

# Good Morning Kashmir

17th Year Of Publication

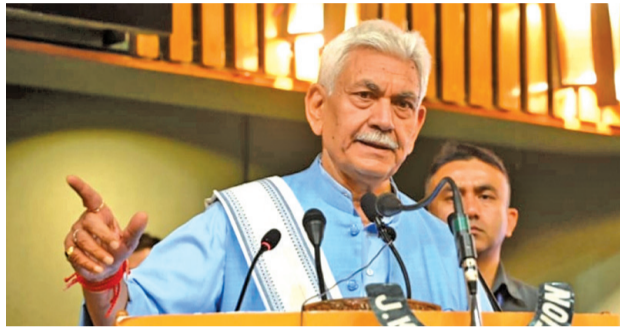
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**Lok Bhavan Jammu & Kashmir**  
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*We are living in an era of constant change. AI and modern technologies are reshaping our classrooms. It's an opportunity for students and teachers to rise higher, think more deeply, and take bolder steps. Let's embrace the challenge and shape the future: Lieutenant Governor*

## AI, Modern Technologies Reshaping Our Classrooms: LG Sinha



GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** Asserting that the rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence marks a pivotal moment for education, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Monday called on students and educators to embrace the challenge of change. In his address, Sinha declared that this era of technological disruption is not a threat, but an "opportunity for students and teachers to rise higher, think more deeply, and take bolder steps" to shape the future.

"We are living in an era of constant change. AI and modern technologies are reshaping our classrooms. It's an opportunity for students and teachers to rise higher, think more deeply, and take bolder steps. Let's embrace the challenge and shape the future," the Lieutenant Governor said while felicitating students of class 10th and 12th during Amar Ujala Medhavi Chhatra Samman Samaroh in Sri-

nagar. He also honored the educators who have made immense contributions. Speaking on the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor emphasised on the change required in the classrooms to meet the future challenges.

He said the ongoing transformation in every sector calls on students to pursue excellence, progress, and courage. The Lieutenant Governor observed that the future ahead will be rapid, unprecedented, and revolutionary.

"In the near future we will witness dramatic change in both classrooms and workplaces. Many old jobs will become irrelevant, while new opportunities will emerge. In such a scenario, I believe brilliance is measured not only by numbers or medals but also by futuristic thinking and the ability to imagine solutions. Brilliance means the relentless pursuit of improvement. It means refusing to be satisfied with the" **•P-06**

■ Jyeshtha Ashtami

## Thousands Attend Mela Kheer Bhawani; Seek Blessings, Pray For Peace, Harmony

Shrine Witnesses' Emotional Scenes, Muslims Greet Visiting Kashmiri Pandits, Rekindle Memories Of Past



RAJA SYED RATHER

**GANDERBAL:** Thousands of devotees gathered at the Mata Kheer Bhawani shrine at Tulmulla in Ganderbal on Monday to celebrate Jyeshtha Ashtami offering prayers for peace, prosperity, and communal harmony in Jammu and Kashmir and across the world.

According to the details available, devotees began arriving at the shrine from the early hours of the day to offer prayers and seek blessings of Mata Kheer Bhawani. The temple complex witnessed a large turnout amid an atmosphere of devotion and spiritual fervour.

Pertinently, the event is one of the most important religious festivals of the Kashmiri Pandit community. The festival marks the appearance day of Goddess Ragnya Bhagwati. It is celebrated at several shrines dedicated to the deity across Kashmir, including Kheer Bhawani at Tulmulla, Tripura Sundari at Devsar, Ragnya Bhagwati at Manzgam, Loktipora and Tikter.

Talking to KNO a devotee, Ashish Nand Bhatt expressed pride in his Kashmiri heritage and said his ancestors had served as priests at the holy Amarnath Cave Shrine. He said he had come to seek the blessings of Mata Kheer Bhawani and

pray for peace and prosperity.

The shrine complex remained packed throughout the day as devotees offered prayers, lit earthen lamps and chanted hymns in praise of the Goddess. Long queues were witnessed outside the temple, the yagya shala and community kitchens amid the heavy rush of pilgrims.

Emotional scenes unfolded at the shrine as Muslims warmly greeted visiting Kashmiri Pandits, rekindling memories of their shared past and centuries-old bonds of coexistence.

Many displaced Pandits who had come to the Valley for the annual pilgrimage met former neighbours and friends. **•P-06**

**I PRAY FOR PEACE, PROSPERITY AND BROTHERHOOD IN KASHMIR. THE MELA IS NOT only a religious gathering but also a symbol of our deep connection with this land," he said.**

## Haj Policy 2027 Announced HCI Invites Applications From Prospective Pilgrims



AGENCIES

**NEW DELHI:** Ministry of Minority Affairs today announced the Haj Policy 2027. Kiren Rijiju, Union Minister of Minority Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs, released the policy and announced that the Haj Committee of India would, from today, invite applications from prospective pilgrims for Haj-2027.

Prospective pilgrims can apply for Haj-2027 online through the Haj Committee of India portal (hajcommittee.gov.in) as well as the Haj Suvidha App, making the application process flexible, simpler and more accessible. The distribution of the quota between the Haj Committee of India and the private sector is expected to remain unchanged at the ratio of 70:30, with 1,22,518 seats for the Haj Committee of India and 52,507 seats for the private sector. However, the Government of India will make efforts to increase the Haj quota for Indian pilgrims, which stood at 1,75,025 last year. The announcement **•P-06**

## Safety Of Amarnath Pilgrims Top Priority: DGP Prabhat



SAJID RAINA

**SRINAGAR:** Director General of Police (DGP) Nalin Prabhat on Monday reviewed security arrangements for the upcoming Amarnath Yatra and directed all security agencies to strengthen coordination, intelligence-sharing and surveillance to ensure the safe and smooth conduct of the annual pilgrimage.

Chairing a high-level security review meeting in South Kashmir, DGP Prabhat, assessed the prevailing security situation and preparedness for the forthcoming Amarnath Yatra 2026, scheduled to commence on July 3.

Senior officers of the

Army's Victor Force, CRPF, BSF, ITBP and Jammu and Kashmir Police attended the meeting. Senior Superintendents of Police from South Kashmir districts also briefed the DGP on the security scenario, anti-terror operations, area domination plans and arrangements being put in place for the yatra.

The officers informed the meeting about the multi-layered security framework being established along the pilgrimage routes and at other vulnerable locations to safeguard pilgrims.

Prabhat directed officers to maintain a robust security grid and remain alert to any potential threat. **•P-06**

## Mutton Dealers Suspend Livestock Imports To J&K Over Punjab 'Tax' Row

KMDA Warns Of Supply Disruption, Asks Public To Reschedule Weddings; Seeks Govt Intervention

REHAN QAYOOM

**SRINAGAR:** The Kashmir Mutton Dealers Association (KMDA) on Monday announced suspension of fresh livestock imports into Jammu and Kashmir and advised the public to reconsider marriage and other event schedules in the coming weeks. It declared that no vehicle carrying livestock would be loaded for the Valley until the government resolves long-pending transportation issues faced by traders in Punjab.

Addressing a press conference here, KMDA General Secretary Mehraj-ud-Din, said traders across major livestock markets supplying Kashmir have decided not to dispatch any fresh livestock-laden vehicles to Jammu and Kashmir until their concerns are addressed.



He said the decision could impact mutton availability during the upcoming marriage season, engagement ceremonies and Nazar-o-Niyaz gatherings if the issue remains unresolved.

"We appeal to people who have fixed marriage dates or planned major functions after

Muharram to take the situation into account and make necessary adjustments. Traders will not be in a position to guarantee supplies if fresh livestock movement remains suspended," Mehraj-ud-Din said.

The association said existing stocks available in **•P-06**

## Rain, Hailstorm Lash Kashmir, Inundate Parts Of Srinagar

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** Heavy rain accompanied by thunderstorms and hailstorm lashed several parts of Kashmir on Monday, causing waterlogging in many areas of Srinagar and bringing a noticeable drop in day-time temperatures across the Valley.

According to the details available, many parts of the Valley witnessed rain and thundershowers during the afternoon, while several areas of Jammu division, including Ramban, Doda, Kishtwar, Poonch, Rajouri, Reasi and Udhampur districts, also received precipitation.

The weather activity was accompanied by brief intense showers, thunderstorms, hailstorm and gusty winds at several places, including along the Sonamarg-Baltal-Holy Cave and Pahalgam-Holy Cave routes, officials said.

The heavy downpour led to waterlogging in several localities of Srinagar, particularly in low-lying areas of the old city, where roads and lanes were inundated following the accumulation of rainwater. Traffic movement was affected at some places as drains struggled to cope with the sudden spell of rain.

Residents in parts of Srinagar and south Kashmir's Anantnag district also reported hailstorms, while strong winds accompanied the rainfall in several areas.

According to data released by the Meteorological Department, Srinagar recorded 2.2 mm rainfall between 8:30 am and 5:30 pm on Monday. Pahalgam received 2.8 mm rainfall, while Gulmarg recorded 4.4 mm during the same period. The rainfall brought temperatures **•P-06**

## Two-Hour Rain Throws Life Out Of Gear In Srinagar

Woman Electrocuted To Death; Shops Flooded, Vehicles Submerged As Downpour Exposes City's Drainage Failure

REHAN QAYOOM

**SRINAGAR:** A spell of heavy rainfall lasting nearly two hours on Monday brought large parts of Srinagar to a standstill, exposing what residents described as the failure of the city's drainage system, while a 65-year-old woman lost her life after being electrocuted amid the downpour in the downtown area.

The intense rainfall inundated several localities across the city, particularly in Downtown Srinagar, where roads turned into streams, vehicles were stranded in floodwaters, shops were flooded, and residents struggled to navigate through waterlogged streets.

Among the worst-hit areas were Nowpora Safakadal, Sakidafar, Ganderpora Eidgah, Waniyar, Rathpora, Daulatabad Khanyar,



Main Chowk Khanyar, Naid Kadal, Zadi Masjid Safakadal, Rajouri Kadal, Firdous Colony Eidgah, Khanyar, Fateh Kadal, Babdemb and several adjoining localities.

Videos that surfaced on social media showed cars and auto-rickshaws partially submerged in water, commuters wading through flooded roads and traffic moving at

a snail's pace as rainwater accumulated rapidly across low-lying areas.

The rainfall turned tragic in Naid Kadal, where a woman died after coming into contact with a live electric current.

Officials told KNO that the deceased, identified as Shamima Makhdoomi (65), wife of Ghulam Nabi and a resident of Naid Kadal, received

an electric shock after touching an electric pole during the rainfall. She was shifted to a hospital in critical condition, where doctors declared her brought dead.

As residents came to terms with the tragedy, anger mounted across affected localities, with many questioning how a city could be thrown into chaos after only a brief spell of rain.

At Khanyar Chowk, several shopkeepers were seen removing water from their premises and salvaging damaged goods hours after the rain had stopped.

Gulam Mohammad, a shopkeeper, told KNO that water entered his shop within minutes, causing substantial losses. "We watched helplessly as water rushed inside. Goods kept getting damaged while we tried to" **•P-06**

## Police Conduct Raids On JEI Members, Sympathizers

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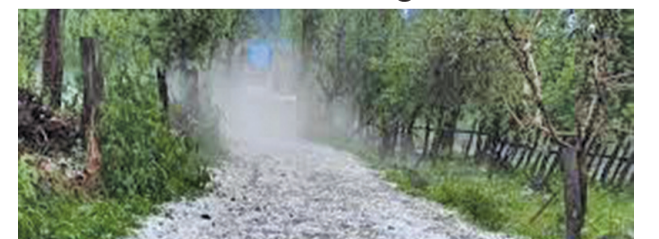
**KULGAM:** Jammu and Kashmir Police on Monday conducted raids at the residences of members and sympathizers of Jamaat-e-Islami (JEI) in several areas of the district as part of what officials described as an ongoing effort to curb activities considered detrimental to public peace and security.

Official sources said the searches were carried out in the jurisdictions of Yaripora, Behibagh and Frisal. The raids formed part of a broader security exercise undertaken by the police in the district.

Simultaneously, police launched a Narco-Cordon and Search Operation (Narco-CASO) in the same areas, targeting individuals suspected of involvement in drug trafficking and substance abuse.

During the operation, searches and verification processes were conducted at multiple locations to gather information and identify **•P-06**

## Farmers Seek Relief Kashmir Apple Farmers Face Crop Risks Amid Increasing Hailstorms



JAHANGEER GANAIE

**SRINAGAR:** Fresh hailstorms accompanied by heavy rainfall lashed several parts of south Kashmir on Monday, causing extensive damage to apple orchards, vegetable crops, and other standing agricultural fields. This has further deepened concerns among farmers already reeling from repeated weather-related losses this season.

Shangus, Sheikhgund, Wangam, Krad and adjoining villages in Anantnag district were stuck with severe hailstorm this afternoon,

damaging crops across large stretches of agricultural land.

Residents said the sudden weather disturbance left farmers worried about the fate of their produce and appealed to the administration to immediately assess the losses and extend relief to affected families.

In Tral's Aripal belt, including Satora and surrounding villages, heavy hailstorm activity continued for a considerable period, pelting orchards and farm-lands with large hailstones. Residents reported significant damage to apple **•P-06**

# MD KPDCCL reviews progress of Power arrangements for SANJY-2026

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**ANANTNAG:** Managing Director, Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDCCL), Mahmood Ahmad Shah, accompanied by the Chief Engineer (Distribution) KPDCCL, Nissar Ahmad Lone and Superintending Engineer of Circle South (Bijbehara) conducted an extensive review of the ongoing works and preparedness for the upcoming Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra (SANJY) 2026 at Pahalgam Anantnag.

During the on-ground review, the Managing Director took detailed stock of the power infrastructure being put in place and issued clear directives to field officers to maintain 24x7 power availability throughout the



Yatra period.

The Superintending Engineer apprised the Managing Director that almost all requisite arrangements have been put in place for the Yatra, which is scheduled to commence on 3rd July 2026. He briefed the MD on the illumination arrangements made at various Padavs, including the deployment of DG sets and Gen sets of

unforeseen contingencies.

MD KPDCCL assured that there will be no shortage or power cuts during the Amarnath Yatra and we have deployed special teams at all important places to ensure seamless electricity during the yatra. He appreciated the dedication and professionalism of the engineers and field staff working tirelessly, often in challenging terrain and adverse weather conditions, to ensure seamless power arrangements for the Yatra.

The MD emphasized that no stone must be left unturned in delivering efficient services to the pilgrims and assured that the management will remain fully supportive and responsive to the needs of the teams on the ground.

# J&K H&UDD receives SKOCH National Awards for digital governance initiatives

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** The Jammu and Kashmir Housing & Urban Development Department (H&UDD) has achieved a significant milestone in the field of digital governance by securing two prestigious SKOCH National Awards, Gold and Silver, for its innovative and citizen-centric digital transformation initiatives.

Both projects were conceptualized and initiated under the visionary directions and continuous guidance of Mandeep Kaur, Commissioner Secretary, H&UDD, with the objective of transforming the public service delivery and enhancing the digital governance across the Urban Development sector. Her unwavering focus on innovation, transparency and technology-enabled governance has played a pivotal role in successful implementation of these initiatives.

On behalf of H&UDD, Ankush Kapoor, Chief Informatics Officer and Chief Information Security Officer (CISO), H&UDD, received the awards during the SKOCH Awards Ceremony held in New Delhi.



mony held in New Delhi.

The awards were conferred for the flagship projects including Automated Building Permission System (ABPS) using Auto DCR technology integrated with GIS-based Land Use and J&K Gati Shakti GIS Asset Mapping System for comprehensive GIS-based asset mapping, monitoring and infrastructure planning.

The Automated Building Permission System has revolutionized the process of granting building permissions by introducing automated scrutiny

of building plans through Auto DCR technology integrated with GIS-based land use verification. The system has significantly reduced the processing time, enhanced transparency, ensured compliance with planning regulations and improved ease of doing business for the citizens and stakeholders.

The J&K Gati Shakti GIS Asset Mapping System has enabled digital mapping and monitoring of public infrastructure assets across Urban Local Bodies and government agencies.

The platform supports evidence-based planning, inter-departmental coordination, efficient asset management and informed decision-making through advanced GIS technology.

Both the initiatives have brought about a transformative change in public service delivery, government digital functioning, monitoring mechanisms and data-driven governance across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Commissioner Secretary appreciated the efforts of the officers, technical teams, Urban Local Bodies and all stakeholders associated with the projects. She reiterated the department's commitment towards leveraging the technology for improving governance and delivering efficient, transparent and citizen-centric services.

The national recognition further reinforces Jammu and Kashmir's growing reputation as a leader in digital governance and highlights the department's continued efforts towards building a modern, technology-driven and responsive urban administration.

# Resident Commission J&K New Delhi marks 12th Int'l Yoga Day with focus on healthy aging



GMK NEWS NETWORK

**NEW DELHI:** The Resident Commission, J&K, New Delhi celebrated the 12th International Day of Yoga 2026 with enthusiastic participation from the officers, officials, staff members and representatives of its subordinate offices.

This year's theme, "Yoga for Healthy Aging," underscored yoga's role in promoting longevity, mobility, mental well-being and preventive healthcare. The theme holds added significance amid rising life expectancy and a growing focus on holistic health and wellness.

The event was organized under the overall supervision and guidance of Additional Resident Commissioner Anil Sharma and coordinated by the Government Ayush

Dispensary, Resident Commission.

Dr. Jyotsna Mukhi, Nodal Officer, Directorate of Ayush, Jammu & Kashmir, hosted the programme.

Expert instructors from the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga conducted a 45-minute yoga session. They demonstrated various yogic practices and asanas designed to enhance flexibility, balance, strength and overall well-being.

Speaking on the occasion, Anil Sharma emphasized the importance of adopting yoga as a way of life for maintaining physical fitness, mental well-being and healthy aging. He also appreciated the efforts of the Directorate of Ayush, the yoga instructors and all the participants for making the event a success.

# Khet Bachao Abhiyan awareness programme held in Shopian

Over 100 farmers participate in soil conservation awareness programme

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**AAA**As part of the month long national flagship campaign "Khet Bachao Abhiyan", the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Shopian Monday organized a one day awareness programme at KKG, Keller, Shopian.

The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from more than 100 farmers, along with Krishi Udyamis from the Keller area.

The awareness programme was organized with the objective of promoting soil conservation, sustainable agricultural practices and creating awareness among farmers regarding the scientific management and efficient

utilization of agricultural land and soil resources.

During the programme, experts highlighted the importance of maintaining soil health for enhancing productivity, ensuring environmental sustainability and securing long term agricultural growth.

Speaking on the occasion, Ravinder Kumar, Agri Chemist, who was the Chief Guest, emphasized the crucial role of soil as the foundation of agriculture and stressed the need



to actively participate in departmental programmes and avail themselves of the various schemes and services being provided by the department for agricultural development.

The participants were also sensitized about soil health management, judicious use of fertilizers, crop planning and other scientific interventions aimed at increasing agricultural productivity while protecting natural resources.

He urged farmers to make optimum use of available agricultural resources and adopt modern technologies for improving crop productivity while preserving soil fertility.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Agriculture Officer Shopian, Mohd Rafiq highlighted the significance of the ongoing Khet Bachao Abhiyan and informed the participants that the month long campaign is being conducted across the district to promote awareness regarding soil conservation and sustainable agriculture. He encouraged farmers

# "Samridhi Ki Pathshala" held at Patyari to empower farmers with water Management

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SAMBA:** To promote sustainable agriculture and water conservation, a massively attended edition of "Samridhi Ki Pathshala" was organised Monday at Patyari under the Modernization of Command Area Development & Water Management (M-CADWM) programme—a flagship initiative being spearheaded by the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India.

The event presided by District Development Commissioner Ayushi Sudan witnessed an overwhelming turnout of more than four hundred farmers of whom over one-third were women, along with agricultural stakeholders and departmental officials, reflecting the widespread enthusiasm and grassroots support for transforming irrigation practices in the district.

The M-CADWM programme is being driven with dedicated thrust by the Ministry of Jal Shakti, which has prioritised the modernisation of irrigation command areas across the country as part of its broader mission of equitable and efficient water resource management.

In District Samba, the project is being implemented on a pilot basis across 7 villages, covering a command area of 400 hectares



at an approximate project cost of Rs. 10.70 crore. The pilot project seeks to demonstrate the transformative potential of pressurised piped irrigation systems and advanced water distribution networks before scaling the model further.

The awareness programme was organised by Nodal Officer MCAD Patyari cluster and designed to educate and sensitise farmers about modern irrigation techniques, efficient water use, micro-irrigation systems and scientific water management practices—all aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity while conserving the region's precious water resources. Participants were comprehensively briefed on the objectives and operational framework of the M-CADWM scheme, which is conceived to ensure reliable and equitable irrigation, boost crop productivity and fortify

farmers' incomes through a foundation of sustainable agricultural practices.

Experts and senior officials engaged at length with the farmers present and encouraged them for active participation in the rollout of modern irrigation practices. The strong presence of women farmers at the programme was particularly noteworthy, reflecting the inclusive character of the initiative and the growing role of women in shaping the agricultural future of the district.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from farmers across the 7 pilot villages, representatives of Water User Societies and officers from the Agriculture, Horticulture, Command Area Development and allied departments—all contributing to a vibrant, solution-oriented dialogue on the future of water-smart farming in District Samba.

# 137 Bn CRPF organises human resource programme under CAP at Chenani

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**UDHAMPUR:** A Human Resource Programme was organised by the 137 Battalion CRPF, Udhampur today at Kendriya Vidyalaya and Government Higher Secondary School Chenani.

The programme witnessed the presence of Commandant Manoj Kumar Sicon, Dy Commandant Raju Lal Meena, Tehsildar Chenani Pankaj Singh staff members, students, CRPF personnel and prominent members of the local community.

While addressing the gathering, the CRPF officers highlighted the force's commitment to youth welfare and community development through its civic action programmes. They emphasized that such initiatives aim to strengthen community engagement, empower young people and foster trust and cooperation between the security forces and the public.

The participants appreciated the efforts of the 137 Battalion, CRPF, in organising the programme and lauded its contribution towards social welfare and youth empowerment. The locals expressed gratitude to the CRPF and urged that similar civic action programmes be conducted regularly in the future for the benefit of the community.

# Bhaderwah gears up for Pulse Polio drive

BMO convenes training for Health staff

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**BHADERWAH:** In preparation for the forthcoming Pulse Polio Immunization Programme scheduled to be held on June 28-2026, the Block Medical Officer Bhaderwah Dr. Versha Sharma Monday convened a training session cum meeting for the staff of health institutions of the Medical Block, here today.

District Mass Education and Information Officer (DMEIO) from Dy CMO Office Mubashir Bin Muzamil was the Master Trainer for the training session.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held regarding the arrangements and preparedness for the effective implementation of the Pulse Polio Programme. The meeting reviewed the operational aspects, including deployment of vaccination teams, Booth management, supervision-cum-monitoring and awareness generation activities to ensure com-

prehensive coverage of all eligible children.

Dr. Versha Sharma stressed the importance of meticulous planning and coordinated efforts to ensure that no eligible child is left out during the immunization drive. She urged the health functionaries to work with dedication and commitment for the successful conduct of the programme.

Mubashir Bin Muzamil sensitized the participants to various technical and operational aspects of Pulse Polio activities. He elaborated on vaccination



protocols, reporting mechanisms, supervisory responsibilities, and strategies to maximize community participation and coverage. He also addressed queries raised by the participants and emphasized adherence to the guidelines issued for the campaign.

# Christopher Mpofo promotes drug-free living among students at PM Shri GHSS Khellani

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**DODA:** As part of the ongoing Nasha Mukta Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan, an anti-drug awareness programme was organized Monday at Government PM Shri Higher Secondary School Khellani by the Young Star Cricket Club (YSCC) in collaboration with the District Administration Doda and the Health Department.

The programme was graced by former International Cricketer from Zimbabwe Christopher Mpofo, who is presently in Doda as the Brand Ambassador of the All India 16th Gufran Memorial T-20 Cricket Championship.

Among those present on the occasion were the School Principal Mohammad Ahsan and faculty members of the institution

and officials from YSCC and a large gathering of students.

Welcoming the distinguished guest, the school Principal expressed gratitude to Christopher Mpofo, YSCC, the District Administration and the Health Department for organizing the awareness programme and providing students with an opportunity to interact with an international sportsman. The speakers highlighted the importance of collective efforts in combating drug abuse and promoting healthy lifestyles among youth.

Addressing the gathering, Christopher Mpofo shared valuable insights from his journey in international cricket and emphasized the significance of discipline, hard work, perseverance and

healthy living in achieving success. He urged students to stay away from drugs and other harmful substances, stating that sports and education are powerful tools to build character and achieve personal excellence. He encouraged the youth to channel their energy towards constructive pursuits and become agents of positive change in society.

The students and staff actively interacted with the former cricketer and pledged their support towards the fight against drug abuse.

The students, teachers and participants took a solemn anti-drug pledge, reaffirming their commitment to remain vigilant against substance abuse and contribute towards realizing the vision of a Nasha Mukta Jammu & Kashmir.

# DC Samba pitches for multi-pronged measures to combat drug menace

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SAMBA:** Deputy Commissioner Samba Ayushi Sudan Monday chaired a meeting of the District Level Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) Committee to review the implementation of anti-drug initiatives to curb the menace of narcotics and substance abuse in the district.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed the action taken by the stakeholder departments and stressed the need for a coordinated, intelligence-driven and community-oriented approach to eliminate drug abuse and trafficking from the district.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned departments to undertake detailed mapping of the district to identify drug hotspots and other areas susceptible to illegal narcotic activities. She instructed enforcement agencies to

intensify surveillance and strengthen enforcement measures in all such vulnerable pockets.

To reinforce preventive efforts in educational institutions, the Deputy Commissioner directed the Education Department to ensure installation of CCTV cameras in coaching centres and educational institutions wherever required. She also called for regular counselling sessions to facilitate early identification of vulnerable students and promote awareness about the harmful effects of substance abuse.

Highlighting the need for constructive youth engagement, the Deputy Commissioner instructed the concerned departments to organise regular sports activities and ensure adequate availability of sports equipment to encourage healthy lifestyles and channelise the energy of youth towards positive pursuits.

The DC further directed all departments to strengthen Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities, particularly in rural areas, by ensuring close coordination among all stakeholders to maximise awareness at the grassroots level.

Reviewing road safety and enforcement measures, she instructed the concerned authorities to conduct mandatory medical examinations of drivers involved in rash driving and take stringent action, including cancellation of driving licences, in cases of drunk driving.

The Deputy Commissioner also directed the Drug Control authorities to intensify inspections of pharmaceutical outlets and ensure 100 percent CCTV surveillance and Computerised Billing System (CBS) coverage in medical establishments to prevent misuse of prescription drugs.

# At Kheer Bhawani festival in Kupwara, Kashmiri Pandits seek return to homeland

WARIS FAYAZ

**KUPWARA:** The annual Kheer Bhawani festival in north Kashmir's frontier Kupwara district on Monday became a platform for Kashmiri Pandits to voice their longing for a return to their homeland. Many devotees urged the government to facilitate their rehabilitation and called upon local communities to help rebuild the bonds that once defined Kashmir's social fabric.

Hundreds of devotees gathered at the revered shrine of Ragnya Devi at Tikker village to celebrate Zeisht Ashtami, one of the most significant religious occasions for the Kashmiri Pandit community. For many pilgrims, the visit was deeply emotional, as it brought back memories of their ancestral homes and renewed hopes of returning to the Valley.

Devotees appreciated the arrangements made by the administrations, including Kupwara and Baramulla, and thanked residents for their hospitality and support during the festival. Many said such gestures strengthen their belief that coexistence and reconciliation remain possible.



Krishna, a devotee originally from Anantnag, said the displaced community continues to aspire for a permanent return to Kashmir and urged the government to take concrete steps in that direction. "We want to come back to our homeland. The government must create conditions that facilitate our return and rehabilitation. For years, promises have been made, but now practical measures are needed," he said.

A woman devotee from

Jammu, whose family hails from Pulwama, said the return of Kashmiri Pandits cannot be achieved by the government alone and requires support from society as a whole.

"We are incomplete without each other. Kashmir has always belonged to all its communities. Muslims, Sikhs and Pandits must live together again. Locals can play a major role in helping us come back home and rebuilding trust," she said.

She added that despite

living outside the Valley for decades, her family has preserved its cultural identity and connection with Kashmir. "We have protected our language and traditions. My children speak Kashmiri fluently because we want them to remain connected to their roots. Kashmir will always be our motherland," she said.

Several devotees stressed that peace, security and communal harmony are essential prerequisites for the return of displaced families.

They said a stable environment would encourage more Kashmiri Pandits to reconnect with their ancestral homeland.

An elderly devotee from Baramulla said the government must ensure a dignified and secure rehabilitation process while addressing concerns related to housing, employment and safety.

Members of the community also highlighted issues concerning properties left behind in different parts of the Valley and urged authorities to take effective measures against encroachments and facilitate restoration of their assets.

"Both the government and local people have an important role to play. If we are welcomed back with dignity, security and acceptance, many Kashmiri Pandits would be willing to return. We are incomplete without each other," several devotees said.

Many participants expressed hope that such interactions would strengthen inter-community ties and contribute to creating conditions conducive to the return of displaced Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley—(KNO)

# Srinagar to host Panchayat Service Delivery Workshop on June 23

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** The Union Ministry for Panchayati Raj will organize an exclusive regional workshop, "Seva Se Samridhi: Panchayat-led Service Delivery", in Srinagar Monday.

The workshop, aimed to strengthen the grassroots governance by spotlighting innovative models of service delivery steered by Panchayati Raj Institutions across the region, would be inaugurated by Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha.

He will be joined by Javid Ahmad Dar, Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Jammu and Kashmir; Vivek Bharradwaj, Secretary, Ministry for Panchayati Raj; Palka Sahni, Joint Secretary, MoPR and Mohammad Aijaz Asad, Secretary, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Jammu and Kashmir.

The workshop is being held in collaboration with

the Common Services Centre Special Purpose Vehicle (CSC-SPV), Ministry for Electronics and Information Technology and the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, government of Jammu and Kashmir. It forms part of a sustained series of initiatives being undertaken by the Ministry to facilitate improved service delivery and strengthen Ease of Living in Grameen Bharat through empowered, accountable and responsive Panchayati Raj Institutions and Rural Local Bodies.

The workshop will bring together the Panchayat functionaries, elected representatives and Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs), along with government officials from seven states including Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. Representatives from civil

society organisations, academic and research institutions besides organisations working in rural technology and digital public infrastructure will also participate, contributing diverse perspectives on last-mile governance and service delivery.

As part of the workshop, high-performing Gram Panchayats and outstanding Common Service Centres (CSCs) from the participating states will be recognized and felicitated. Deliberations will focus on strengthening Panchayat-led service delivery through digital transformation, citizen participation, innovation and improved accessibility of public services at the grassroots. Panel discussions, technical sessions and State-level experience-sharing sessions will provide a structured platform for inter-State knowledge exchange and the dissemination of scalable governance models.

# Mehbooba calls for Kashmiri Pandits return, warns against using community as 'weapons'

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mehbooba Mufti on Monday pitched for the return and rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits, asserting that the displaced community cannot be treated at par with others and deserves all facilities extended to migrants.

"Kashmiri Pandits are migrants. You cannot treat them at par with other people. You have to give them all the facilities that migrants should get," Mufti said.

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president urged the community to move beyond the past and focus on the future. "We want our Kashmiri brothers and sisters to forget what happened in the past. We want them to look ahead and look to the future," she said.

Highlighting the contribution of Pandit doctors, Mehbooba Mufti cited the examples of Dr



Sushil Rajdhan and Dr Sameer Koul, saying they remained deeply connected to Kashmir. "I believe that young doctors like Dr Sameer Koul and Dr Sushil Rajdhan should come to Kashmir and connect with the people here," she added.

The PDP leader also drew attention to the plight of Pandits residing in Jammu and other areas, terming their conditions "very difficult."

Mufti said her party had submitted proposals to the Governor, including the construction of a temple and the formation

of a dedicated board for the community's welfare. "The biggest thing is that the treatment should be maintained. We should not look back. We should look forward," she said.

Cautioning against any attempt to use the Kashmiri Pandit community as "weapons", she advised them to establish direct contact with the local populace. "The people who want to use the Kashmiri Pandits as weapons, the Kashmiri Pandits should be scared of them. And they should make direct contact with the Kashmiris," she said. (KNS)

# RBI Jammu sets up financial awareness stall at Kheer Bhawani mela



GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** The Reserve Bank of India participated in the annual Kheer Bhawani Mela by setting up a financial awareness stall at the revered shrine of Mata Kheer Bhawani at Tulmulla, Ganderbal.

The initiative was aimed at enhancing financial literacy and promoting safe banking practices among the devotees and visitors attending the mela.

The stall also highlighted the key initiatives of the Reserve Bank of India in the areas of financial inclusion, customer protection and digital payment security. The visitors were sensitized about

the common cyber frauds and were advised to follow the "Be Aware, Be Secure" approach while undertaking the digital financial transactions.

The FIDD officials interacted with the public in local dialect and disseminated information on various aspects of financial literacy, including safe digital banking practices, protection against financial frauds, grievance redress mechanisms, deposit insurance and the importance of responsible financial behaviour. Besides, information brochures and awareness material was distributed among the visitors during the mela.

# Tulmulla Mela reflects spirit of Kashmiriyat as Muslims assist Kashmiri Pandits



REHAN QAYOOM

**GANDERBAL:** The annual Kheer Bhawani Mela at Tulmulla in Ganderbal district on Monday witnessed heartwarming scenes of communal harmony as local Muslims extended support and assistance to Kashmiri Pandit devotees visiting the revered shrine.

According to the details available, hundreds of local residents volunteered to help pilgrims by guiding them, arranging drinking water, assisting elderly devotees and facilitating smooth movement in and around the temple premises. The gesture was widely appreciated by the visiting devotees, who described it as a reflection of Kashmir's centuries-old tradition of brotherhood and coexistence.

Several devotees said the warm welcome and support

from local Muslims strengthened their emotional bond with their homeland and revived memories of shared cultural traditions.

A local resident Manzoor Ahmad Wani said that the Kheer Bhawani Mela is not only a religious occasion but also an opportunity to uphold the values of mutual respect and communal harmony that have long been associated with Kashmiriyat.

The annual mela, observed on the auspicious occasion of Jyeshtha Ashtami, witnessed participation of thousands of devotees from Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of the country amid elaborate arrangements by the administration. The atmosphere at the shrine remained festive, with devotees offering prayers for peace, prosperity and brotherhood—(KNO)

# Sakeena Itoo reviews medical preparedness for upcoming SANJY at Pahalgam

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**ANANTNAG:** Minister for Health & Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo Monday visited Pahalgam and chaired a meeting to review the medical preparedness preparations for ensuing Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra-2026 at Pahalgam Club here.

MLA Pahalgam, Altaf Ahmad Wani; Director SKIMS; Principal GMC Anantnag; Director Health Services, Kashmir; MD JKMSCL; RTO Kashmir; Superintending Engineers PHE and KPDC, SDM Pahalgam, ACD, CMO, DD Tourism, Executive Engineers of various engineering wings and other officials attended the meeting.

The Minister had a detailed review of healthcare, logistical and other preparations being put in place by the different departments for the smooth conduct of the annual pilgrimage.

Addressing the officers, the Minister emphasized on the critical importance of robust medical facilities along the Yatra route including transit camps,



stations and other prominent places. She stressed that the department must provide best possible healthcare to the pilgrims for their health and wellness during the entire pilgrimage.

Sakeena Itoo also reviewed the drinking water and power supply, availability of essential commodities, transport and sanitation, road connectivity, telecommunication and other facilities related to the SANJY.

The Minister placed special emphasis on robust transport management and sanitation, including measures for the post-Yatra period, saying that this would ease the experience for both pilgrims and tourists. She also called for upgrading facilities wherever needed, backed by well-planned contingency

plans ready for immediate execution.

Sakeena Itoo impressed upon the officers to exhibit full hospitality to the pilgrims so they have an enriching, pleasant and lasting experience of the place. "Pilgrims need to be facilitated in all possible ways for smooth conduct of the sacred journey", she remarked.

The Director Health Services, Kashmir, briefed the Minister about the healthcare arrangements made by the department for the devotees on both Pahalgam and Baltal Axis. He said that facilities including establishment of hospitals, advance and critical care units, deployment of specialists having expertise in high altitude healthcare, ambulances, medicines and other logistics have been meticulously planned and put in place.

Following the meeting, several public delegations and representatives of various associations called on the Minister and put forth their issues and concerns.

The Minister assured them that their genuine issues will be resolved in a time bound manner.

# Congress Probe Panel Arrives in Kashmir, Meets Senior Leaders

AGENCIES

**SRINAGAR:** The Congress enquiry committee is currently in the Kashmir Valley to gather feedback from party leaders regarding indiscipline and anti-party activities, sources disclosed.

As per sources, the team, which arrived in Srinagar on Saturday, has met several leaders in Srinagar over the past two days.

The team met Pradesh Congress Committee president Tariq Hamid Karra,

AICC general secretary and MLA Dooru, Ghulam Ahmad Mir, former Deputy Chief Minister Tara Chand and former PCC president Vikar Rasool.

When contacted, Ghulam Ahmad Mir confirmed that he met the committee.

"The high command took cognisance of the actions of certain leaders and constituted the committee," he said.

The committee continued its interactions with top leaders on Sunday, meeting

several former and sitting MLAs.

"The panel would continue its interaction with the party leaders today," sources said.

On June 12, the Congress high command constituted a three-member committee to look into incidents of indiscipline in the party's Jammu and Kashmir unit. The panel comprises Shaktisinh Gohil (convener), Amar Singh (member) and Rafeek Khan (member). (KNO)

# Parliamentary panel head flags delays in passport issuance in J&K, Ladakh

REHAN QAYOOM

**JAMMU:** Chairperson of the parliamentary panel on the Ministry of External Affairs, Shashi Tharoor, on Monday said that they are concerned about some of the delays impeding passport issuance in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. Talking to reporters, Tharoor, who

heads the department-related parliamentary standing committee on External Affairs, said that they want the speeding up of passport delivery for applicants in J&K and Ladakh.

"We are concerned about some of the delays that have been impeding passport issuance in this area, and we have been raising some very strong questions

because we want to see improvements and speeding up of passport delivery for applicants in Kashmir, Leh, Srinagar, and Jammu," he said.

Tharoor said that they have held discussions with different stakeholders over the issuance of passports. "We already had very serious discussions. We had conversations with the Regional Passport

Office, the MEA representative from Delhi, the police, and the postal department," he said. The MP said it has been a good start to their visit, and they have four more days in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

"We will see everything and then decide what to put in the report," he said. He added that the visiting MPs have found it a very meaningful

visit and had some very strong and constructive discussions.

Tharoor said the committee is in Jammu & Kashmir to study Indo-Pak and Sino-India relations, as well as the functioning of passport offices and Passport Seva Kendras.

"I just want to make it very clear this is not a visit about checking conditions in the Kashmir Valley.

The committee is here to study three issues: Indo-Pakistan relations, Sino-Indian relations, and the functioning of passport offices and Passport Seva Kendras. These are the only three issues we are studying. We are not here to look at domestic matters; that is not our business. We are the External Affairs Committee," he said—(KNO)

Good Morning **Kashmir**

EDITORIAL

## The Undying Spirit Of Kheer Bhawani

For most of the year, Tulumulla is just a quiet village cradled by Kashmir's landscape. But on Jyeshtha Ashtami, it becomes the emotional center of a diaspora. The air changes, growing thick with the scent of rosewater, burning camphor, and the soft, collective murmur of thousands of voices rising through the chinar trees. They have come home to Mata Kheer Bhawani. To call this a religious festival is to understate what actually happens here. For the Kashmiri Pandit community, this journey is a bittersweet homecoming. It is a space where the trauma of displacement meets the stubborn resilience of identity. Wandering through the temple complex, you see it in the eyes of the elders, tears that are part grief for a life left behind, and part fierce joy at standing on this sacred soil once more. This isn't just about faith; it is an annual reclamation of history, a quiet rebellion against forgetting. But the true beauty of the Kheer Bhawani Mela is that it doesn't exist in a vacuum. While the seamless organization by local authorities and security teams ensures everyone stays safe, the real heartbeat of the festival belongs to the people. It is found in the local Kashmiri Muslims who stand by the gates, welcoming back old neighbors with open arms, guiding them through the crowds, and sharing stories of days gone by. In these fleeting, powerful moments, the heavy political headlines that usually define Kashmir simply melt away. What is left is Kashmiriyat—the old, resilient social fabric of coexistence that conflict has tried, and failed, to completely unravel. As the sun sets over the holy spring and the crowds begin to disperse, a quiet settles back over Tulumulla. The pilgrims will pack their bags and return to lives scattered across the country, but they leave a piece of their hearts behind. In a world that often feels deeply fractured, Kheer Bhawani stands as a beautiful, stubborn reminder that some bonds are too sacred to ever truly break.

# Environmental Hazards And The Fight For A Sustainable Future

MOHAMMAD HANIEF

Environmental hazards have emerged as one of the defining challenges of the twenty-first century. Across the globe, communities are increasingly facing the consequences of environmental degradation in the form of extreme weather events, polluted air and water, shrinking forests, declining biodiversity, and mounting waste. What were once considered isolated environmental concerns have evolved into interconnected crises that threaten public health, economic development, and the future sustainability of human civilization. As nations strive to achieve growth and prosperity, the challenge of balancing development with environmental protection has become more urgent than ever before.

The environment serves as the foundation of life on Earth. Clean air, freshwater resources, fertile soil, forests, oceans, and biodiversity provide essential services that sustain societies and economies. However, decades of rapid industrialization, urban expansion, overconsumption of natural resources, and unsustainable practices have placed unprecedented pressure on natural systems. Environmental hazards are no longer confined to specific regions; they have become global in scope, affecting both developed and developing countries alike.

Among the most pressing environmental hazards is climate change. Scientific evidence has consistently shown that human activities, particularly the burning of fossil fuels and large-scale deforestation, have increased greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. This has resulted in rising global temperatures and significant changes in weather patterns. Climate change is contributing to more frequent and severe heatwaves, floods, droughts, storms, and wildfires, causing widespread damage to communities and ecosystems.

The consequences of climate change are visible across continents. Prolonged droughts are affecting agricultural production and reducing water availability. Floods are destroying homes, infrastructure, and livelihoods, while rising sea levels threaten coastal communities. Extreme weather events have become increasingly common, placing additional pressure on governments and disaster management agencies. These challenges are particularly severe for vulnerable populations who often lack the resources needed to adapt to changing environmental conditions.

Air pollution represents another major environmental challenge. Rapid urbanization, industrial activities, and increasing numbers of vehicles have contributed to declining air quality in many parts of the world. Harmful pollutants released into the atmosphere can have serious consequences for human health. Respiratory illnesses, cardiovascular diseases, and other chronic conditions are often linked to prolonged exposure to polluted air.

The health impacts of air pollution extend beyond physical illness. Research indicates that poor air quality can affect cognitive development in children and contribute to mental health problems. Millions of people living in urban centers



are exposed to air pollution levels that exceed recommended safety standards. The economic costs associated with healthcare expenses, reduced productivity, and premature deaths further highlight the magnitude of this challenge.

Water pollution continues to pose significant risks to both human health and the environment. Industrial waste, agricultural runoff, untreated sewage, and plastic debris frequently contaminate rivers, lakes, and oceans. Access to clean drinking water remains a challenge for many communities, particularly in developing regions. Polluted water contributes to the spread of diseases and undermines efforts to improve public health and sanitation.

Aquatic ecosystems are also suffering from the effects of contamination. Excessive nutrient pollution can lead to harmful algal blooms that reduce oxygen levels in water bodies and threaten aquatic life. Toxic chemicals and heavy metals can accumulate in fish and other organisms, disrupting food chains and affecting biodiversity. The degradation of freshwater and marine ecosystems highlights the need for stronger environmental regulations and improved waste management practices.

Plastic pollution has become one of the most visible symbols of environmental degradation. The convenience and affordability of plastic products have led to widespread use across industries and households. However, inadequate waste management systems have allowed enormous quantities of plastic waste to enter the environment. Oceans, rivers, forests, and urban areas are increasingly burdened by discarded plastic materials.

Marine life is particularly vulnerable to plastic pollution. Sea turtles, fish, birds, and marine mammals often ingest plastic debris or become entangled in waste. The growing presence of microplastics in water sources and food chains has raised concerns about potential impacts on human health. Addressing plastic pollution requires comprehensive strategies that promote recycling, reduce single-use plastics, and encourage sustainable alternatives.

Deforestation remains another critical environmental hazard. Forests play a vital role in regulating climate, conserving biodiversity, and protecting watersheds. Yet large areas of forest continue to be cleared for agriculture, infra-

structure projects, mining, and urban development. The loss of forests reduces the planet's ability to absorb carbon dioxide and contributes to climate change.

Deforestation also has significant ecological consequences. Many species depend on forests for survival, and habitat destruction is one of the leading causes of biodiversity loss. Indigenous communities and rural populations that rely on forests for their livelihoods often face social and economic challenges when these ecosystems are degraded. Protecting forests is therefore essential not only for environmental conservation but also for human well-being.

The decline of biodiversity has become a growing concern among scientists and conservationists. Species extinction rates are occurring at levels far above natural background rates. Habitat destruction, pollution, climate change, invasive species, and overexploitation of natural resources are contributing to the loss of plant and animal species worldwide.

Biodiversity is essential for maintaining healthy ecosystems. Pollination, nutrient cycling, water purification, and soil fertility are among the many ecosystem services supported by diverse biological communities. The loss of biodiversity weakens ecosystem resilience and reduces the ability of natural systems to recover from disturbances. Ultimately, biodiversity loss threatens food security, economic stability, and environmental sustainability.

Chemical pollution presents additional environmental and public health challenges. Industrial chemicals, pesticides, heavy metals, and hazardous waste can persist in the environment for long periods, contaminating soil, water, and air. Exposure to toxic substances has been linked to a variety of health problems, including cancer, neurological disorders, reproductive issues, and developmental abnormalities.

The management of chemical pollution requires effective regulatory frameworks, improved monitoring systems, and greater accountability from industries. Many countries continue to face challenges in controlling hazardous waste and ensuring the safe disposal of toxic materials. Strengthening environmental governance is essential to minimizing the risks associated with chemical contamination.

Urbanization has further intensified environmental pressures. As cities continue to grow, demand for energy, water, housing, and transportation infrastructure has increased significantly. Urban expansion often results in the loss of green spaces and natural habitats, while traffic congestion and industrial activities contribute to pollution. Managing sustainable urban growth remains a major challenge for policymakers worldwide.

Waste generation has become another pressing concern. Increasing consumption levels have resulted in growing volumes of municipal, industrial, and electronic waste. Improper disposal practices can contaminate soil and water resources and contribute to environmental degradation. Developing efficient waste management systems and promoting circular economy approaches are important steps toward reducing environmental impacts.

One of the greatest difficulties in addressing environmental hazards is their interconnected nature. Climate change influences water availability, biodiversity, and agricultural productivity. Deforestation contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and habitat loss. Pollution affects ecosystem health and human well-being simultaneously. Because these issues are closely linked, effective solutions require integrated and coordinated approaches.

Despite the scale of these challenges, opportunities for positive change remain. Advances in renewable energy technologies, sustainable agriculture, environmental monitoring, and conservation practices are providing new tools for addressing environmental problems. Governments, businesses, researchers, and civil society organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Public awareness has also grown significantly in recent years. Citizens around the world are becoming more conscious of environmental issues and are demanding stronger action from policymakers and industries. Individual actions such as reducing waste, conserving energy, supporting sustainable products, and participating in environmental initiatives can collectively contribute to meaningful change.

The environmental hazards facing humanity are serious, but they are not insurmountable. Scientific knowledge, technological innovation, and international cooperation provide a foundation for addressing these challenges. The decisions made today will shape the environmental conditions experienced by future generations.

Protecting the environment is no longer an option but a necessity. A sustainable future depends upon the ability of societies to balance economic growth with environmental responsibility. As the world confronts increasingly complex environmental hazards, collective action, informed policymaking, and long-term commitment will be essential to safeguarding the planet and ensuring a healthier future for all.

(The author is a senior analyst and environmentalist. Feedback can be sent to m.hanief@gmail.com. Twitter/X: @haniefmha)

## Italy's Unique Case Of Women Political Leadership In Europe

NAVEED QAZI

For much of the post-war era, Italy was not usually seen as a leading example of women's political representation. Instead, attention tended to focus on countries such as Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Iceland, where women achieved higher levels of political participation and where gender-equality indicators consistently ranked among the strongest in Europe. Today, however, Italy offers a compelling case study for understanding how debates about women's political leadership are changing across the continent.

This is not because Italy has achieved gender equality. Far from it. Eurostat data show that female employment rates in Italy remain below those of several northern European countries, while the European Institute for Gender Equality's Gender Equality Index places Italy behind a number of its European neighbours. Rather than presenting a model of gender equality already achieved, Italy illustrates the complexities and contradictions that often accompany social and political change.

What makes Italy particularly interesting today is the prominence of women at the highest levels of politics, despite representing very different ideological traditions. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, opposition leader Elly Schlein and Genoa mayor Silvia Salis have emerged as influential political figures whose careers reflect contrasting visions of leadership, society and public policy. Together, they provide a useful lens through which to examine the relationship between gender, power and political ideology in contemporary Europe.

The most significant turning point came on 22 October 2022, when Giorgia Meloni became Italy's first

female prime minister. The historical importance of that achievement is undeniable. In a study published in Politics and Governance, political scientists Elisabetta De Giorgi, Alice Cavalieri and Francesca Feo describe Meloni's rise as the culmination of a long political journey that took her from youth activism on the Italian right to the highest office in the country. Her election marked a watershed moment in Italian politics and shattered one of the most enduring barriers in the nation's political history.

Yet Meloni's rise also revived an important debate within political science. In her influential 1967 book *The Concept of Representation*, political theorist Hanna Pitkin distinguished between descriptive and substantive representation. Descriptive representation concerns who hold political office; substantive representation concerns the interests and policies those officeholders pursue. More than half a century later, that distinction remains central to discussions about women and political power.

Italy provides a particularly clear illustration of this debate. Meloni's election demonstrated that women can attain the highest levels of political authority within ideological traditions that differ markedly from those commonly associated with progressive feminism. As De Giorgi, Cavalieri and Feo note, Meloni's political discourse has frequently emphasised family, motherhood and national identity. Her premiership has therefore prompted renewed discussion about whether the election of women to senior office necessarily translates into a particular set of feminist political goals.

Across the political divide stands Elly Schlein, who became secretary of the Democratic Party in February 2023. As leader of Italy's principal centre-left party, Schlein has championed issues



associated with social justice, equality and progressive reform. Her leadership means that one of Italy's most important political contests is being shaped by two women whose ideological outlooks differ substantially. This challenges the assumption that female political leadership inevitably leads to consensus on questions of gender, welfare or social policy.

Among Europe's largest democracies, such a situation remains relatively uncommon. France has never elected a female president. Spain has never had a female prime minister. Germany, after sixteen years under Angela Merkel, has been led by male chancellors since 2021. Italy is therefore among the few major European democracies where the government and the principal opposition are both led by women. This alone makes the country an especially valuable case for understanding the changing nature of political representation.

The emergence of Silvia Salis has added another layer to this story. A former Olympic hammer thrower and sports administrator, Salis was elected mayor of Genoa in May 2025. According to Italy's ANSA news agency, she secured 51.48 per cent of the vote, winning outright in the first round. The victory was politically significant because it was achieved through a broad centre-left coalition. ANSA reported that both Salis and Schlein viewed the result as evidence that opposition unity could provide an effective electoral strategy against parties aligned

with the national government. Running as a progressive independent backed by a broad centre-left coalition, Salis eventually won the high-profile mayoral seat, flipping the port city after years of right-wing governance as a civic outsider.

It would be premature to speculate about Salis's future role in national politics as of now. Nevertheless, her election adds another prominent woman to Italy's political landscape. Alongside Meloni and Schlein, she illustrates how women are increasingly visible across different levels of public life, from municipal government to national leadership.

The growing prominence of women in Italian politics has also drawn attention to the way female politicians are portrayed in the media. Research by Emanuele Brugnoli, Rosaria Simone and Marco Delmastro found evidence that women politicians in Italy continue to face forms of media coverage that differ from those experienced by men. Their study identified a greater tendency for reporting to focus on personal characteristics and non-political attributes when discussing female politicians. Such findings suggest that greater representation does not automatically remove long-standing gendered patterns in political discourse.

This distinction is important. Political visibility and social equality are not the same thing. Women may occupy powerful offices while still facing forms of scrutiny shaped by entrenched cultural assumptions. Increased representation is a significant achievement, but it does not mean that all barriers have disappeared.

Broader socio-economic indicators reinforce this point. Eurostat data continue to show that female employment rates in Italy lag behind those in several northern European countries. Issues such as

childcare provision, labour-market participation, work-life balance and economic opportunity remain important subjects of political debate. The election of women to senior office is a historic achievement, but it does not by itself resolve deeper structural inequalities.

In many ways, this is what makes Italy such an interesting case. The country combines unprecedented female political leadership with continuing disagreements about the meaning of equality, representation and social progress. Rather than offering a single model of women's advancement, Italy presents competing visions embodied by leaders from different political traditions.

For observers of European politics, that makes Italy especially instructive. The country's experience demonstrates that the rise of women in politics does not produce a uniform agenda. Female leaders, like male leaders, can advocate very different ideas about society, citizenship, welfare, family policy and political change. Italy therefore offers an illuminating window into the evolving relationship between gender and power in contemporary Europe.

The prominence of Giorgia Meloni, Elly Schlein and Silvia Salis reflects a broader transformation in which women are no longer exceptions in political competition but increasingly central participants in it. Viewed through the lenses of representation, party politics and democratic leadership, contemporary Italy provides one of Europe's most revealing examples to the broader world of competitive politics where women's political leadership is reshaping public debate in the twenty-first century.

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

# Yoga: A Beacon Of Hope For Humanity In A Divided World

LALIT GARGG

**A**t a time when the world is grappling with wars, terrorism, violence, mental stress, environmental crises, and an alarming rise in lifestyle-related diseases, humanity is searching for a path that can restore balance not only to the body but also to the mind, intellect, and spirit. In this age of uncertainty and transition, Yoga has emerged not merely as a system of physical exercise or a science of health, but as a beacon of hope for human civilization. This is why the International Day of Yoga has evolved from being a celebration of India's ancient wisdom into a global movement embraced by people across continents. India has been the cradle of Yoga since time immemorial. The very soil of this land carries the fragrance of the spiritual disciplines practiced by sages, seers, ascetics, and enlightened beings over thousands of years. From the Vedic rishis to Lord Mahavira, Lord Buddha, Adi Shankaracharya, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, Acharya Tulsi, and Acharya Mahapragya, India's spiritual luminaries have regarded Yoga as a pathway to self-realization and human welfare. Yoga has shaped India's spiritual consciousness and conveyed to the world a profound truth—that genuine human progress begins within.

The direction in which the world is moving today is deeply concerning. The Russia-Ukraine conflict, ongoing tensions in West Asia, acts of terrorism, communal unrest, and the relentless race for military superiority continue to generate fear and insecurity. While artificial intelligence, science, and technology have brought unprecedented convenience and advancement, they have also amplified the potential for destruction and alienation. In such times, the relevance of Yoga has become greater than ever before. Yoga nurtures inner peace, emotional balance, and human sensitivity. Peace in society and harmony among nations can emerge only when peace resides within individuals. The very meaning of Yoga is "union" or "integration." It unites human beings with one another, the individual soul with the Supreme, the person with society, and humanity with the entire cosmos. Yoga is a philosophy of connection, not division; of harmony, not conflict. It therefore serves as a natural antidote to hatred, violence, extremism, and war. A person who cultivates compassion, love, and nonviolence through Yoga cannot harbor hostility toward others. In this sense, the



message of nonviolence espoused by Mahatma Gandhi and the universal compassion taught by Lord Mahavira resonate deeply with the broader consciousness of Yoga.

According to global health experts, mental stress, depression, insomnia, hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, obesity, and other lifestyle disorders are increasing at an unprecedented rate. Modern life has become a relentless pursuit of external achievements, often leaving individuals internally exhausted and emotionally depleted. Against this backdrop, Yoga has emerged as a holistic approach to health and well-being. Yoga harmonizes the body, mind, emotions, and consciousness. Regular practice of asanas, pranayama, and meditation strengthens immunity, reduces stress, enhances emotional resilience, and promotes mental clarity. During the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of people across the world experienced firsthand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and a strong immune system. Yoga, breathing techniques, and meditation played a significant role in helping individuals maintain physical health and psychological stability. Even today, medical professionals increasingly acknowledge Yoga as an effective complementary practice in the prevention and management of many diseases. It is not merely an alternative therapy; it is a foundation for healthy living.

One of Yoga's greatest strengths

is that it does not simply free people from illness—it provides direction and purpose to life itself. The sage Patanjali defined Yoga as "Chitta Vritti Nirodha"—the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind. When the mind is disciplined and balanced, qualities such as wisdom, patience, self-confidence, and sound judgment naturally flourish. For today's generation, living amidst intense competition, digital distractions, and mounting psychological pressures, Yoga offers perhaps the most powerful pathway to mental equilibrium. Yoga also possesses a profound ethical and humanitarian dimension. Its foundational principles of Yama and Niyama teach truthfulness, nonviolence, self-restraint, non-possessiveness, discipline, and contentment. If these values were integrated into personal and social life, many contemporary challenges—violence, corruption, crime, intolerance, and social discord—could be significantly reduced. Yoga, therefore, is not merely a health practice; it is a movement for character building, moral awakening, and social transformation.

Yoga has played a pivotal role in enhancing the global appreciation of Indian culture and civilization. The decision of the United Nations General Assembly to declare 21 June as the International Day of Yoga, following the initiative of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stands as a remarkable recognition of India's cultural heri-

tage and moral influence. Today, Yoga is practiced in almost every corner of the world. This achievement is not merely diplomatic; it represents the global acceptance of India's ancient wisdom traditions. Prime Minister Modi has consistently promoted Yoga alongside India's enduring values of nonviolence, Ayurveda, natural healing systems, millet-based nutrition, and the timeless philosophy of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"—"The World is One Family." This message carries extraordinary significance. India aspires not only to be an economic or military power but also to contribute to a healthier, more balanced, and more peaceful world. This vision lies at the heart of the idea of India as a moral and spiritual guide to humanity.

The relationship between Yoga and Ayurveda is equally profound. Ayurveda focuses on the healing and maintenance of the body, while Yoga harmonizes the mind and consciousness. Together, they offer a comprehensive framework for holistic well-being. As concerns grow worldwide regarding the side effects of excessive dependence on chemicals and the rise of lifestyle diseases, Yoga and Ayurveda are increasingly being recognized as sustainable and complementary solutions for long-term health. History bears witness to the silent revolutions inspired by Yoga. It has transformed rulers into sages, warriors into saints, and ordinary individuals into extraordinary per-

sonalities. Swami Vivekananda introduced the spiritual essence of Yoga to the modern world. Mahatma Gandhi embodied the principles of Karma Yoga and nonviolence in a struggle that changed history. Sri Aurobindo viewed Yoga as a means for the evolution of human consciousness. These examples illustrate Yoga's extraordinary power to transform both individuals and societies.

In the modern era, one of the most significant contributions to India's meditative tradition came from the eminent philosopher, visionary thinker, and spiritual master Acharya Mahapragya. He provided a fresh and scientific dimension to the ancient art of meditation through the development of Preksha Meditation. For centuries, meditation was often viewed primarily as a spiritual discipline aimed at liberation and transcendence. Acharya Mahapragya expanded its relevance by connecting it with life science, mental health, emotional balance, behavioral transformation, and personality development. He emphasized that if individuals learn to observe their body, breath, emotions, thoughts, and consciousness with deep awareness—Preksha meaning "to perceive profoundly"—many psychological disturbances and emotional conflicts can gradually dissolve. Through Preksha Meditation, meditation was no longer confined to monks and ascetics; it became accessible and beneficial to ordinary people seeking inner harmony and a meaningful life. His work represented a revolutionary shift in the understanding and application of meditation in contemporary society.

At the crossroads where humanity stands today, Yoga is no longer a luxury or an option—it is a necessity. It heals the body, calms the mind, purifies the intellect, and awakens the spirit. It offers peace instead of war, compassion instead of violence, and balance instead of stress. The true message of the International Day of Yoga is that before transforming the external world, humanity must first transform the inner world. Through Yoga, India has offered humanity one of its most precious gifts. If this gift is embraced in its true spirit, it can inspire the emergence of a new global consciousness—a consciousness founded on peace, health, coexistence, sustainability, and universal well-being. This is the dream of Yoga. This is India's message to the world. And this is perhaps the greatest need of our times.

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## Visa Strategy: PhD Is Not A Degree Anymore

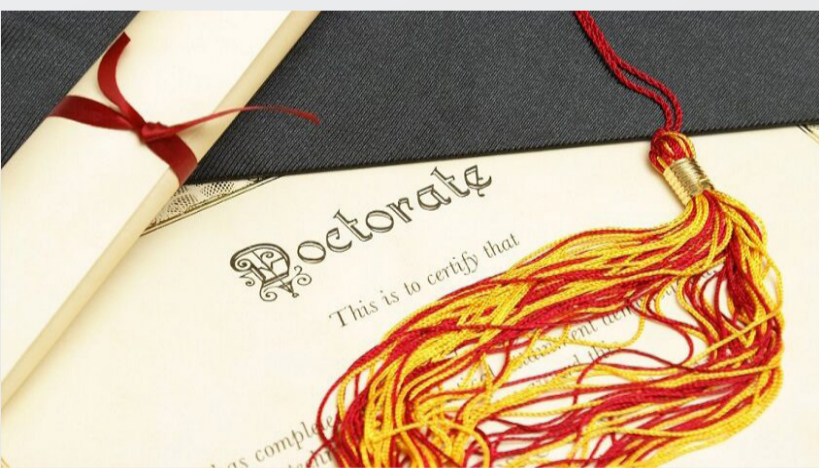
As Doctoral Programs Swell With International Enrollment, A Quiet Question Lingers In Every Seminar Room: Who Is Here To Learn, And Who Is Here To Stay?

MAHMUDUL HASAN SHESHEIR

**W**alk through the graduate halls of any large American research university and you will notice something that the admissions brochures never mention. The cohort is overwhelmingly international. The stipends are modest, often barely livable. The dissertations will take six or seven years. And yet the applications pour in, from India, Bangladesh, China, Nigeria, South Korea, in numbers that would make an undergraduate admissions officer blush. Ask any of these students privately why they came, and a surprising number will tell you the same thing: not for the degree, but for what comes after it. The H-1B. The green card. The chance to stay.

This is not cynicism. It is strategy, rational, understandable, and quietly encouraged by an academic system that has grown dependent on their cheap, brilliant labor. But it has produced a peculiar distortion in American higher education, one that nobody seems willing to name directly: the PhD is increasingly functioning as an immigration instrument dressed in academic robes. "The dissertation is the paperwork. The defense is the interview. The postdoc is the waiting room."

Consider the numbers. The National Science Foundation's Survey of Earned Doctorates has tracked a dramatic shift over two decades. In STEM fields, and increasingly in social sciences—international students now constitute the majority of PhD recipients at American universities. A significant portion of them report, at graduation, that they intend to remain in the United States. Many will. The OPT



extension for STEM graduates gives them three years. An employer-sponsored H-1B can follow. A green card application, often stretching a decade or more for Indian nationals due to the per-country backlog, keeps them tethered to their sponsoring employer and, effectively, to the country.

The system works. That is precisely the problem.

For the student, the calculus is brutally clear. A PhD from a mid-tier American university, combined with a few years of US work experience, is worth more, in lifetime earnings, in quality of life, in sheer optionality, than almost any career path available at home. The credential itself matters less than the geography it unlocks. This is not PhD inflation in the traditional sense, where too many doctorates chase too few academic jobs. It is something stranger: credential acquisition as migration infrastructure.

Universities are not innocent bystanders in this arrangement.

Graduate programs in engineering, computer science, and the life sciences are structurally dependent on international PhD students in ways that have become impossible to disentangle from their functioning. These students teach the undergraduates. They staff the labs. They write the papers that generate the grants that pay for the next cohort of students. Their stipends are low enough that the arrangement remains economical for the institution, yet high enough, relative to wages in their home countries—to remain attractive to the students. It is, in the language of economics, a mutually beneficial transaction. It is also, in the language of honesty, a quiet exploitation that neither party has much incentive to examine.

The PhD, meanwhile, has absorbed the pressure. Completion times have lengthened. Programs have proliferated. Departments that would once have graduated four or five PhDs a year now graduate fifteen, knowing that the aca-

demetic job market will absorb perhaps two of them. The rest will disperse into industry, government, or, and this is the part that often goes unsaid—into the immigration pipeline, where a doctoral degree functions as a powerful filter, signaling to employers and immigration officers alike that its holder is worth retaining.

"No one lied. The brochure said 'pursue knowledge.' It simply omitted that knowledge, in this context, also comes with work authorization."

Is this wrong? The question is genuinely difficult. The students are not frauds. They do real work. Many produce extraordinary scholarship. The ones who stay often go on to build companies, cure diseases, and train the next generation of American scientists. The empirical case for high-skilled immigration is overwhelming, and the PhD pipeline is one of the mechanisms by which the United States has historically imported the world's intellectual talent. If the system produces good outcomes, perhaps the motivation for entering it is irrelevant.

But there are costs that this framing obscures. At the sending end, the countries that produce these students lose exactly the people they can least afford to lose—the ones brilliant and ambitious enough to navigate a foreign doctoral program, survive its financial austerity, and emerge credentialed on the other side. Bangladesh, to take one example, funds primary and secondary education for students who then leave for Dhaka, then Dhaka for a scholarship abroad, then abroad for a life that never returns its investment to the soil that grew it. This is not a new observation. It is, in fact, the oldest lament

of the development literature. What is new is the scale, and the degree to which the academic credential has become the mechanism of departure rather than the promise of return.

At the receiving end, the distortion is subtler but real. When doctoral programs are populated primarily by students who did not come for the discipline but for the destination, it changes what those programs become. Attrition looks different. Advising relationships carry different stakes. The dissertation is not the end of a scholarly formation; it is a milestone in an immigration timeline. This is not the culture that doctoral education was designed to produce, and pretending otherwise costs something, even if it is hard to quantify.

None of this suggests that international PhD students should be unwelcome, or that wanting to stay in America is a moral failing. The desire for a better life is not a credential violation. But the academy's willingness to quietly accommodate, and profit from, that desire, while maintaining the fiction that it is purely in the business of knowledge, is worth examining. The PhD has always been many things at once: a union card, a class marker, a research license. It is now also, for many of the world's most talented young people, the most reliable path to the American dream. The least we can do is say so plainly.

Because when a degree becomes an immigration strategy, we should at minimum be honest about what we are selling—and what, quietly, both sides are buying.

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## AI, Modern Technologies

status quo. It means a commitment to become better, a passion to create something new, the courage to embrace change, and the confidence and hope to move forward even amid uncertainty," the Lieutenant Governor said.

Addressing the teachers, the Lieutenant Governor said that they must adapt to these changing times because teacher's role is no longer limited to covering the syllabus. He said teachers must cultivate lifelong learning skills in students.

"You must encourage their creativity and inspire values such as compassion and empathy. Rather than preparing students to compete with machines, teachers should guide them to become more humane so that they grow into people who are both sensitive and strong. The future belongs to those who pair skills with sensitivity and values. I am confident that skilled, empathetic students will not only adapt to the modern world but will help shape it. They will be the innovators who build new technologies, the leaders who guide communities, and the citizens who uphold compassion and justice," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor stated that the young students are the makers of our future. He urged the students to carry their brilliance with humility, courage with compassion, and ambition with responsibility.

Always remember that your success will be judged by what you have contributed not just for yourself, but for others. The honor you receive today recognizes academic excellence, but the true reward will be the lives you touch in the years to come. Your prize will be visible in the communities you lift and strengthen.

I see in all of you the builders of tomorrow. You will choose different fields in future. Some will be scientists who innovate, some engineers who improve infrastructure and design sustainable cities, some artists who reshape society through their vision. Above all, I see responsible citizens who will carry forward the values of compassion, empathy, and justice," the Lieutenant Governor told the students.

Dr Syed Darakhshan Andrabi, Chairperson, J&K Waqf Board; Ms Yasha Mudgal, Commissioner Secretary Cooperatives Department; Shri Ram Niwas Sharma, Commissioner Secretary School Education; Shri Anshul Garg, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; Ms Shreya Singhal, Director Information; Dr. G.V. Sundep Chakravarthy, SSP Srinagar; Shri Uday Sinha, Group Consulting Editor, Amar Ujala; Shri Abhishek Raj, Editor, J&K, Amar Ujala; senior officials, team members of Amar Ujala Group, teachers and students were present.

## Thousands Attend

turning the religious gathering into an occasion of reunion and remembrance.

Several similar reunions were witnessed at the shrine complex as members of the two communities exchanged greetings, recalled old times and expressed hope for the return of peace and harmony in Kashmir.

The scenes of Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits embracing each other drew attention from pilgrims and visitors alike, reflecting Kashmir's traditional ethos of communal harmony and brotherhood.

A devotee, Ashish Nand Bhatt, said he was proud of his Kashmiri roots and had come to seek the blessings of Mata Kheer Bhawani. "I pray for peace, prosperity and brotherhood in Kashmir. The mela is not only a religious gathering but also a symbol of our deep connection with this land," he said.

Another devotee from Jammu, Sunita Raina, said she visits the shrine every year and feels spiritually uplifted. "The atmosphere here is divine and peaceful. We pray for happiness, good health and lasting peace in Jammu and Kashmir," she said.

Pilgrims praised authorities for putting in place comprehensive security, traffic regulation, healthcare, sanitation and other essential services to ensure the smooth and peaceful conduct of the annual festival.

Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, who visited the shrine, extended greetings to devotees and said elaborate arrangements had been put in place for pilgrims visiting Kheer Bhawani temples across Kashmir, including Tullmulla, Mangsam, Devsar, Logripora and Tikkar. He said all necessary facilities, including security, healthcare, sanitation, transport and other essential services, had been arranged to ensure the smooth conduct of the mela.

Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore, said the annual mela holds immense religious significance and that the district administration had made comprehensive arrangements for the convenience of pilgrims. He welcomed devotees on behalf of the administration and the people of Ganderbal.

Meanwhile, Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kashmir, V K Birdi extended greetings to devotees on the occasion and expressed hope that the festival would promote peace, harmony, spiritual strength and communal brotherhood—(KNO)

## LG Sinha Prays For

everyone. The Lieutenant Governor commended the proactive efforts of the local administration, emphasizing that the administration remains fully committed to enhancing infrastructure and support services to accommodate the growing influx of devotees from across the nation.

He also appreciated all the stakeholders for

their seamless coordination and arrangements in organizing the annual Mela.

The Lieutenant Governor also met representatives of various Kashmiri Pandit organisations, PM Package employees and civil society delegations. He listened to their concerns and assured them of the Administration's commitment towards ensuring their welfare.

Speaking to media-persons, the Lieutenant Governor said, "Today, I prayed for the well-being, peace and prosperity of all. May the blessings of Mata Kheer Bhawani be upon everyone. This year, the number of devotees visiting the holy shrine is higher compared to previous years. The administration has made comprehensive and foolproof arrangements to ensure the convenience, safety and smooth conduct of the pilgrimage for all devotees."

The Lieutenant Governor was accompanied by Shri Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Shri Nalin Prabhath, Director General of Police; Shri Anshul Garg, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; Shri Jatin Kishore, Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal; Dr Arvind Karwani, Relief & Rehabilitation Commissioner; senior officials of police and civil administration and heads of Kashmiri Pandit organizations.

## HCI Invites

follows the Haj Review Meeting chaired by the Union Minister on 18 June 2026, at which the conduct of Haj-2026 was reviewed and the roadmap for Haj-2027 was finalised. The early announcement of the policy and the simultaneous opening of applications reflect the Ministry's emphasis on timely preparation and adherence to the timelines prescribed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Haj Policy 2027 carries forward the Ministry's sustained efforts to make the pilgrimage more comfortable, safe and dignified for every pilgrim, building on the pilgrim-centric initiatives of Haj-2026 such as sofa-cum-beds in Mina, travel by high-speed train between Makkah and Madinah, hotel-style accommodation in Makkah and the 20-day Short Haj Package. In recognition of these efforts, the Indian Haj Mission was conferred two Labbaytum Awards by the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah under the "Best Haj Coordination and Communication" category for Haj 2026—a distinction received for the first time.

Among the key changes, the policy strengthens on-ground assistance to pilgrims by improving the State Haj Inspector ratio from one inspector for every 150 pilgrims to one for every 135. To address the growing waiting list in a fair manner, preference will be given to the top 20 per cent of the final waitlisted applicants of Haj-2026. The Short Haj Package, which received an encouraging response in its first year, is being retained with the inclusion of Kolkata as an additional embarkation point in view of the strong demand from the region.

The policy also aligns medical screening with Saudi medical guidelines, with strengthened checks to ensure that individuals with chronic medical conditions are not cleared to depart for Haj, in the interest of the health and safety of pilgrims.

The Ministry is also pursuing an emerging set of artificial intelligence (AI) interventions to strengthen end-to-end Haj pilgrim management, including AI-assisted applications and documents verification of Pilgrims, demand modelling for flight allocation across embarkation points, and real-time grievance tracking and escalation. These initiatives are envisaged for phased implementation, in line with the Government's push towards a technology-enabled Haj.

A key element of this effort is a conversational AI assistance for Haj pilgrims, designed to provide round-the-clock support in Hindi, Urdu and major regional languages, allowing pilgrims to ask questions and receive guidance in their own language through simple voice or text. It is intended to help pilgrims at every stage — from filling and submitting the application form, to obtaining information on payments, flights, accommodation and baggage, to raising grievances and seeking emergency assistance — thereby reducing errors and rejections in application forms, lessening dependence on intermediaries and making accurate information readily available to first-time and elderly pilgrims. Integration with the Saudi Nusuk platform is also planned, so that pilgrim services across the Indian and Saudi systems can work together seamlessly and pilgrims receive consistent, real-time information throughout their journey.

The Union Minister urged all eligible pilgrims to apply within the prescribed timelines and directed the Haj Committee of India and all concerned agencies to ensure a smooth and transparent application process. He reiterated the Government of India's commitment to ensuring a safe, comfortable, transparent and dignified Haj for every Indian pilgrim.

## Safety Of Amarnath

He stressed the need for seamless coordination among all security agencies and called for joint operational planning to ensure effective response mechanisms during the pilgrimage.

"The safety and security of pilgrims remains our top priority," the DGP said, asking officers to enhance surveillance measures, intensify intelligence gathering and ensure effective deployment of personnel along the yatra routes.

He also appreciated the efforts of security forces in maintaining peace and stability in the region and urged all agencies to work in close coordination for the successful conduct of the pilgrimage.

Meanwhile, Jammu and Kashmir Police issued a detailed traffic advisory for the yatra period, regulating vehicular movement on the

Jammu-Srinagar National Highway.

According to the advisory, no civilian vehicle travelling from Kashmir towards Jammu will be allowed to cross the Navyug Tunnel after 11:30 am, while vehicles travelling from Jammu towards Kashmir will not be permitted to cross the tunnel after 3 pm during the yatra period.

The advisory also notified cut-off timings at several locations in Kashmir. Vehicles heading towards Srinagar and Anantnag will have to cross Mir Bazar by 4 pm, while those travelling towards the Baltal base camp must cross the same point by 5 pm. At Pantha Chowk, the cut-off time for vehicles heading towards Ganderbal and Baramulla has been fixed at 3 pm, while vehicles moving towards Anantnag must cross before 3 pm.

Similarly, vehicles travelling towards Manigam and north Kashmir will have to cross Shadipora by 3:30 pm, while those heading towards Srinagar must do so before 1 pm. At Manigam, the cut-off time for vehicles bound for Baltal has been fixed at 5 pm, while those travelling towards Srinagar and north Kashmir must cross before 12 noon.

Police advised tourists, pilgrims and local commuters to plan their journeys accordingly, follow instructions issued by traffic authorities and remain updated through official advisories during the yatra period—(KNO)

## Mutton Dealers Suspend

the Valley may be sufficient for the next few days, and efforts would be made to ensure availability during Muharram, but warned that a prolonged halt in livestock imports could affect supplies thereafter.

"We usually have stock availability for two to three days. We will try to manage supplies during Muharram, but if fresh vehicles do not arrive, the situation after that could become difficult," he said.

Mehraj-ud-Din further alleged that livestock transporters continue to face harassment, prolonged stoppages and excessive collections at checkpoints in Punjab, increasing transportation costs and causing losses to traders.

He said transporters are being forced to pay between Rs 20,000 and Rs 30,000 per vehicle, while livestock carriers are allegedly detained for several hours during transit. "When vehicles carrying livestock are stopped for two to four hours in temperatures exceeding 40 degrees Celsius, livestock mortality increases and traders suffer heavy losses. We are being forced to bear additional costs despite repeated requests for intervention," he said.

The KMDA accused the Jammu and Kashmir administration of failing to secure a resolution despite repeated representations over the past year. "We are not seeking any relief or favour. We are seeking justice. We have approached every authority, travelled to Punjab several times and raised the issue repeatedly, but no concrete solution has emerged so far," Mehraj-ud-Din said.

He said the association has reached out to political leaders and other stakeholders in recent days to seek intervention, but maintained that traders would continue the suspension of fresh imports until effective action is taken.

Mehraj-ud-Din further said that no fresh livestock vehicle will be loaded for Jammu and Kashmir from any market until the government takes up the matter with Punjab authorities and ensures smooth transportation of animals into the Valley—(KNO)

## Rain, Hailstorm Lash

down across Jammu and Kashmir, with most stations recording maximum temperatures below normal.

Srinagar recorded a maximum temperature of 26.6 degrees Celsius, which was 2.6 degrees below normal, while the minimum settled at 15.4 degrees Celsius. Qazigund recorded a maximum of 25.2 degrees Celsius, Kokernag 25.3 degrees Celsius and Kupwara 26.5 degrees Celsius.

Pahalgam, one of the coldest stations in the Valley, recorded a maximum temperature of 21.6 degrees Celsius, while Gulmarg registered 17 degrees Celsius.

In the Jammu region, Jammu city recorded a maximum temperature of 35.8 degrees Celsius, 1.8 degrees below normal. Banihal recorded 24.7 degrees Celsius, Batote 25 degrees Celsius, Katra 32.2 degrees Celsius and Baderwah 22.5 degrees Celsius.

The Meteorological Department advised people to remain indoors during thunderstorms and lightning activity and stay away from electric poles, overhead wires, loose structures and old trees. Authorities also urged suspension of boating and shikara operations during periods of thunderstorms and gusty winds.

The department said brief intense showers at isolated places could trigger minor flash floods and mudslides, particularly in vulnerable areas of Kashmir and parts of Ramban, Banihal and Kishtwar districts. People have been advised to stay away from nallahs and streams during periods of heavy rainfall.

The weather department forecast generally dry weather from June 23 to June 26, although brief spells of light rain, thundershowers and gusty winds cannot be ruled out at a few places.

From June 27 to June 29, the Union Territory is expected to witness partly to generally cloudy weather with light rain, brief intense showers, thunderstorms and gusty winds at scattered places.

A fresh spell of rain and thundershowers, accompanied by brief heavy showers, thunder-

storms and gusty winds at many places, is likely between June 30 and July 1, the department said.

Farmers and orchardists have been advised to undertake spraying operations during the early morning hours when weather conditions are expected to remain favourable—(KNO)

## Two-Hour Rain Throws

save whatever we could. This is not the first time. Every year we suffer losses because the drainage system fails whenever it rains," he said.

Another shopkeeper, Zahoor Ahmad, said the flooding had disrupted business and added to the economic hardships already being faced by small traders. "We pay taxes, electricity bills and other charges, but when it comes to basic civic facilities, nobody takes responsibility. A few hours of rain should not be enough to flood markets and damage businesses," he said.

Residents said the scenes witnessed across Srinagar reflected years of neglect, poor planning and the failure to upgrade drainage infrastructure despite repeated assurances by successive governments.

A resident of Khanyar said Monday's rainfall once again exposed the vulnerability of the city's civic infrastructure. "It was not a cloudburst, and it was not an entire day of rainfall. It rained for barely one to two hours, yet roads disappeared under water. Vehicles got stuck, people could not move freely, and entire localities looked like pools. What more proof is needed that the drainage system has failed?" he asked.

Several residents said the situation was particularly alarming because the city struggled to cope with a relatively short spell of rainfall, raising concerns about its preparedness for more intense weather events in the future.

"If a couple of hours of rain can cripple normal life, authorities must explain how the city is prepared for prolonged rainfall or extreme weather conditions. Every year the same localities suffer, and every year the same promises are made," said another resident.

The residents urged the Omar Abdullah-led government and Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha to identify vulnerable zones, modernise drainage infrastructure, improve monitoring mechanisms and ensure accountability of departments responsible for recurring urban flooding.

They said Monday's downpour once again highlighted the urgent need for long-term solutions, warning that unless concrete measures are taken, Srinagar will continue to witness the same scenes of flooding, disruption and public suffering whenever heavy rainfall occurs—(KNO)

## Police Conduct Raids

persons allegedly involved in narcotics-related activities.

Officials said the simultaneous operations were aimed at addressing both security concerns and the growing challenge posed by drug abuse and trafficking.

Police maintained that the drive would continue in accordance with law and that action would be taken against individuals found involved in unlawful activities.

Further details regarding recoveries, detentions or subsequent legal action, if any, were awaited at the time of filing. [KNT]

## Kashmir Apple Farmers

orchards, vegetable fields and other standing crops. Orchard owners said the hailstones bruised young apples and damaged tree foliage, which could adversely affect both the quality and quantity of the harvest this year.

"Many farmers had pinned their hopes on a good season after months of hard work. However, the sudden hailstorm has caused substantial losses and left growers anxious about their livelihoods," said a local orchardist from the area.

Similar reports emerged from Buchroo in Kulgam district, where heavy rainfall accompanied by hailstorm activity damaged crops and triggered concern among farming communities. Residents expressed fears that recurring extreme weather events could severely impact agricultural production and household incomes in the region.

The latest spell of hailstorms comes amid a worrying trend of frequent weather disturbances across Kashmir. Over the past several weeks, multiple districts, particularly in south Kashmir, have witnessed repeated hailstorms that have left thousands of orchardists and farmers counting losses. The recurring incidents have raised concerns about the increasing vulnerability of Kashmir's horticulture sector to erratic weather patterns.

Horticulture remains the backbone of the rural economy in large parts of Kashmir, with apple cultivation providing livelihood support to thousands of families. Growers say repeated hailstorms not only reduce fruit production but also affect fruit quality, forcing them to sell their produce at lower market rates.

Farmers and residents from the affected areas have urged the administration to immediately deploy revenue and horticulture department teams for a comprehensive damage assessment. They have also demanded adequate compensation and long-term measures such as subsidised hail-protection nets to safeguard orchards from recurring weather-related disasters.

They have demanded the immediate implementation of the crop insurance scheme in the UT—(KNO)

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# J&K Delegation Bags Top Honour at National Education Conference in Hyderabad

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** A high-level delegation from Jammu & Kashmir, led by Dr. Baba Nazrul Islam, President of the Private Schools and Children Welfare Association (PSACWA), Jammu & Kashmir, participated in the 15th Annual Conference of PSACWA held in Hyderabad from June 19 to June 22, 2026.

The four-day national conference brought together eminent educationists, school leaders, policy experts and child welfare advocates from across the country to deliberate on key issues related to inclusive and holistic education, innovative learning ecosystems, child welfare frameworks and educational leadership.

In a significant achievement, the Jammu & Kashmir delegation was awarded First Prize among all participating states in recognition of its outstanding educational initiatives, innovative practices and valuable contributions during the technical sessions of the conference. The award reflects the growing contribution of educational institutions and stakeholders from the Union Territory towards advancing quality education and child welfare.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Baba Nazrul Islam expressed gratitude to the organizers and highlighted the importance of collective efforts to strengthen educational quality, equity,



innovation and student welfare. He said the recognition is a tribute to the commitment and hard work of educators, school administrators and stakeholders across Jammu & Kashmir who continue to work tirelessly for the betterment of students.

The J&K delegation included, M. Y. Wani, Chairman, Green Valley Educational Institute, Srinagar, Anuradha Verma, PSAJK Jammu, Er. M. Ashraf Baba, Chairman, Alexander Secondary School, Kupwara, M. Farooq Fazili, Chairman, Dolphin International School, Pulwama, Arshid Mehraj Khan, Chairman, National Innovations Public School, Zainapora, Fayaz Ahmad, Chairman, International Delhi Public School, Bandipora, Mudassar Mushtaq, Chairman, Oxford International School, Altaf Maqbool

Bhat, Chairman, Dream Valley Educational Institute, Tangdar, Karnah, Mustafa Bashir Bhat, Chairman, Al Noor English Medium Public School, Lalpora, Lolab, Zahoor Ahmad Sheikh, Administrator, Bright Career Educational Institute, Vilagam, Muneer Mohiuddin Sheikh, Chairman, Abu Bakar Educational Foundation, Kralpora, and Er. Nazir Ahmad Malik, Chairman, Crescent School of Learning, Kralpora.

On the sidelines of the conference, the delegation held a fruitful interaction with officials of Mimer Academy and visited its associated institutions in Hyderabad. The delegation studied the academy's innovative "My Young Scientist" Laboratory Development Initiative and explored possibilities of introducing similar science and innovation-based

learning models in schools across Jammu & Kashmir. The academy appreciated the efforts of the J&K delegation and felicitated its members during the visit.

The delegation also met the leadership of a leading educational academy, where discussions focused on contemporary curriculum design, future-ready learning models and ongoing educational reforms. The members appreciated the institution's pioneering work in curriculum development and student-centric learning approaches.

The successful participation of the Jammu & Kashmir delegation and the prestigious recognition earned at the national forum have further reinforced the Union Territory's growing role in educational innovation, institutional excellence and child welfare initiatives at the national level.

# Javid Dar visits Ramban, reviews development works; e-inaugurates projects

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**RAMBAN:** Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Javid Ahmad Dar, Monday reviewed the progress of development works besides assessing implementation of flagship schemes in Ramban during his whirlwind tour to the district.

He also e-inaugurated several projects and conducted extensive field visits to assess the development initiatives on the ground. MLA Ramban, Arjun Singh Raju; MLA Banihal, Sajjad Shaheen; Deputy Commissioner Ramban, Mohammad Alyas Khan; Directors of Agriculture Jammu; Animal Husbandry Jammu; Horticulture Jammu; Fisheries Department; Registrar Cooperatives J&K; senior officers of Sheep Husbandry Department and other district officers were present.

Addressing the officers, the Minister stressed the importance of maintaining close coordination with public representatives while identifying and finalizing the developmental works. He directed the officers to expedite the execution of ongoing projects and ensure that the benefits of government schemes reach the grassroots level in a time-bound manner. He also called for enhanced public outreach and awareness programmes to maximize beneficiary coverage under various welfare initiatives.

The Minister remarked that with the operationalization of key tunnel projects and the continuous improvement of the National Highway cor-



ridor, travel time is being reduced significantly while ensuring all-weather connectivity. He said these transformative projects will not only strengthen the regional connectivity but also open up new avenues for trade, horticulture, agriculture and employment generation in the district.

The Minister also e-inaugurated various developmental projects completed by different departments and reviewed their impact on service delivery and public welfare.

Earlier, Javid Ahmad Dar inaugurated the Cooperative Super Bazaar Ramban and visited the Advanced Centre for Horticulture Development, Govindpora. He inspected the functioning of the centre and reviewed the initiatives aimed at promoting horticultural development and farmer welfare.

Later, the Minister laid the foundation stone for the Shah-i-Asrar Memorial School Building at Kashkoot.

Addressing the gathering, he appreciated the efforts of Advocate Raja Salim in establishing the institution and described the initiative as a significant contribution towards

educational advancement and social upliftment in the region.

As part of his extensive tour, the Minister visited the Veterinary Hospital Banihal, Sheep Husbandry Office, Seed Farm, Agriculture Farm Tethar and Sheep Farm Zaban. He reviewed the functioning of these institutions and assessed the status of ongoing developmental and extension activities. He directed the concerned officers to further strengthen the farmer-centric services, improve livestock healthcare facilities and ensure timely availability of quality inputs to the farming community.

Speaking on the occasion, Javid Ahmad Dar said that Ramban district is witnessing a new era of development and connectivity, driven by unprecedented investments in infrastructure, road networks and public welfare programmes. He observed that major highway upgrades and strategic tunnel projects are transforming Ramban into an important gateway district, boosting the economic opportunities, tourism potential and ease of transportation for the local residents.

Earlier, the Deputy Commissioner presented

a comprehensive overview of developmental achievements and the status of ongoing projects across various sectors. He informed that under MGNREGA, the district has 36,550 active job cards during the financial year 2025-26 while 2,382 works have been physically completed. Besides, Aadhaar seeding has reached 99.78 percent completion and timely wage payment stands at 70 percent.

He apprised that 3,758 works had been approved under MGNREGA during 2025-26 while 3,564 works have already been approved for 2026-27. Under PMAY-G, 503 houses have been completed while the survey conducted under PMAY-G 2.0 has identified 25,530 prospective beneficiaries.

Regarding the achievements under Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), the Deputy Commissioner stated that 1,505 works have been completed under different components of the mission, significantly improving the sanitation infrastructure in rural areas.

Highlighting the performance of the agriculture sector, he informed that substantial progress has been registered in crop production, particularly in oilseeds with production touching 15,687 quintals. He added that farmers and rural youth are actively benefiting from schemes such as Soil Health Cards, Kisan Credit Cards (KCC), PM-KISAN and Kisan Khidmat Ghar (KKG), which are contributing towards enhanced agricultural productivity and income generation.

## Samsung takes AI, design thinking workshops to J&K students

452 youth explore technology-led solutions for local challenges



GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** Samsung India has expanded its flagship innovation and education programme, Samsung Solve for Tomorrow 2026, to Jammu & Kashmir, training 452 students through Design Thinking Workshops aimed at fostering innovation and problem-solving skills among young minds.

In a statement, a spokesperson said the Design Thinking Workshops introduced participants to Samsung's human-centred innovation framework, equipping them with practical tools to identify everyday challenges, understand user needs and develop technology-led solutions with meaningful social impact.

The workshop was held in Army Public School, Ratnuchak Jammu and Government Degree College Baramulla that encouraged students to explore innovation opportunities across digital accessibility, community development, education and smarter civic infrastructure.

The workshops forms part of Samsung's nationwide effort to expand innovation opportunities beyond metropolitan centres. As part of Solve for Tomorrow 2026, Samsung is conducting Design Thinking Workshops across 100 cities spanning Bharat, enabling young innovators from diverse backgrounds to build future-ready problem-solving and entrepreneurial skills.

Among them was Zamin Anayat Lone from Government Degree College

Sopore, Baramulla, who conceptualized a mobile application designed to improve accessibility and emergency response through SOS alerts and live-location sharing features.

"The workshop taught me that innovation begins with understanding people and their experiences. It encouraged me to think about how technology can be used to create meaningful solutions that positively impact communities," said Zamin.

The workshops also inspired participants to examine how technology could strengthen public services and improve quality of life. Gagandeep Singh from Army Public School, Ratnuchak explored technology-enabled approaches to support more efficient waste management systems, while Garima Yadav, a Class IX student, examined how digital platforms could help students access career awareness and skill-development opportunities.

The ideas emerging from the workshops reflected the growing innovation potential of Jammu & Kashmir's youth. Participants demonstrated how Design Thinking can transform everyday observations into scalable solutions that address local needs while creating broader social impact. Samsung Solve for Tomorrow is Samsung India's flagship innovation competition for young people aged 14-22 years.

The programme encourages participants to develop solutions under four themes - AI for a Better Tomorrow, Health & Education, Environmental Sustainability, and Sport-Tech.

## DC Samba reviews preparedness for Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SAMBA:** Deputy Commissioner Samba Ayushi Sudan Monday chaired a high-level review meeting at the DC Office Complex to assess the preparedness for the smooth, safe and successful conduct of the Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra-2026.

The meeting was attended by senior functionaries from key departments and agencies tasked with facilitating the annual pilgrimage through district Samba.

The Deputy Commissioner conducted a detailed department-wise review, covering the full spectrum of logistical and operational



arrangements essential for the Yatra. These encompassed security deployment, traffic management, safe drinking water supply, uninterrupted power availability, healthcare services, sanitation and waste management, lodgement centres, temporary toilet facilities, langar arrangements and emergency response mechanisms. Each department was called upon to present its state of readiness and outline the measures being put in place to meet the demands of the pilgrimage season.

Emphasising the paramount importance of meticulous advance planning and effective inter-departmental coordination, the Deputy Commissioner issued specific operational directives to each department. The Jal Shakti Department was directed to ensure an adequate and uninterrupted supply of safe drinking water at all points along the Yatra route. JPDCCL was instructed to maintain reliable and continuous power supply throughout the duration of the pilgrimage.

The Health Department was directed to deploy well-equipped medical teams and establish robust emergency healthcare services at strategic locations.

Municipal authorities were tasked with ensuring rigorous sanitation standards, installation of adequate temporary toilet facilities and the scientific disposal of waste. The Traffic Police and other security agencies were directed to put in place comprehensive traffic regulation measures and ensure a strong security apparatus along the entire Yatra corridor within the district.

The DC further directed NIC to ensure reliable and uninterrupted internet connectivity at RFID Centres being created at Nonath and Chichi Mata so as to facilitate seamless pilgrim registration, biometric veri-

fication and the full range of digital services integral to the Yatra management framework. She underscored that any disruption in digital infrastructure could impede the smooth flow of pilgrims and directed that contingency measures be kept in readiness at all times.

Ms. Sudan categorically directed all departments to maintain the highest state of operational readiness and to respond with urgency and efficiency to any exigency that may arise during the Yatra period. She stressed that close inter-departmental coordination, proactive planning and a zero-tolerance approach to lapses in service delivery would be the hallmarks of the district administration's conduct during the pilgrimage and called upon every officer to discharge their responsibilities with utmost dedication and a sense of public service.

Among others present in the meeting included Senior Superintendent of Police Anuj Kumar; Additional District Development Commissioner Champa Devi Thakur; Programme Officer, ICDS Rajesh Lakhani and other district officers from the concerned departments.

## 10-year-old girl dies after rooftop fall in Bijbehara

AGENCIES

**ANANTNAG:** A 10-year-old girl died after sustaining a severe neck injury while playing on the roof of her house in Gadiseer area of Bijbehara in south Kashmir's Anantnag district on Monday, officials said.

The deceased was identified as Tafheeda Khursheed, daughter of Khursheed Ahmad Dar, a resident of Gadiseer. Officials said the girl suffered the injury while playing on the rooftop of her residence.

She was immediately rushed to Sub-District Hospital (SDH) Bijbehara for treatment.

However, despite medical efforts, she succumbed to her injuries at the hospital, they said.

The body has been kept at SDH Bijbehara for medico-legal formalities and would later handed over to the family.

## JDA conducts draw of lots for allotment of PwBD-category 2-BHK flat

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU:** Jammu Development Authority (JDA) Monday conducted the draw of lots for allotment of a 2-BHK residential flat at JDA Heights Phase-II reserved under the Persons with Benchmark Disabilities (PwBD) category. Ajay Gupta emerged as the successful allottee.

The draw, held under the housing scheme advertised by the Authority in March 2023, was conducted in the Conference Hall of JDA at Vikas Bhawan Jammu in presence of all eligible applicants and their family members, under the supervision of senior JDA officers.

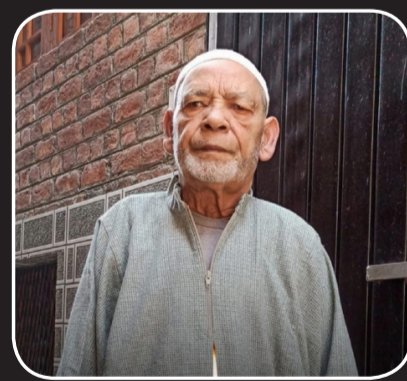
Against the single flat reserved under the category, four appli-

cants had submitted applications through the online portal in April 2023. These were scrutinised by the competent authority and found eligible for the draw.

Speaking on the occasion Jammu Development Authority Vice Chairman Rupesh Kumar said, the draw marked another step towards transparent and accountable governance, resolving a long-pending matter relating to the PwBD-category flat. He added that JDA remained committed to equal opportunity for eligible applicants and to addressing pending public matters expeditiously.

Ajay Gupta thanked JDA for conducting the process transparently and impartially, saying it had strengthened public confidence in the system.

## Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilayhi Raji'un



With profound grief, we inform that Ghulam Mohammad Khan, son of Late Abdul Aziz Khan resident of Aqilmir Kawamohalla, Khanyar, Srinagar, has passed away.

We humbly request everyone to pray for his Maghfirah (forgiveness) and ask Allah (SWT) to grant him the highest place in Jannat-ul-Firdous. May Allah shower His mercy upon him and grant patience and strength to the bereaved family....Ameen.

The Ijtima-e-Fateha Khwani will be held on Wednesday at 10:00 AM at Aaba Makbara. Family, relatives, friends, and well-wishers are requested to attend and pray for the departed soul.

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# Indian Wushu Team Calls on CM Omar ahead of SCO Wushu Championship



**GMK NEWS NETWORK**

**SRINAGAR:** The Indian Wushu Team, led by National Chief Coach of India and Dronacharya Awardee, Kuldeep Handoo called on Chief Minister Omar Abdullah here Monday.

The team is scheduled to depart for China on 23rd June 2026 to participate in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Wushu Championship in Hubei Province, followed by a

one-month foreign exposure training programme at Beijing Sport University.

During the interaction, the Chief Minister extended best wishes to the whole team and expressed confidence in the team's abilities for the championship. He urged them to excel in international competitions, bring laurels to the nation and make the country proud through their outstanding performances.

The Chief Minister also assured all possible support

for the promotion and development of Wushu and other sporting disciplines across Jammu and Kashmir.

Prominent Coaches like Amit Pal (Army), Aparna (Income Tax Department), Divanshi (Rajasthan), Ansa Chishti (J&K), Surya Bhanu Pratap Singh (J&K), Aryan (Haryana), and Suraj Yadav (Uttar Pradesh), besides medical support staff, Dr Ehsaan (J&K) and Dr Mahira (Uttar Pradesh) were also present during the interaction.

# KCFL creates new football buzz in Kashmir



**GMK SPORTS DESK**

**SRINAGAR:** The inaugural edition of the Kashmir Champions Football League (KCFL) 2026 has generated tremendous excitement among football enthusiasts, with the first 10 matches of the tournament witnessing spirited contests and steadily growing crowds at the TRC Turf Ground, Srinagar.

Since its commencement on June 16, the league has emerged as a vibrant celebration of football, bringing together teams representing districts from across Kashmir and providing a com-

petitive platform for local talent to showcase their abilities.

Each match day has witnessed increasing enthusiasm among spectators, with football lovers from different parts of the Valley thronging the stadium to cheer for their respective teams. The atmosphere reached new heights on Sunday on 21 June, when not only local supporters but also tourists visiting Kashmir made their way to the TRC Turf Ground to witness the action.

The opening phase of the tournament has produced several closely fought encounters and exciting performances. The



participation of players from all districts has added a unique flavour to the competition, adding a spirit of healthy rivalry and sportsmanship.

As the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council is organising the initiative, the overwhelming response from spectators and the quality of football on display reaffirm the UT's passion for the sport. The Council expresses confidence that the league would continue to inspire young footballers and contribute significantly to the growth of grassroots football in Jammu and Kashmir.

Pertinent to mention, this is the first initiative of its kind by any Government in the country, in which district players were scouted, district teams are formed, and were given an equal opportunity to compete with professional players from the valley in an evenly distributed district team of the League.

With the group stage progressing and anticipation building with each fixture, the KCFL is fast establishing itself as a landmark sporting event and a platform dedicated to celebrating and scouting local football heroes.

# 2026 FIFA WC: Record-breaking Messi helps Argentina reach knockouts with 2-0 win over Austria

**IAN S**

**DALLAS:** Lionel Messi produced another magical display and nailed a few records, scoring a brace to help defending champions Argentina beat Austria 2-0 in a Group J match and advance to the knock-out stages of the FIFA World Cup 2026 at the Dallas Stadium in Dallas on Monday.

Messi made it to the record books by scoring his 17th and 18th goals in World Cups, setting the record for most individual goals in the history of the tournament. Two days before his 39th birthday, the Argentine talisman brushed aside missing a penalty early in the first half, to give his team the lead in the 38th minute and then doubled it seconds before the end of the match to seal a memorable victory for the defending champions.

With their second Group J win, Argentina secured their progress to the last 32. If Jordan fail to beat Algeria later in the day, they will be confirmed as group winners.

The day belonged to Messi as he scored his first goal of the day in the 38th minute, setting the record for most individual goals by any player in the tournament's history. This was Messi's 17th



goal in the FIFA World Cup and also his fourth in the 2026 edition.

Messi not only broke the tournament's scoring record, but he also joined Just Fontaine of France and Jairzinho of Brazil as the third man to score in six successive World Cup games. This is Messi's fourth goal of this tournament, taking his tally to 17 at the World Cup. He then made it five goals for the 2026 edition towards the end of the match.

Messi improved on the record of 16 goals held by Miroslav Klose of Germany. The list is now led by Messi with 17 goals, followed by Klose at 16 and Ronaldo (Brazil) at 15 goals. Kylian Mbappe of France and Gerd Müller of Germany are next in the list with 14 goals.

He then extended his record by scoring an opportunistic goal in the fifth minute of added time (90+5) to make it 2-0 for Argentina.

Reigning tournament champions Argentina fought off some tough challenges from Austria before Messi led their fine comeback with a superb goal. He got possession of the ball and passed it to Thiago Almada. Almada sent a masterful pass back to Messi, who received the ball and

launched a great shot to beat Austria's Alexander Schlager. He could have set the record a few minutes earlier, but missed a penalty.

At half-time, Argentina were leading Austria 1-0 in the match played at the Dallas Stadium in Dallas.

Argentina came back strongly to impose an offensive style of play. They dominated play in the opening minutes but could not take the lead as Messi missed a penalty, which caused them to lose control of the proceedings.

Austria dominated the next few minutes of play and managed to take control of the game, pressing high and cutting off the opponent's build-up. Playing aggressively, they kept the game even for the next 15 minutes. However, they were completely ineffective, as they could not translate their dominance into a goal.

Argentina then wrested back the initiative when Messi created a play in midfield. He combined well with Thiago Almada to create a good opportunity and then converted it to give Argentina a 1-0 lead and set the record for most individual goals scored by a player.

# TG20 Season 1: Tilak Varma's century outshines Aman Rao's onslaught, leads Medak Falcons to 3-wkt win

**IAN S**

**HYDERABAD:** Medak Falcons' captain Tilak Varma led from the front as his side pulled off a heist to chase down 259 against Warangal Warriors and clinch a three-wicket win in Match 3 of the Hyderabad Cricket Association's TG20 at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Hyderabad on Monday.

Warriors captain Aman Rao Perala set the tone for the high-scoring contest with his blazing 32-ball century, scoring 142 in 48 balls to help his side post a daunting target of 259. In reply, Tilak's unbeaten 136, which included 14 fours and 8 sixes, along with a crucial cameo from Vikram Naik (27 off 12), led the Falcons home after they were 190/6 in the 15th over, helping them get over the line with two balls to spare.

Warangal Warriors got off to a flying start courtesy Aman, who came out all guns blazing and raced to a scintillating 17-ball

half-century. Alongside Harshit Choudhary, he put the Medak Falcons bowlers under immense pressure from the outset, with the pair powering the Warriors to 101/0 in the powerplay — the highest powerplay score of the tournament so far.

The opening duo continued to pile on the runs, adding 133 for the first wicket before N Surya Teja finally provided the breakthrough by dismissing Harshit for a brisk 35 off 23 balls in the ninth over. By then, however, the foundation for a massive total had already been laid.

Aman showed no signs of slowing down after his partner's departure, continuing his assault with a range of clean and powerful strokes all around the ground. The opener went on to become the first batter to score a century in the Greenidhi University TG20, reaching the landmark in just 32 deliveries and producing one of the most memorable knocks of the tournament so far.

# Rohan Bopanna backs Sinner and Rybakina to win Wimbledon 2026 titles

**IAN S**

**NEW DELHI:** As the tennis world turns its attention to Wimbledon 2026 in London, veteran Indian doubles star Rohan Bopanna has weighed in on the championship, identifying his favourites for the singles crowns and reflecting on what the All England Club has meant throughout his career.

Speaking ahead of the season's marquee grass-court event, Bopanna tipped defending champion Jannik Sinner and Elena Rybakina to lift the men's and women's singles trophies, while explaining why Wimbledon continues to occupy a special place in his life.

Asked to predict this year's champions, Bopanna acknowledged the field's competitiveness before naming his picks.

"It's such a tough question; the field is so open. But I have to go with defending champion Jannik Sinner for the men's tournament. Among women, I would pick Elena Rybakina," Bopanna told JioStar.

His backing comes as Sinner returns to the All England Club looking to retain the men's singles title after a season in which he has established himself as the world's leading player. The Italian enters Wimbledon aiming to respond to an early exit at Roland-Garros, while Carlos Alcaraz's absence from the tournament has further intensified the spotlight on the defend-



ing champion.

On the women's side, Bopanna believes Rybakina has the qualities to emerge on top in a draw expected to feature several genuine title contenders.

Beyond the predictions, the 46-year-old also shared a deeply personal account of his relationship with Wimbledon, describing how the tournament shaped his childhood long before he competed there as a professional.

"Wimbledon is a magical dream because I grew up watching only that. Back home, we only used to watch Wimbledon. In fact, television only broadcasts Wimbledon. So, for me to go there and not only be present but also play on those courts was absolutely amazing.

"I also played in an era when the three greatest tennis players of our generation, Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, and Novak Djokovic,

were competing. Sharing locker rooms with them and simply being there was better than a dream, actually," Bopanna added.

Bopanna's memories span one of tennis' most celebrated eras, having shared the tour with Federer, Nadal, and Djokovic while building one of the most successful doubles careers in Indian tennis. His recollection highlights the enduring prestige of Wimbledon, a tournament that remains the oldest championship in the sport and one of its most coveted titles.

This year's edition presents several compelling storylines. Djokovic arrives seeking a record-extending 25th Grand Slam title and an eighth Wimbledon crown, while Olympic champion Alexander Zverev, American contenders Ben Shelton and Taylor Fritz, and Britain's Jack Draper will all look to challenge for the men's championship.

## Show Timings

TUESDAY • 23 JUNE

			<b>OBSESSION (ENGLISH) (A)</b> 11:10 AM
			<b>MAIN VAAPAS AAUNGA (HINDI) (U/A16+)</b> 11:40 AM, 02:00 PM, 06:15 PM
			<b>COCKTAIL 2(A)</b> HINDI ATMOS 01:30 PM, 07:30 PM HINDI 11:00 AM, 03:15 PM, 05:20 PM
			<b>TOY STORY 5</b> (3D ENGLISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES) (U) 04:30 PM

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