, and Tilak Varma hammered 44 off just 16 deliveries as India posted the second-highest total in T20 World Cup history, laced with a record 17 sixes.

Zimbabwe's reply, anchored by Brian Ben-

nett's defiant unbeaten 97, reached 184/6 - creditable in the circumstances, but never threatening to complete the chase. "I'm a guy who looked at a lot of positives. I think for me, the positive from today is that the last game, it was 250, and I felt there was a bit of panic and rush in our batting lineup.

"I always say that you cannot win the game in the first six overs, but you certainly can lose it if you're chasing a big total. Today, I thought we were a lot more composed in the first six overs. We were trying to give ourselves a chance as well. I thought the way the boys batted compared to the last game is certainly to take a lot of positives and heart from it, and that's what I'll do," added Raza.

Asked about his broader assessment of where his side stood, now that they are out of reckoning for the semi-finals, Raza said, "Yes, batting was there, but I think bowling and fielding, no, I think we

could have done better there as well. I think, as I said, the last game sort of taught us how to go on about your business when you're chasing a big total. So certainly I saw that today. Listen, we are also a work in progress.

"A lot of youngsters, most of them are playing their first World Cup, first time in India for us. Not that I want to use that as an excuse, but certainly the lessons from the last game, from a batting point of view, I thought we took them really well. You can see how quickly these boys are willing to improve, and they showed up today."

Eliminated from the competition, Zimbabwe will now face South Africa in their final Super Eight fixture at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi on Sunday afternoon with nothing but pride left to play for. Raza said he sees it as an opportunity to finally bring all three departments together in the manner his side managed during the qualifying stages and left no doubt about the standards he would demand from them.

MOVIES WATCHLIST

Saturday, 28 Feb



O' ROMEO (A)
HINDI WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES - 11:45 PM, 06:00PM



VIYAAH KARTAARE DA (U/A-13+)
PUNJABI - 03:25 PM

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