

Good Morning

Kashmir

17th
Year Of Publication

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The Lieutenant Governor emphasised that India's youthful population, creativity, and risk-taking ability are its greatest assets, and universities must transform students into creators of opportunities rather than mere job seekers.

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US Ambassador Hints At Downgrading Travel Warning For J&K



SRINAGAR: Describing Jammu and Kashmir as an important part of India, United States Ambassador to India, Sergio Gor on Wednesday said Washington would reassess its advisory cautioning citizens against travelling to the region. Speaking to reporters after meeting Chief Minister Omar Abdullah at his residence in Gupkar, Gor said the U.S. periodically reviews its travel warnings and that the advisory for J&K would also be examined. “The United States issues travel warnings, and every so often we re-evaluate them. I cannot make any big announcements here today, but it is something we are going to look at,” Gor said. He said that the Centre and the J&K

US Ambassador To India Calls On CM Omar

SRINAGAR: The United States Ambassador to India, Sergio Gor, called on the Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, Omar Abdullah, in Srinagar Wednesday as part of his maiden visit to Jammu & Kashmir. During the meeting, the two sides engaged in broad-based discussions. The Chief Minister expressed confidence that the strong bilateral relationship between India and the United States would yield

SC Stresses Need To Institutionalise NTA

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Wednesday reiterated the need to institutionalise the National Testing Agency (NTA), with secure infrastructure, dedicated testing centres, cyber-security systems, institutional expertise and a permanent mechanism for examination-related operations to prevent future paper leaks. “A vibrant system and institutionalisation is what needs to be done,” a bench of Justices PS Narasimha and Alok Aradhe said while hearing pleas concerning the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak. The Court

India, Japan To Hold Talks On Deepening Defence Ties, 'Make In India' Initiative

NEW DELHI: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will hold a meeting with his Japanese counterpart Shinjiro Koizumi here on Thursday to further strengthen bilateral defence relations, enhance strategic trust and cooperation, promote stability and security in the Indo-Pacific region, and identify new areas of collaboration, according to a Defence Ministry statement issued on Wednesday. The two ministers will exchange views on deeper maritime security cooperation and closer defence equipment and technology collaboration under the ‘Make in India’ framework, following Japan’s revision of the ‘Three Principles on Transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology’.



Shinjiro Koizumi visited the Western Naval Command in Mumbai on Wednesday, where he held discussions with the Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Krishna Swaminathan and Flag Officer Commanding in Chief, Western Naval Command Vice Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan. The delegation was briefed on the roles and responsibilities and operational capabilities of the Indian Navy. Upon his arrival, the visiting dignitary inspected a Guard of Honour at the Western Naval Command. He, earlier, laid a wreath at the Gaurav Stambh at the Naval Dockyard.

MSMEs True Builders Of India's Economic Resilience: LG Sinha

'For Future Growth MSMEs Must Focus On Green Technologies, Export Competitiveness'

JAMMU: Reaffirming the sector's critical role in the national economy, the Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday highlighted that Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) continue to serve as the backbone of India's growth—powering employment, driving export figures, and fostering a robust culture of entrepreneurship across the country. “MSMEs are contributing 31.3% to GDP and nearly half of India's exports. They are also the second-largest provider of employment after agriculture. MSMEs are the heartbeat of our economy and the true builders of India's resilience and self-reliance,” the Lieutenant Governor said while attending the 2nd edition of the ICC MSME Conclave 2026 in Jammu. He



delivered a keynote address at the Conclave, highlighting the transformative role of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), the rise of Nano Global Capability Centres (GCCs), and the centrality of technology-led growth in shaping India's economic future. The Lieutenant Governor underscored that India's economy stands at a defining crossroads where agility, innovation, and technology are rewriting the rules of enterprise. He said the theme of the

SMVDU Has Emerged Beacon Of Knowledge, Innovation: LG

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir LG Manoj Sinha on Wednesday attended the foundation day celebrations of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University at Katra and called upon all stakeholders to turn it into a “pilgrimage centre of knowledge, a laboratory of innovation and a guiding light for society”. Addressing a function, Sinha said that over the past 23 years, the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU) has emerged as a beacon of knowledge, innovation and values, nurturing students who are not only

Flash Floods Hit J&K Parts After Intense Rainfall

SRINAGAR: Flash floods were witnessed in parts of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday following intense spells of rainfall, officials said. A flash flood occurred in the Wangath area of Ganderbal district, while minor flash floods were also reported from Haknari and Gund areas of the district following an intense spell of rainfall between 1 pm and 3 pm, according to initial reports. There were no reports of any loss of life or damage to property in the affected areas, officials said. A flash flood was also reported from the Shadab Karewa area of Shopian district, while an extremely heavy spell of rain accompanied by gusty winds lashed parts of the district. The Meteorological Centre, Srinagar, said rain was being

CM Takes Early-Morning Tour Of Srinagar

Stresses Decongestion, Better Public Facilities

SRINAGAR: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Wednesday undertook an extensive early-morning tour of Srinagar city, covering all eight Assembly constituencies, to take stock of ongoing development works, inspect key infrastructure projects and assess the delivery of public facilities and civic amenities on the ground. Beginning the tour at around 6:30 am, the Chief Minister visited a number of important project sites covering road and traffic infrastructure, healthcare, heritage conservation, sports facilities and other urban development works. He reviewed the physical progress of the projects with officers and executing agencies and sought timely completion of works so that their intended benefits reach the people at the earliest. At Barbar Shah in Habba Kadal, the Chief Minister inspected the site for the proposed multi-span bridge over Choont Khul, a project aimed at improving connectivity to Shehar-e-Khaas and easing traffic congestion in the area. The bridge is being executed by the PW(R&B) Department, Srinagar Core Division, at an estimated cost of ₹ 32.50 crore. Designed as per IRC codal standards and MoRTH

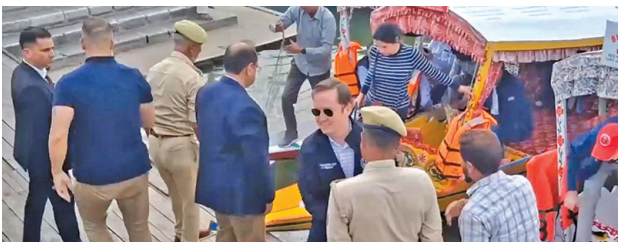


CS Reviews UNDP Strategy For SDG-Linked Budgeting In J&K

SRINAGAR: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Wednesday chaired a meeting to assess the strategy proposed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for aligning the annual budget of Jammu & Kashmir with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with emphasis on outcome-based planning, convergence of schemes and evidence-based allocation of public resources. The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, Finance; Commissioner Secretary, Information Technology; Commissioner Secretary, Social Welfare; Secretary, Agriculture; Director Planning, besides senior officers and representatives of various departments. The UNDP team made a detailed presentation to provide a preliminary roadmap for aligning public expenditure with the Sustainable Development Goals, outlining a structured approach for integrating SDGs into the budgeting and public financial management architecture of the Union Territory. Taking note of the strategy presented by UNDP, the Chief Secretary directed the



US Envoy Takes Shikara Ride At Dal Lake



personnel and officials from the US Embassy, they said. Gor boarded the ‘shikara’ near the Nehru Park and enjoyed the ride for about an hour. The US envoy called on the chief minister at his residence at his Gupkar residence soon after reaching Srinagar. Speaking to reporters, he said the US will reconsider the advisories on travel to Jammu and Kashmir as the central government

ACB Books Officials, Beneficiaries Over Alleged Illegal Construction

SRINAGAR: The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Wednesday said it had registered an FIR against several officials and beneficiaries over alleged illegal construction, encroachment of State land and other violations in the Rajbagh area of Srinagar. In a statement issued, a spokesperson said the ACB, Srinagar, had registered FIR No. 10/2026 following a Joint Surprise Check and subsequent verification into allegations of illegal construction of a multi-storey building in the flood basin/fringe area of River

Spring Silk Cocoon auction begins in Srinagar with Focus on fair prices



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: The Spring Silk Cocoon Auction Market for Kashmir commenced Wednesday at the Sericulture Complex, Srinagar.

The market was inaugurated by Ajaz Ahmad Bhat, Director Sericulture, in the presence of departmental officers, cocoon growers from various districts of Kashmir Division and buyers from within and outside the Union Territory.

The Cocoon Auction Market has been organized with the objective of ensuring fair and remunerative prices to cocoon growers through a transparent and competitive bidding process. The initiative is part of the Department's continued efforts to strengthen the sericulture sector and improve the economic well-being of silkworm rearers.

Speaking on the occasion, the Director reiterated the Department's

commitment to providing adequate market facilities to cocoon growers and ensuring better returns for their produce. He also highlighted the focus on expanding the infrastructure base by establishing more Silkworm Reeling Units across Jammu & Kashmir to promote local silk production.

"Our aim is to ensure that the cocoon produce generated in Jammu & Kashmir is largely consumed within the Union Territory itself. This will not only boost the local silk industry but also help our farmers realize better returns for their produce," Bhat said.

The auction market is expected to contribute significantly towards enhancing the income of cocoon growers by facilitating direct interaction between sellers and buyers, promoting competitive bidding and ensuring transparent price discovery. The Department has put in

place arrangements for the smooth conduct of the auction, including proper space allocation, weighing and quality assessment facilities.

Cocoon growers and buyers actively participated in the auction process. The growers appreciated the arrangements and transparent mechanism adopted by the Department, expressing hope for better returns in view of the improved quality and quantity of cocoons produced across Kashmir Division.

The buyers also appreciated the quality of cocoons available at the market, noting improvement in both quality and quantum compared to previous years.

The successful commencement of the Cocoon Auction Market marks another significant step towards empowering cocoon growers, strengthening the local silk value chain and revitalizing the silk industry in Jammu & Kashmir.

JKEDI Pulwama concludes Management Dev Programme under RAMP



GMK NEWS NETWORK

PULWAMA: The Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI), Pulwama, in collaboration with the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), successfully concluded two Management Development Programmes (MDP-11 and MDP-12) under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) initiative at Abhama, Pulwama.

The programmes trained 49 entrepreneurs, equipping them with structured, high-quality training designed to enhance their entrepreneurial

skills and strengthen business capabilities.

The valedictory ceremony was attended by Nafia Nazir, Senior Manager P&A/Range Officer South (K); Raiyees Manzoor, District Nodal Officer, JKEDI Pulwama; Iftikhar Bashir Lone, Assistant Faculty; Mohd Yasir, Assistant Faculty and S. Imran, Program Co-facilitator.

Interacting with the participants, M Nafia Nazir reviewed the progress of the program and highly appreciated the efforts of JKEDI Pulwama in organising impactful capacity-building programmes in the far-flung areas of Pulwama district. She com-

mended the enthusiasm and active participation of the women entrepreneurs and encouraged them to apply the knowledge and skills gained to establish sustainable and growth-oriented enterprises.

Furthermore, Raiyees Manzoor emphasised the importance of such initiatives in promoting entrepreneurship and empowering women at the grassroots level, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas.

Participants expressed heartfelt gratitude to the course team and JKEDI for their dedicated guidance and support in successfully organising the program.

DC Anantnag inaugurates Aadhaar Seva Kendra at Batengoo

GMK NEWS NETWORK

ANANTNAG: Deputy Commissioner (DC), Anantnag, Dr. Bilal Mohiuddin Bhat, Wednesday inaugurated the UIDAI-approved Aadhaar Seva Kendra (ASK) located at Batengoo.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by the Assistant Commissioner Revenue (ACR), Tariq Ahmad Malik, Project Manager, Cluster Manager, and Operational Manager along with staff and the local public.

Following the inauguration, the Project Manager UIDAI briefed the Deputy Commissioner on the operational features of the facility and the full range of citizen-centric services related to Aad-



haar available at the centre.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC stressed the importance of smooth, efficient, and hassle-free service delivery to the public. He urged the management and staff to ensure high standards of operational quality so that local residents can access Aadhaar enrolment and update services seamlessly.

Notably, services like fresh Aadhaar enrolment, mandatory biometric updates for children, Cross Limit DOB, demographic updates (name, address, mobile number), and document verification services under UIDAI standards are available at the Aadhaar Seva Kendra Centre located at Ground Floor, Near Whiz Kidz STEM School Batengoo.

Seminar on ‘Modern Theatre, Youth of Kashmir’ Concludes in Srinagar

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: A two-day seminar on "Modern Theatre and Youth of Kashmir" concluded at Kashmir Government Polytechnic College, Gogji Bagh, Srinagar, bringing together eminent theatre personalities, artists, scholars, critics and young theatre enthusiasts for discussions on the contemporary theatre landscape in Kashmir.

Organised to foster meaningful dialogue on the present state and future of modern theatre in the region, the seminar also focused on the role of youth in preserving Kashmir's rich theatrical tradition and taking it forward through innovation and experimentation.

The programme was held in three major sessions—an inaugural session, paper-reading session and lecture session. The



sessions provided a platform for theatre practitioners, scholars and critics to share their experiences, research and perspectives on contemporary theatre.

During the paper-reading sessions, theatre personalities and scholars including Majeed Majazi, Shakir Shafi, Sheikh Fatima, Hakeem Javed, Shahzad Shabir, Manta-sha Shuja, Shahid Malik and Shabeer Hakak presented papers covering various aspects of modern theatre, its evolution, challenges and relevance to the younger generation.

The lecture sessions featured eminent theatre personalities and experts including Bashir Bhawani, Mohammad Amin Bhat, Nisar Naseem, Hamayun Qaisar, Shafiq Qureshi, Dr Nishtar, Shakeel Rehman, Shabir Mujahid, Bashir Qadri and Dr Sohan Lal Koul. The speakers deliberated on contemporary theatrical practices, acting, direction, playwriting, theatre criticism, experimentation and the changing relationship between theatre and society.

The experts emphasised that theatre extends

beyond entertainment and serves as an important medium of social communication, cultural expression, education and preservation of identity. They stressed the need to encourage greater participation of youth in theatre while creating opportunities for their training, experimentation and professional growth.

The speakers also highlighted challenges confronting theatre practitioners in Kashmir and called for stronger institutional support, greater collaboration among theatre groups

and increased engagement of educational institutions with theatre and the performing arts.

The seminar witnessed active participation from theatre practitioners, scholars, students and young artists. The interactive discussions provided participants with an opportunity to exchange ideas and deliberate on the future direction of modern theatre in Kashmir.

The organisers expressed gratitude to all the distinguished speakers, paper presenters, artists, students and participants for contributing to the success of the seminar and making it a meaningful platform for dialogue.

The seminar concluded with a call for sustained efforts to promote theatre among the younger generation and build a vibrant, inclusive and sustainable theatre movement in Kashmir.

VC LCMA directs intensified Lake Cleaning Operations

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: The Vice Chairman, JKLCMA, Khurshid Ahmad Shah, Wednesday undertook an extensive on-site assessment of Dal Lake to take stock of the ongoing cleaning and conservation activities being carried out by the Authority.

During the inspection, the Vice Chairman visited various locations of Dal Lake, particularly the Gagribal Basin, and took stock of the progress of the ongoing cleaning activities on site. He reviewed the deployment of manpower and machinery, including Watermasters, harvesters, and grabbers, and assessed the effectiveness of the measures being undertaken for the removal of weeds, aquatic vegetation, accumulated waste, and other floating material from different sections of the lake.

During the field inspection, the Vice Chairman identified specific locations for the deployment of the hired lake cleaning machinery. He directed the concerned officers to ensure that the machinery is deployed at the identified spots in a planned and effective manner to intensify the ongoing lake cleaning operations.



sify the ongoing lake cleaning operations.

Khurshid Ahmad Shah emphasized the need for a systematic and area-specific approach to lake cleaning, with priority being given to locations experiencing heavy weed infestation and excessive accumulation of aquatic vegetation. He particularly directed that focused cleaning measures be undertaken in the area around SKICC and Lalit Ghat where the 1st International Film Festival is scheduled to be held from September 07 to September 10, 2026, ensuring that the designated area is adequately cleaned and maintained in advance of the event.

He directed the field staff and concerned officers to maintain close monitoring of the cleaning operations and ensure that the machinery remains operational and is utilized to its optimum capacity. He also called for regular assessment of the cleaned areas to prevent re-accumulation of weeds and waste.

The Vice Chairman reiterated the Authority's commitment towards the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of Dal Lake and stressed that all ongoing interventions should be carried out with due regard to the ecological character of the lake.

KPDCL announces power shutdown in Kashmir parts

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Chief Engineer, Distribution, KPDCL Wednesday informed that the Shutdown of 33 kV Sharifabad-Narbal line will be observed due to which power supply to Narbal, Kawoosa, Lawaypora, Suzaith, Sanoor, Malpora, Redbugh, Railway Station Mazhama and adjoining areas will be affected from 09 AM to 02 PM on 22 August 2026.

Similarly, shutdown of 33 kV Khanyar line and 33 kV Bagh-i-Ali Mardan Khan-Takanwari line will be observed due to which power supply to Miskeenbagh, Rosebal, Hazaribagh, Kondebal, Hasanabad, Jogi

Lanker, Palpora, Sangam, JLNH Hospital and adjoining areas will be affected from 08 AM to 11 PM on 22 & 24 August 2026.

Likewise, shutdown of 33 kV Pampore-Pulwama line will be observed due to which power supply to Kakapora, Pahoo, Nehama, Newa, Gudoor, Parigam, Singo Narbal, Zadoora and adjoining areas will be affected from 09 AM to 02 PM on 20 & 22 August 2026.

Similarly, shutdown of 33 kV Delina-Sopore Tapline will be observed due to which power supply to Amargarh, Krankshivan, Sopore, Industries, Railway Sopore and adjoining areas will be affected

from 9:30 AM to 11:30 AM on 23 August 2026.

Likewise, shutdown of 33 kV LJHP Uri line will be observed due to which power supply to Mohura, Noorkhah, Gingal, Salamabad, Lalpul, Garkote, Bandi, Parampillan, Rampur, Dhani, Bijhama, Bagna, Uri, Kamalkote and adjoining areas will be affected from 08 AM to 02 PM on 24 & 27 August and 01 September 2026.

Similarly, shutdown of 33 kV Potushai Nadihal line will be observed due to which power supply to Ajas, SK Bala, Bazipora, Nadihal, Guroora, Argam and adjoining areas will be affected from 08 AM to 02 PM on 20 & 22 August 2026.

Jatin Kishore reviews progress on AgriStack Farmer Registration

GMK NEWS NETWORK

GANDERBAL: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore, Wednesday chaired a meeting to review the progress achieved under AgriStack farmer registration in the district.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed the work completed so far and took stock of the progress in genera-

tion of farmer IDs and registration of eligible farmers. He directed the concerned officers to expedite the remaining work and ensure maximum coverage within the stipulated timeline.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned officers to organise registration camps at the field level to facilitate generation of IDs and ensure wider coverage of eligible

farmers. He stressed upon regular monitoring of the camps and the progress achieved through them.

He further emphasised dissemination of information among farmers regarding AgriStack registration and the benefits associated with the digital farmer database, so that eligible farmers are adequately informed and encouraged to complete the registration process.

ADC Kulgam reviews arrangements for Eid Milad-un-Nabi (SAW)

GMK NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM: A meeting of officers and members of local aqaf management committees was Wednesday held under the chairmanship of Additional Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Vikar Ahmad Giri, at Mini Secretariat Kulgam to review the arrangements for the upcoming celebrations of Eid Milad-un-Nabi (SAW).

Deliberations were held on provision of all requisite facilities including drinking water, sanitation, medical care, uninterrupted power supply, adequate transport services, and parking facilities for devotees.

Fire & Emergency Department was instructed to station fire tenders at shrines where large congregations are expected. Municipal authorities were directed to put in place proper sanitation measures well in advance at shrines and Khankahas, particularly at Ziyarat Shareef Kulgam, Qaimoh, Gufbal, Yaroo Hazratbal, Chimmer, Kund, and other prominent locations.

Traffic and MV Departments were directed to ensure smooth transport facilities and proper route management across the district, while the CMO was instructed to make available adequate medical facilities and ambulances at key places.

The ADC instructed all departments to put in place elaborated arrangements across the district to ensure smooth celebrations of Eid Eid Milad-un-Nabi (SAW) across the district. He also stressed on intensifying market checking to oversee fair market practices and ensure availability of essential commodities.

Shopian Admin urges farmers to complete AgriStack Registration

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN: District Administration Shopian has urged all farmers to approach their concerned Patwaris/Revenue field staff and complete registration under Agristack for generation of the unique Farmers ID.

The initiative will create a comprehensive digital database of farmers and facilitate seamless access to agriculture-related benefits, including Direct Benefit Transfer, crop insurance, soil health cards and institutional credit. Meanwhile, Revenue officials and field staff have been directed to expedite the exercise, ensure proper verification and maintain data quality. Special assistance has been advised for elderly and marginal farmers.

Registration and verification under AgriStack is currently underway across the district through dedicated camps, with all villages being covered in a phased manner.

Farmers are urged to cooperate with the field staff and complete their registration at the earliest to ensure that no eligible farmer is left out.

DC Budgam visits Mata Vasuki Nag Temple, Anand Dham Ashram

GMK NEWS NETWORK

BUDGAM: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan, Wednesday visited Mata Vasuki Nag Temple at Wagam and Anand Dham Ashram at Hushroo in Chadoora to take stock of arrangements for the annual Hawan programme being held at these religious places.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed the arrangements put in place by the concerned departments and local committees for the smooth conduct of the annual religious programme. He took stock of facilities being provided to devotees, including basic amenities and other necessary arrangements.

The Deputy Commissioner also interacted with devotees, members of the Kashmiri Pandit community and local residents, who apprised him of various requirements related to the conduct of the programme and facilities for pilgrims. He assured the devotees and organisers that the District Administration would extend all necessary support for the smooth and peaceful conduct of the annual Hawan programme.

The DC also appreciated the efforts of the local community for its support to concerned departments ensuring seamless arrangements for conduct of annual religious programme.

Later, the Deputy Commissioner interacted with local delegations and community members and listened to their demands. He assured them that genuine issues would be examined on priority and directed the concerned officers to take necessary follow-up action for their timely redressal.

NEWS

US-J&K engagement to widen: CM Omar

Says meeting with US envoy focused on bilateral ties, what Washington can do for J&K

REHAN QAYOOM

SRINAGAR: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday said he was “very hopeful and optimistic” that engagement between the United States and Jammu and Kashmir would widen and deepen in the years ahead.

Speaking to reporters outside his residence here after meeting US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor, Omar said the discussions focused on India-US relations, with particular emphasis on what the United States could do for Jammu and Kashmir.

“It was, as Ambassador Gor has said, a very good meeting. We had an opportunity to discuss the relations between our two countries, but with specific focus on what the U.S. can do with Jammu and Kashmir,”



Omar said.

He said there were certain “legacy issues” that would be addressed over time, while expressing willingness to continue the conversation.

“There are obviously certain legacy issues that over time we will be working to resolve, but we look forward to taking this conversation further,” he said.

Omar said the engagement would involve discussions between the US envoy and Washington,

as well as between him and the Government of India in New Delhi.

“This is a conversation that will take place both between Ambassador Gor and Washington and between me and the Government of India in New Delhi,” he said.

“We are very hopeful and optimistic that the engagement between the United States of America and Jammu and Kashmir will both widen and deepen in the years ahead,” Omar added—(KNO)

LG Chairs 37th Executive Council Meeting of SMVDU

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, Wednesday chaired the 37th meeting of the Executive Council of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University,

The meeting was attended by Prof. Pragati Kumar, Vice Chancellor, SMVDU; Prof. Umesh Rai, Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu; Prof. Nilofer Khan, Vice Chancellor, University of Kashmir; Prof. Pankaj Chandra, Vice Chancellor and Chairman, Board of Management, Ahmedabad University; Prof. A.S.K. Sinha, Former Director, Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Petroleum Technology, Amethi; Prof. Manoj Singh Gaur, Director, IIT Jammu; Dr Mandeep K. Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor; Shri Sachin Kumar Vaishya, CEO, SMVDSB; Shri Ajay Kumar Sharma, Registrar, SMVDU and other members of the Executive Council.

The Council accorded in-principle approval for a 200-bed boys' hostel, to



be funded by SMVDSB, along with preparation of a detailed project report. It also granted in-principle approval for two new academic programmes—B.A. LL.B. (Hons.) and B.Tech in Food Technology—and suggested exploring the possibility of offering LL.B. in conjunction with the science and commerce streams. The budget proposals for FY 2026-27 and the final audit report for FY 2024-25 were adopted, along with a proposal for enhanced financial assistance to students attending national and international

conferences, workshops, and events.

The Council further approved the completion and development of the sports complex at the SMVDU campus, in collaboration with SMVDSB, to provide sports facilities for students and employees, and decided to finalise a five-year roadmap for the University, based on a viable operating model, in consultation with the Academic Council and Finance Committee. The Executive Council also adopted the University's proposed Kulgeet (institutional anthem).

The Council reviewed the University's academic, administrative, and financial progress and also approved several initiatives for the forthcoming academic sessions. It also ratified the nomination of external members to the Executive Council and to the Academic Council of SMVDU, and reviewed the status of ongoing and completed major construction projects, calling for their timely completion.

Appreciating the University's initiatives on wellness, sports, and youth engagement, the Lieuten-

ant Governor directed the administration to conduct counselling, mental health, and value-based awareness programmes for students, and to subscribe to online counselling platforms for student support.

The Lieutenant Governor, who is also the Chancellor of the University, suggested academic relaxation for NSS and NCC students selected to represent the University at events of national importance, along with additional credits in recognition of their achievements. He further recommended introducing industry-linked vocational courses, delivered through internal faculty and external experts, and open to all students regardless of minimum eligibility criteria.

Prof. Pragati Kumar, Vice Chancellor, SMVDU briefed the Executive Council on key developments relating to admissions, recruitment, faculty career advancement, ongoing construction projects, and new academic programmes proposed for the upcoming academic year.

CS reviews progress on CITaG's Governance, Policy, Dev Initiatives

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo Wednesday chaired a high-level review meeting to assess the progress, strategic interventions and future roadmap of the Centre for Innovation and Transformation in Governance (CITaG), J&K, with particular focus on policy formulation, knowledge outputs, public-private partnership (PPP) projects and initiatives aimed at accelerating socio-economic development across the Union Territory.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary, Culture; Commissioner Secretary, Planning; Chairman, Bureau of Public Enterprises; Commissioner Secretary, Science & Technology; Secretary, Transport; Managing Director, J&K Power Development Corporation (PDC); Managing Director, J&K Tourism Development Corporation (JKTDC); Managing Director, J&K Housing Board; Director, Skill Development Department; Director, Employment; CEO, CITaG and representatives of other concerned departments.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary emphasized the need for establishing a dedicated Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to comprehensively oversee PPP projects, including their conceptualisation, development, progress, execution and outcomes on the ground.

He further directed that a dedicated digital portal for PPP projects in the pipeline be developed to facilitate real-time monitoring and enable senior officers to maintain close oversight over their progress. He observed that such a mechanism would ensure effective follow-up, identify



bottlenecks at an early stage and facilitate timely execution of projects.

The Chief Secretary called upon departments, particularly the Housing & Urban Development Department (H&UDD), Tourism, Science & Technology and Power, to undertake regular review and follow-up of their projects and policy initiatives so that these are translated into tangible outcomes and grounded expeditiously.

Highlighting the potential of Jammu and Kashmir's abundant water resources, he underscored the importance of small hydropower projects and called for making optimum use of this potential as part of the UT's broader energy development strategy.

The Chief Secretary also advised CITaG to explore an innovative education framework focused on identifying and addressing individual learning gaps among students. He suggested that well-researched and evidence-based interventions may be developed to strengthen students' motivation, confidence and capabilities, particularly in areas where they face learning or communication challenges, drawing upon successful practices followed in developed States and countries across the world.

Giving a detailed presentation, CEO, CITaG, Dr Sandeep apprised the meeting of the progress achieved

under its institutional partnership with different government Departments of J&K.

It was highlighted that against the original Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) target of 28 deliverables by August 2026, CITaG has tracked 100 knowledge-output projects, reflecting a significant expansion in the scope of policy research, strategic advisory and institutional support being provided to the UT administration. The milestone MoU between the Planning, Development & Monitoring Department and IIM Jammu has also been extended for a further two years, providing a longer-term institutional framework for continued policy innovation and governance transformation.

The current knowledge-output portfolio includes 21 completed deliverables, covering major interventions such as the J&K Road Safety Plan 2026, J&K Electric Vehicle Policy 2026, J&K Circular Economy Policy 2026, Compressed Bio-Gas Policy, Urban and Rural Mobility Plans and the PPP Project Lifecycle Tracker, which have been submitted and adopted by the concerned departments.

Moreover another 20 strategic frameworks have been submitted and are under review, covering areas such as attracting FDI, J&K GCC Policy 2026, Agri-Startup Policy, Tourist Safety Policy Framework and sector-specific viability analyses. Seven further deliverables, including the J&K Youth Policy 2026, HR Management & Manpower Auditing, Capital Adequacy and Leveraging of Assets for J&K Bank and blueprints for Model Industrial Estates, are scheduled for submission during August 2026.

Div Com reviews preparations for Eid Milad-un-Nabi, Friday Following

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: In view of Eid Milad-un-Nabi (S.A.W.) and the following Friday, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg convened a high-level meeting on Wednesday to assess and strengthen arrangements at major mosques and shrines across the Kashmir Division.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioners, Commissioner SMC, SSPs, VC LCMA, senior officials from various departments, including KPDCL, PHE, FCS&CA, PWD, Food Safety, Legal Metrology, LCMA, Wakf Board, Health, Police and Traffic departments, along with religious representatives from prominent shrines.

The Divisional Commissioner conducted a detailed assessment of essential facilities at major religious sites, including Hazratbal Shrine, Jenab Sahib Soura, Assar-i-Sharief Kalashpora, Aham-i-Sharief Bandipora, Kabamarg Anantnag and Pethmak-hama Budgam, besides other mosques and shrines expected to witness significant gatherings for night prayers.

He gave special emphasis on arrangements at Hazratbal Shrine, where more than one lakh devotees are anticipated to participate in congregational



and night prayers. Garg instructed the concerned departments to ensure that all arrangements remain fully functional throughout the occasion.

The Chief Engineer, KPDCL was directed to maintain an uninterrupted power supply at Hazratbal, along with a reliable backup arrangement through DG sets. The PHE department was asked to establish sufficient drinking-water points and keep water tankers available as an emergency measure.

To ensure convenient movement of devotees, SSCL, SRTC and ARTO were instructed to deploy adequate buses and e-autos, including services extending into the late hours. Traffic Police Srinagar was asked to prepare a comprehensive route plan for visitors arriving from different districts to prevent congestion and facilitate smooth traffic flow.

Emphasising the need for adequate shelter and crowd-management facilities, the Divisional

Commissioner directed Wakf authorities to make advance arrangements for tents at designated religious locations.

The Commissioner of SMC was instructed to undertake an extensive sanitation and cleanliness campaign at Hazratbal Shrine and its surrounding areas.

To safeguard public health, joint market-inspection teams were ordered to monitor food quality, hygiene standards and pricing around markets and religious sites. Garg stressed strict action against traders found violating prescribed quality standards or resorting to overcharging.

The Health Department was directed to establish medical camps and deploy personnel according to duty rosters, while Fire & Emergency Services were instructed to position fire tenders at vulnerable and strategically important locations to ensure a rapid response in case of any emergency.

CPCO reviews preparations for Census-2027 phase-II in snow bound areas

GMK NEWS NETWORK

RAMBAN: Director Census Operations (DCO) and Chief Principal Census Officer (CPCO), J&K and Ladakh, Amit Sharma, Wednesday reviewed the preparations for Population Enumeration Phase-II of Census-2027 in the snow-bound areas of Ramban district at a meeting held here.

District Nodal Officer Census and Additional Deputy Commissioner Ramban Varunjeet Singh Charak, Deputy Director Census, DSEO and other concerned officers attended the meeting.

The meeting focused on preparedness for Population Enumeration in snow-bound areas, training of census functionaries, self-enumeration, geo-tagging and demarcation of Enumeration Blocks (EBs) besides measures for effective public awareness and publicity.

Addressing the meeting, the CPCO highlighted the importance of Census-2027 as a crucial national exercise for generating reliable demographic and socio-economic data, which serves as an important basis for development planning, policy formulation, resource allocation



and delivery of public services. He stressed the need for coordinated efforts by all stakeholders to ensure complete, accurate and timely enumeration.

He directed the concerned officers to ensure extensive awareness among the public, particularly residents of snow-bound areas, regarding the Self-Enumeration process and the upcoming Population Enumeration exercise.

Amit Sharma was informed that the training of District and Charge Census Officers, Census officials and field trainers has been completed. Besides, training of Supervisors and Enumerators at the charge level is scheduled to be conducted from August 20 to August 29, 2026, as per the timelines conveyed by the Office of the Registrar General of India.

The CPCO laid special emphasis on Self-Enumeration in snow-bound areas, which is being undertaken from August 17 to August 31, 2026, as per the Stan-

dard Operating Procedures issued by the Office of the Registrar General of India.

He directed the district administration to ensure wide publicity of the Self-Enumeration process through local media, leading newspapers, electronic and social media platforms so that residents of snow-bound areas receive clear and authentic information and do not face any confusion. He further stressed that public messages may be disseminated in Hindi, English and local languages while awareness activities may be organized at panchayat and ward level with the involvement of field functionaries and local representatives.

The concerned officers were also directed to closely monitor the progress of Self-Enumeration and field-level preparations, identify gaps well in advance and take timely corrective measures to ensure smooth conduct of Population Enumeration in all designated snow-bound areas.

Woman dies after being hit by car in Sopore

AGENCIES

SOPORE: An elderly woman died after being hit by a car near the Bypass in Sopore area of north Kashmir's Baramulla district on Wednesday.

An official said that the accident occurred when an Alto car, travelling from Sopore towards Bandipora, hit a pedestrian near Sofi Akber Road, Bypass, in Sopore. He said the woman was immediately shifted to District Hospital Sopore for treatment; however, she succumbed to her injuries at the hospital.

She was identified as Azi Begum (70), a resident of Ningli. Police have taken cognisance of the incident and initiated proceedings—(KNO)

Man drowns while saving son in Qazigund

UMAISAR GULL

QAZIGUND: A man drowned while attempting to rescue his five-year-old son after the child accidentally fell into Nallah Sandran at Nussu Badragund area of Qazigund in south Kashmir's Anantnag district on Wednesday. An official said, that the father-son duo had gone to the area to attend a marriage ceremony when the child fell into the water channel.

The child, Imad Zahoor (5), was rescued and shifted to Emergency Hospital Qazigund, where he is undergoing treatment and is stated to be stable and under observation. The deceased has been identified as Zahoor Ahmad Ganie, a resident of Nigenpora, who drowned while trying to save his son.

Meanwhile, police have taken cognisance of the incident and initiated proceedings—(KNO)

10 injured after passenger bus accident in Nagrota

AGENCIES

JAMMU: At least ten persons were injured after a passenger bus met with an accident in the Nagrota area of Jammu on Wednesday, officials said.

An official said that the accident occurred in the Nagrota area, leaving ten persons injured.

He said that soon after the incident, the injured were shifted to a nearby hospital for medical treatment. Their condition is stated to be stable. Meanwhile, police have taken cognisance of the incident—(KNO)

Sheetal Nanda chairs meeting on increasing human-wildlife conflict mitigation

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Commissioner Secretary, Forest, Ecology and Environment Department, Sheetal Nanda, Wednesday convened a meeting to review the rising incidents of Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) and assess the measures for its effective and timely mitigation across Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by Dr. Suneesh Buxy, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife)/Chief Wildlife Warden, J&K; Rajinder Singh Tara, Secretary, Forest Department; Secretary Technical; Regional Wildlife Wardens of Jammu and Kashmir and all Wildlife Wardens of the UT.

Dr. Suneesh Buxy made a detailed presentation on the current status of HWC in the UT and outlined the initiatives undertaken by the department for its mitigation. The presentation covered the key drivers of HWC, operational challenges, existing response mechanisms, infrastructure and manpower gaps, identified conflict hotspots, rescue operations, community awareness efforts and the proposed Integrated Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation Framework for 2026-29.

Sheetal Nanda directed all the concerned officers to formulate species-specific and situation-specific Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for scientific, effective and timely mitigation of HWC incidents, including rescue, capture, handling, transportation, release/rehabilitation and post-rescue monitoring. She also instructed the department to ensure prompt settlement of compensation cases for victims. She stressed the need for inter-departmental coordination with Police, District Administration and allied wings of the Forest Department for immediate response to SOS calls.

Javed Rana emphasises strengthening rural road connectivity in Mendhar

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, Wednesday emphasised the need to further strengthen the rural road connectivity in Mendhar constituency under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), particularly in remote and hilly areas, to ensure better access to essential services and socio-economic opportunities.

He made these remarks while reviewing the progress of PMGSY works in Mendhar constituency at a meeting convened at the Civil Secretariat, Jammu, which was attended by senior officers of the con-



cerned departments.

Reviewing the status of PMGSY works in Mendhar, the Minister enquired about the progress of ongoing works and the status of the tendering process. He directed the concerned officers to maintain close monitoring of all ongoing projects and ensure their timely completion while adhering strictly to prescribed quality standards.

Rana underscored that reliable road connectivity is particularly important for Mendhar, given its hilly terrain and geographically difficult areas. He said that PMGSY roads play a vital role in connecting the remote habitations with administrative centres and facilitating access to education, healthcare, markets and other essential services.

Good Morning

Kashmir

EDITORIAL

US Travel Advisory Review Could Open New Window For Kashmir

The United States’ indication that it may review its travel advisory for Jammu and Kashmir is a significant development for the region’s tourism sector and its international image.

US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor’s remarks after meeting Chief Minister Omar Abdullah in Srinagar carry particular significance because travel advisories influence the decisions of international tourists, businesses and institutions. Any decision by Washington to downgrade its advisory could encourage more Americans to visit Kashmir and signal growing confidence in the region’s security environment.

Gor’s acknowledgement that the governments in Jammu and Kashmir and New Delhi have taken “incredible steps” towards making the region safer is also noteworthy. For years, security concerns have been among the biggest obstacles to Kashmir’s international tourism potential. A more positive assessment from Washington could help change perceptions that have long discouraged foreign visitors.

Kashmir has everything required to attract American tourists—spectacular mountains, lakes and meadows, rich heritage, distinctive cuisine, handicrafts and a culture unlike anywhere else. What has often been missing is sustained international confidence. That confidence cannot, however, be taken for granted. Any improvement in the security situation must be consolidated through continued vigilance, effective administration and a tourism environment in which visitors feel safe, respected and welcome.

The meeting between Omar Abdullah and Ambassador Gor is important beyond the travel advisory issue. The Chief Minister’s reference to “legacy issues” and his optimism about widening and deepening engagement indicate an opportunity for Jammu and Kashmir to develop stronger links with the United States in tourism, education, culture, investment and people-to-people exchanges. For Kashmir, this is a moment to look beyond the traditional tourism markets and aggressively promote itself in new international destinations. American visitors can become an important segment of the region’s tourism economy, particularly if better air connectivity, professional promotion and high-quality hospitality are developed alongside security. The possible review of the US advisory should therefore not be viewed merely as a diplomatic gesture. It is an opportunity to reinforce a changing narrative about Kashmir.

For decades, the world often saw Kashmir primarily through the prism of conflict. The challenge now is to ensure that it is increasingly known for its peace, hospitality, natural beauty, culture and economic potential. A safer Kashmir can attract more visitors, more investment and more opportunities. The government must seize this moment and ensure that the world gets to experience the Kashmir that its people want to showcase.

Craving The Grind

The Cost Of Keeping "Options" Open



TAMANA LIAKET

Every man on earth has a purpose of life. It may be positive or negative; it all depends on the mindset. Some destinations make us so tired that giving up seems conceivable. We put in as much effort as we can and work tirelessly, but sometimes we still get no results. In the race to get stability, and that too quickly, we follow different ways for different destinations. We start telling ourselves, “whatever life presents, I will accept,” and in that process our dreams get no space. We keep so many options with us, going hand-in-hand, so that we may succeed in at least one and build our life there.

During the period of preparation, we just want to get rid of the burden, regardless of the results. But when it is over, and you no longer have to prepare because you are now working on Plan B, your mind and soul start craving for it. You keep craving for that cycle, that discipline, again and again. When you are afraid of being unsuccessful, and you also don’t want to go through that race again without a system, somewhere deep in your heart you still feel for that one profession. Though it is over, your mind still gives you the imagination of it.

In life, one should always have only one solid destination which would be full of passion, zeal and dedication. When we present life with so many options, our mind progresses in the same way. Plan B may be okay, but somehow it brings you comfort more than demand. Real life brings many blocks and hard tests that no backup plan can fix. Plan B may lower the fear of total loss, but it somehow snatches your dream destination.

So, let’s work so fully for that one dream. Let’s take all risks so that we have no regrets. Let’s work so hard that opportunities will crave for us.

Having a backup is not wrong. It keeps you safe when life gets unpredictable. The danger comes when Plan B starts living in your head as Plan A. When your safety net becomes your excuse, you stop giving 100% to your real dream. Use a backup for security, but do not let it dilute your hunger.



Your main energy should always flow to the one thing that sets your soul on fire.

I have seen this in my own circle. Friends who spent years preparing for one exam, one goal, one dream. When results didn’t come, they took a stable job to “be practical.” On the outside they are fine. But on late nights, they still open their old notes. They still watch videos about that field. They are surviving, but they are not alive. That is what happens when we leave the one thing we truly wanted. The routine we cursed during preparation becomes the peace we miss later.

People who chase only their big dream and make it real prove this point. Walt Disney faced hundreds of rejections to build a famous theme park. J.K. Rowling kept writing her fantasy book through hard times until it became a global success.

Walt Disney: He wanted a magical place for families. Banks said no many times. He did not give up. He built Disneyland and changed movies forever.

Walt Disney overcame immense failure by risking everything, refusing to accept rejection, and constantly pivoting his

business strategy until his vision worked.

How He Defeated Failure: His first animation studio, Laugh-O-Gram Films, went completely bankrupt in 1923. He lost the rights to his first major hit character, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, to a cheating distributor. Instead of quitting, he used the train ride home to invent Mickey Mouse. Bankers rejected his pitch for Disneyland over 300 times because they thought amusement parks were dirty and unprofitable. For his ultimate risk, he mortgaged his own house and cashed in his life insurance to found the park himself.

J.K. Rowling: She was a single mother with very little money. She wrote her first wizard book in cafes. Many publishers said no. She kept trying until a small company took a chance.

Thomas Edison: He wanted a working electric light. He failed thousands of times. He treated each failure as a step toward his goal.

Elon Musk: He put all his money into electric cars and private space rockets. People thought both ideas would fail. Both companies survived and changed the world.

We humans get tired of routines so quickly, and it starts feeling like we are not living life, we are just surviving. But once you get out of that routine, you slowly realize that the system, that cycle, was actually a blessing. You no longer need your own comfort. You just crave for that one life.

What To Do Now

- Choose One: Write down your one dream. Make it clear, not 5 options
- Burn The Boats: Remove distractions and comforts that make Plan B feel too easy
- Fall In Love With The Process: The discipline you hate today is the blessing you’ll miss tomorrow.
- Fail Forward: Every rejection is data. Like Disney, pivot, but never quit.

True success comes when you commit fully to one dream, take the risks, and refuse to settle for a backup. Failure is not the end. It is the step that leads you to the vision you were chasing all along.

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The Red Atlas



SYED MAJID GILANI

Some memories of childhood remain with us for life. Years pass, places change and people move on, but a small incident can suddenly take us back to those days. For me, one such memory is of my first big bicycle, a red Atlas. I was in the 6th standard. Before that, I had enjoyed the small tricycles and bicycles my father had bought for me. I had spent many happy hours riding them. But as I grew older, I started wanting a proper bicycle. The funny part was that I had never even ridden a big bicycle. I did not know how to balance it or how to start riding one. But that did not stop me. I wanted one badly and kept telling my family about my wish.

Those were simple days. Like many children, I had a small clay piggy pot. Whenever I received a few coins or some small amount of money, I put it into the pot. Slowly, my savings grew. One morning, I took the clay pot to my grandfather, whom we lovingly called Abaji. I told him that I wanted to break the pot and use the money to buy my bicycle. Abaji told me not to break it. He said he would buy the bicycle for me from his own pocket. But I did not agree. I insisted that I wanted to use my own savings. Finally, Abaji gave in.

He took a small hammer and broke the clay pot. The coins and notes scattered around. I sat down and started collecting them. I separated the 10, 20, 25 and 50-paisa coins and the one-rupee coins into different piles. Abaji counted the notes. We found that I had saved about Rs 250. I was very happy. Those coins were special to me because I had collected them slowly, little by little. I felt



proud that I had something of my own to contribute towards the bicycle. Abaji then took me to a local bus towards a cycle shop. I still remember Neelam Cinema, its cinema hoardings and the surroundings of those days. Opposite the cinema was a big bicycle shop. Perhaps it was Haji Amir Joo & Sons, though I do not exactly remember the name now.

I looked at many bicycles. Finally, Abaji bought me a medium-sized red Atlas bicycle. I remember its price being around Rs 850. I had saved Rs 250, and Abaji paid the remaining Rs 600 from his own pocket. After buying the bicycle, Abaji took me to a tea shop near his old office, Shaali Store, now the Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs department. We had samosas and tea there. I do not remember the exact amount we paid, but that small meal has remained in my memory. I also got a lock for the bicycle. The new bicycle was very precious to me, and whenever I left it somewhere, I made sure it was locked.

There was only one problem. I had a bicycle, but I did not know how to ride it. Abaji helped me sit on the bicycle and hold the handle. He walked beside me, guiding me as we slowly made our way through the Eidgah side towards our cherished home in Lalbazar. On the way, he bought me a pista ice cream bar from an ice-cream rehri wala. The pista bar cost Rs 2, which was a rare luxury in those days. At last, we reached home. I was extremely happy. To me, it was not just a bicycle. I felt as if I had bought a helicopter. Papa had returned from his office. I immediately told him, “Papa, you always carry me on your Lambretta scooter. Now I will go everywhere on my own bicycle.” He laughed and hugged me.

Within two or three days, my younger sister Yasmeen and I had learnt to ride the bicycle properly. Soon, riding became part of our everyday life. Of course, learning to ride was not always easy. I fell from the bicycle many times. Sometimes I got cuts and bruises,

and at times there was blood from a wound. But after some time, we would get up, wipe ourselves and start riding again.

That was childhood. We fell, got hurt and continued. The bicycle also taught us to take care of our belongings. A puncture, a loose chain, broken brakes or any other damaged part was noticed immediately. If a bicycle was damaged because of careless riding, the parents would pay for the repair, but the child would also receive a good scolding. We did not always like those words. But slowly, we understood their meaning. Things cost money. When parents spent their hard-earned money repairing something we had damaged through carelessness, we learned to be more careful.

Lalbazar was very different in those days. There were very few people on the streets and much less traffic. The orchard lands were still open, and we had plenty of space to ride and play. We rode through those quiet streets. The bicycle gave us a sense of freedom

that was difficult to explain. Looking back now, I sometimes think about that little clay piggy pot. At that time, I thought Abaji allowed me to break it only because I insisted. Today, I feel there may have been something more.

He could have bought the bicycle himself. He had already offered to do so. But he allowed me to use my own savings. He never gave me a long lecture about valuing things. He simply let me break the pot, collect the coins and count what I had saved. Then he paid the rest. That simple act taught me a lesson I understood much better as I grew older. When we save for something and contribute towards getting it, we value it more. Years have passed. The bicycle is no more. The little lock is also gone. Lalbazar has changed, the open orchard lands have disappeared, and the quiet streets of my childhood are no longer the same.

But the memory of that red Atlas remains clear. I can still see Abaji breaking the clay pot with his small hammer, the coins scattered on the floor, and myself separating them into different piles. I can still remember sitting with Abaji in that tea shop, buying samosa and tea after buying the bicycle. And I can still hear myself telling Papa that I would now go everywhere on my own bicycle.

That red Atlas carried much more than a boy on its seat. It carried my little savings, Abaji’s love, Papa’s laughter, Yasmeen’s company, the falls and bruises, the scoldings and repairs, and the freedom of those simple childhood days. For a boy in the 6th standard, it was not just a bicycle. It was my little helicopter. And perhaps that is why, after all these years, I can still see it so clearly in my mind.

Syed Majid Gilani is a Storyteller, Opinion Writer and a Government Officer. He writes on family, faith, nostalgia, betrayal, resilience, and moral values. He can be contacted at syedmajid6676@gmail.com.

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■ Beyond The Chalkboard

The Quiet Revolution Inside J&K's Government Schools

Our Government School Teachers Are Doing More Than Teaching Lessons. But If We Want Them To Transform Education, Society Must Stop Treating Government Schools As Somebody Else's Responsibility.



DR RIZWAN RUMI

There is an old image of the government school that refuses to die. A faded building. A cracked blackboard. A teacher standing before rows of silent children, dictating lessons from an ageing textbook. The private school, by contrast, is imagined as modern, disciplined and aspirational. But walk into some of Jammu & Kashmir's government schools today, particularly those in rural and remote areas, and that old picture begins to lose its accuracy.

There are teachers turning discarded cardboard into teaching aids, converting mathematics into games, taking children outdoors to understand science, using smartphones to supplement lessons, creating reading corners, developing locally relevant learning material and spending hours beyond the classroom trying to bring a reluctant child back to school.

There is no spectacular announcement when this happens. No ribbon-cutting ceremony. No large advertisement.

Yet the story of government education in Jammu & Kashmir in 2026 is not a story of either success or failure. It is a much more complicated story—one of committed teachers working inside a system that has made significant progress but continues to face serious structural problems.

A System Too Large to Ignore

The scale of Jammu & Kashmir's school education system alone tells us why its future matters. UDISE+ 2023-24 recorded 24,296 schools, nearly 26.3 lakh students and 1.67 lakh teachers across the Union Territory. The overall pupil-teacher ratio was 16:1. At the primary level, the ratio was 13:1, nine at upper-primary, 12 at secondary and 21 at higher-secondary level.

The latest UDISE+ 2024-25-based assessment puts the total number of schools at about 24,192, with roughly 26.5 lakh students and 1.67 lakh teachers. Government schools continue to account for a substantial share of enrolment: around 54.9 per cent of students in Classes I-XII in the available 2024-25 data.

These numbers matter because government schools are not a marginal component of education in Jammu & Kashmir. They remain one of the principal institutions through which children in villages, mountainous areas, economically weaker households and socially vulnerable communities access formal education.

The question, therefore, is not whether government schools matter. They unquestionably do. The real question is: How do we make them stronger?

The Teacher is Often the First Reformer

Educational reform is frequently discussed in the language of policies, schemes, smart classrooms, infrastructure and technology. All of these are important. But eventually, reform reaches a child through one person: the teacher.

A government order cannot inspire a child to read. A smart board cannot understand why a student has stopped participating. A textbook cannot visit the home of a child who has stopped attending school. A teacher can.

This is particularly important in communities where the first generation of children is entering formal education. For such children, the teacher is not merely someone who completes a syllabus. The teacher may be the person who introduces them to books, computers, competitive examinations, careers and possibilities they have never encountered at home.

This is where many government teachers quietly perform a much larger social role. They teach. They counsel. They motivate. They communicate with parents. They identify struggling children. They organise activities. They prepare teaching-learning material. And, in many cases, they work with extremely limited resources.

The most impressive innovations are sometimes the simplest. A handful of bottle caps can become a mathematics lesson. A school garden can become a science laboratory. A local story can become a language exercise. The surrounding forest, stream, orchard or mountain can become a living classroom.

Education does not always need an expensive laboratory to become experiential. It needs a teacher who knows how to turn the world around a child into a source of learning. That is pedagogical innovation—and it deserves recognition.

From Rote Learning to Learning by Doing

The transformation is also visible in the broader direction of education policy.

The National Education Policy 2020 has placed considerable emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy, experiential learning, competency-based education, multidisciplinary learning and the professional development of teachers.

Jammu & Kashmir, too, is moving towards greater use of technology in classrooms. By 2025, the UT had reportedly reached 3,427 smart classrooms, following the addition of around 1,700 classrooms under digital-learning initiatives. The expansion is significant, although connectivity, maintenance and teacher training remain important challenges.

But technology should not become another mistaken definition of educational progress. A smart classroom without a skilled teacher is simply a room containing expensive equipment. A projector cannot replace pedagogy. Artificial intelligence cannot replace empathy. And a digital lesson cannot replace the human relationship between a teacher and a child.

The real digital revolution in our schools will occur when technology becomes a tool in the teacher's hand, rather than a substitute for the teacher.

But Let Us Not Romanticise the System

Defending hardworking teachers should never mean defending every weakness in the government school

plus teachers were to be redeployed according to requirements.

There is a legitimate administrative argument behind rationalisation. A school with very few students and inadequate infrastructure may not provide the educational environment children deserve. Consolidating resources can potentially improve teacher deployment, laboratories, libraries, sanitation and other facilities.

But education is not merely an exercise in accounting. A school that looks "small" on a government spreadsheet may be the only school within walking distance of a mountain village.

If consolidation means that a child must travel significantly farther, the system must ask a basic question: Who bears the cost of that efficiency?

In mountainous and remote areas of Jammu & Kashmir, distance, weather, transportation and road connectivity are not abstract variables. They can determine whether a child attends school at all. Therefore, rationalisation must be accompanied by safe transportation, hostels where necessary, reliable connectivity and careful village-level assessment. Otherwise, an administrative solution can unintentionally create an educational problem.

The Learning Question

Perhaps the most important challenge is not infrastructure. It is learning.

The National Achievement Survey has previously shown learning gaps in Jammu & Kashmir. In the Class III assessment, students in the UT performed below the national average in language and mathematics, with weaknesses across several assessed abilities.

The latest national performance picture also requires caution. In the Performance Grading Index 2.0 for 2024-25, Jammu & Kashmir scored 500.2, compared with 527.3 in 2023-24, placing the

a child is admitted to school, the entire responsibility for learning has been transferred to the teacher. It has not.

A teacher may spend six hours with a child. The family and community shape the remaining eighteen. If parents never ask what the child learned, never look at a notebook, never encourage reading and never attend school meetings, the teacher is being asked to perform an impossible task.

Parents do not need to be highly educated to participate in education. They can ask simple questions:

- "What did you learn today?"
- "Can you read this paragraph to me?"
- "What did you do in mathematics?"
- "Show me your notebook."
- "What did your teacher ask you to practise?"

These small conversations can transform a child's relationship with learning.

School Management Committees Must Become Meaningful

School Management Committees should not exist merely as names on registers. They can become powerful instruments of community participation.

Parents and community representatives can help identify infrastructure gaps, monitor facilities, encourage attendance, support school activities and communicate local concerns to the administration.

Jammu & Kashmir's institutional framework already recognises community involvement in school education, including the role of School Management Committees and local bodies. What is required is not another committee. What is required is an active committee culture.

Imagine a village where the SMC meets every month and asks: Is every

If we genuinely want to strengthen government education, five priorities deserve urgent attention:

1. Fill teacher vacancies: Nearly 13,000 vacancies are too large a gap for a system that expects better learning outcomes. Recruitment and promotion must be timely, transparent and linked to actual subject-wise and geographical requirements.
2. Protect the neighbourhood-school principle: Rationalisation may improve efficiency, but no child should be pushed out of education because the nearest school has become inaccessible. Remote and mountainous areas require special planning.
3. Invest in teachers, not only technology: Smart classrooms are useful, but continuous teacher training, mentoring and academic support are indispensable.
4. Measure learning rather than merely infrastructure: A school should not be judged successful simply because it has a building, electricity, furniture or a smart board. The fundamental question is: Can children read, write, reason, calculate, communicate and apply what they learn?
5. Build community ownership: Parents, SMCs, Panchayats, alumni and local professionals should become partners in school development. Even a modest community library, reading programme, career talk or mentorship initiative can make a difference.

The Teacher Standing Alone is Not Enough

There is a beautiful irony in the story of government education. We expect one teacher to change a child's life. But we rarely ask whether society is willing to change the environment in which that teacher works.

We ask teachers to produce results while classrooms may lack resources. We ask them to embrace technology while expecting them to solve connectivity problems. We ask them to improve learning outcomes while vacancies remain. We ask them to prevent dropouts while communities sometimes remain indifferent. And then, when the system struggles, we blame the teacher alone. That is neither fair nor productive.

The government has a responsibility to provide infrastructure, staffing, training and policy support. Teachers have a responsibility to teach with commitment, professionalism and accountability. Parents have a responsibility to support their children. And communities have a responsibility to protect and strengthen their public schools.

Education is a shared social contract.

The Real Revolution is Already Happening

Perhaps the most important story about Jammu & Kashmir's government schools is not the number of buildings, smart classrooms or government schemes.

It is the teacher who enters a classroom every morning and decides that the limitations of the system will not become the limitations of a child's imagination. It is the teacher who stays after school to help a struggling student. The teacher who visits a home when a child disappears from class. The teacher who creates a learning aid from material that would otherwise be thrown away. The teacher who makes a shy child speak. The teacher who tells a village child that university is possible.

These acts rarely make headlines. But education is built from precisely such acts. We should celebrate them—not to hide the failures of public education, but to remind ourselves of what becomes possible when committed professionals receive the support they deserve.

Jammu & Kashmir does not merely need better schools. It needs stronger public faith in public education. And that faith will not be created by advertisements.

It will be created when parents walk into government schools without embarrassment, when communities stand behind teachers, when administrations fill vacancies, when rationalisation is carried out with sensitivity, when learning becomes the central measure of success, and when society begins to understand that the government school down the road is not merely a government institution.

It is our institution.

The children sitting inside it are not somebody else's children. They are the future doctors, teachers, scientists, writers, entrepreneurs, administrators and citizens of Jammu & Kashmir.

And perhaps the quiet revolution has already begun. We only need to stop looking away long enough to see it.

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system. Jammu & Kashmir has serious educational challenges.

The most striking is the shortage of teachers. In February 2026, the J&K Education Minister informed the Legislative Assembly that 12,977 teaching posts were vacant across the Union Territory—7,985 in Jammu division and 4,992 in Kashmir division.

This is not a minor administrative issue. A teacher cannot be expected to produce transformative learning outcomes if the system does not provide adequate human resources.

The problem becomes particularly acute in higher classes and specialised subjects, where a shortage of subject teachers can directly affect students' preparation for board examinations and higher education.

Teacher vacancies also undermine the very idea of educational equality. A child in a remote village deserves the same opportunity to learn mathematics, science, English, computer education and other subjects as a child in an urban centre. That equality cannot be achieved merely through policy documents. It requires teachers in classrooms.

The Rationalisation Dilemma

Another uncomfortable issue is the rationalisation of schools. The J&K government has merged or closed 4,358 schools under its rationalisation exercise—1,274 in Jammu division and 3,084 in Kashmir division, according to the Education Minister's statement reported in March 2025. The stated rationale included schools functioning in the same vicinity, as well as institutions operating without adequate buildings or with other viability concerns. Sur-

UT in the AKANSHI-2 category.

The district picture is equally uneven. The 2024-25 Performance Grading Index for Districts places Pulwama at 343, Srinagar at 328, Ganderbal at 314 and Anantnag at 312, while Kulgam recorded 297. Several other districts were below 300.

These figures should not be used as a weapon against teachers. They should be used as a diagnostic tool. A low score tells us where the system needs intervention. It does not tell us that every teacher in that system is failing.

In fact, the opposite may sometimes be true: a teacher may be working exceptionally hard inside a school facing multiple structural disadvantages.

The Forgotten Partner: The Community

This brings us to the missing piece in our education debate. The community.

We often speak about the government and teachers as if they are the only stakeholders in public education. They are not. Parents are stakeholders. Local communities are stakeholders. Panchayats are stakeholders. School Management Committees are stakeholders. Civil society is a stakeholder. Local professionals, writers, academics, doctors, engineers, entrepreneurs and former students can all contribute.

A school is not an isolated government building. It is a community institution. And when the community withdraws from it, the school becomes weaker.

Parents Cannot Outsource Education

One of the most damaging assumptions in contemporary education is that once

child attending? Does every girl have access to a functional toilet? Does the school have books? Is the drinking water facility working? Which students are falling behind? Which teacher needs support? Can a local professional volunteer one hour a month?

Such questions can change a school without waiting for another large government scheme.

Recognise Teachers—But Hold Them Accountable Too

There is another balance we need to restore. Teachers deserve respect. But respect and accountability are not opposites. They are partners.

A teacher who innovates should be recognised. A teacher who consistently neglects duty should be held accountable. A school that produces excellent learning outcomes despite difficult circumstances should be celebrated. A school struggling year after year should receive intervention.

The solution is neither blind criticism nor blind praise. It is professional dignity combined with professional accountability.

This is particularly important because the profession itself is changing. The teacher of today is expected to understand child psychology, inclusive education, digital tools, competency-based assessment, foundational literacy, classroom management and continuously evolving curricula. That requires continuous professional development—not occasional workshops where attendance certificates become the primary outcome.

What Jammu & Kashmir Should Do Next

US Ambassador Hints

government had taken "incredible steps" towards making the region safer. "New Delhi, the Chief Minister here, the government here, have made some incredible steps to make this area safer. So we will look at whether the travel warning imposed and recommended by the U.S. should be downgraded. Because it is a beautiful area, and many Americans would like to come here and see its beauty," he added.

Gor, who also serves as US Envoy for South and Central Asia, called Jammu and Kashmir an important part of India.

"As everybody here knows, I am the U.S. Ambassador to India. And this is an important part of India. I am here visiting for the first time," he said.

The envoy described J&K as "incredibly beautiful" and said he was "thrilled" to be in the Valley.

On his meeting with Omar Abdullah, Gor termed it "very good" and "very cordial."

"We have some follow-ups that we hope to take back to Washington, back to Delhi. It was very warm, very cordial, and we look forward to building this relationship further," he said.

In a post on X, Gor said they discussed ways to deepen economic collaboration and create opportunities that would mutually benefit both nations.

"Appreciated the opportunity to meet with Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister @ Omarabudllah and to learn more about his priorities. We discussed ways to deepen economic collaboration and create opportunities that would mutually benefit both of our nations," he wrote.

In another post, Gor said he very much enjoyed meeting the Chief Minister. Later, the U.S. envoy took a Shikara ride in Dal Lake—(KNO)

US Ambassador

positive outcomes for Jammu & Kashmir. He voiced optimism for further widening and deepening engagement across sectors such as tourism, horticulture & the new economy.

Ambassador Gor noted that the meeting was held in a cordial manner. He noted that Jammu & Kashmir's rich natural heritage holds strong appeal for visitors from the United States. He added that potential avenues to facilitate increased tourism and promote travel from the United States would be explored.

The United States delegation included Senior Advisor Chester (Brand) Kroeger, Chief of Staff Lisa Browne, First Secretary Gary Applegarth, and Political Advisor A. Sukesh.

From the Government of Jammu & Kashmir, the meeting was attended by Cabinet Minister Sakeena Itoo, Advisor to the Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha), Gurwinder Singh Oberoi and Member of the Legislative Assembly, Tanvir Sadiq.

SC Stresses

directed the Union Secretary for the Ministry of Education to file an affidavit setting out the steps being taken to implement the Radhakrishnan Committee's recommendations, as nuanced by the Nandan Nilekani Committee.

The Court said its objective was to ensure that the country has a robust examination institution capable of retaining expertise and adapting to technological changes." Our duty is to ensure that there is a vibrant institution that the country can be proud of. If you don't institutionalise, experienced people get transferred, and the entire experience is lost. There are a lot of technological changes that have to be brought about", it said.

The matter will be listed on a date after three weeks.During the hearing, the Court emphasised that its concern was not merely the safeguards currently in place for the preparation, printing, transportation and distribution of question papers, but it is the institutionalisation of the NTA, including its infrastructure, manpower, technology and institutional memory."

Our concern is how you institutionalise the conduct of the examination. Secure office premises, confidential operational infrastructure, cyber security. They have suggested 10 vertically to be created. Testing centres, central network operators, etc. Each of these the committee said that you need to create this infrastructure," Justice Narasimha said.

The K Radhakrishnan Committee was constituted under the chairmanship of former ISRO chairman Dr K Radhakrishnan after the NEET-UG 2024 paper leak controversy. It submitted its report to the Ministry of Education in October 2024, making 101 recommendations to overhaul the NTA and strengthen the security and integrity of public examinations.

The recommendations include measures concerning the examination infrastructure, security of question papers, technology, manpower and institutional mechanisms within the NTA.Solicitor General of India (SGI) Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and NTA, explained the safeguards currently in place for the preparation, printing, transportation and distribution of question papers. He said the question paper is prepared through multiple layers of moderation. For a Physics paper comprising 100 questions, several moderators first prepare a question bank of around 500 questions. Different moderators then select questions and prepare four question papers, out of which two are finally selected by the Director General of NTA.

Mehta said the identity of the final question paper remains unknown until it is sent in sealed boxes to identified printing presses, which are monitored through CCTV and CISO surveillance.He said the printing process is video-recorded and outsiders are not allowed inside once the sealed box is opened.Mehta also explained that question papers are packed in iron boxes with non-openable locks and transported in GPS-tracked vehicles. Two sets of papers are kept in separate boxes in bank strong rooms, generally at SBI or Canara Bank branches.On the morning of the examination, the DG, NTA informs the city coordinator about which set is to be used.

The papers are then taken in a motorcade involving district officials, with the movement videographed, before being distributed to class coordinators, Mehta submitted. The Court said that these safeguards were already within the scope of the Radhakrishnan Committee's recommendations, which has rightly suggested institutionalisation of NTA. It thus inquired about what is being done in that regard. "What you have told us is something which is already in the purview of the Radhakrishnan Committee. It has correctly said it is a systemic problem which needs institutionalisation. That's why these are matters which need to be institutionalised. What is the body, how many officers, how much staff, what is the security, etc.?" the court asked.

The Court specifically sought details on the implementation of recommendations relating to a permanent committee for sealing question papers, the appointment of senior officers and the creation of institutional expertise."The method by which you do sealing of the papers has to be undertaken by a permanent committee. How many DGs, etc. have been appointed? This is what we want to know by way of regular affidavits", the Court said. Stressing the need to preserve institutional memory and expertise, the Court noted that frequent transfers of officials could result in the loss of experience within the examination system.

"What really needs to be done is institutional memory, institutional expertise. All that we need to see is, has it been set up? You'll have to have R&D infrastructure", the Court said.The Court also asked about the creation of a sovereign database and infrastructure for storage and security. It said that a director-rank officer should be responsible for security-related issues."So far as security is concerned, you need to have a director-rank officer. Then you will realise what the pitfalls are," it explained.

The Court also questioned the need to rely on artificial intelligence for translating question papers into Indian languages."Do you need AI translation for question papers? In our country we don't need to blindly rely on AI for this", it asked. Mehta said the translation process was being done by humans. The Court reiterated that institutionalising the NTA was a matter of importance and that the examination agency must be strengthened in a manner that prevents a recurrence of the problems.

Mehta informed the Court that the Nandan Nilekani Committee was meeting on Wednesday and would work on reforms to improve upon the Radhakrishnan Committee's recommendations.Advocate Tani Dubey, appearing for FAIMA, pointed out that the Radhakrishnan Committee had recommended conducting examinations entirely in computer-based mode, but that recommendation was still under consideration.Mehta responded that moving completely to CBT mode could itself carry greater risks.

"We are concerned with the institutionalisation of NTA. With all infrastructure, manpower, technological requirements etc. we have been informed that the Nandan Nilekani Committee has recommended reforms relating to AI, blockchain etc", it noted. (ANI)

MSMEs True

conclave- "Shaping the Future of MSMEs, Nano GCCs & Technology-led Growth" - is timely and visionary.

The Lieutenant Governor reaffirmed that MSMEs are powering employment, driving exports, and nurturing entrepreneurship across the nation.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted the emergence of Nano Global Capability Centres (GCCs), where small, specialized teams deliver high-value capabilities once reserved for large corporations.

"I strongly believe that this is democratization in its truest sense. It really means that a mid-sized enterprise in a tier-two city can now build, own, and scale world-class technology capability on its own terms.

And behind all of this is technology as the very engine of growth. Artificial intelligence, automation and digital infrastructure are compressing timelines, lowering barriers, and opening doors that were once closed to all but the largest players. This gives cities like Jammu, Srinagar a new sense of confidence and I believe today's conclave is more than just fire-side chat. It is a call to action. A call to reimagine what our MSMEs can become and to embrace the nano GCC model as a genuine pathway to global relevance. It is a call to place technology at the very heart of India's next chapter of inclusive growth," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said the Union Territory of Jammu Kashmir is a vibrant example of all-round transformation in the country. Since 2021, investments worth Rs. 5,824 crore in FY 2025–26 alone marked a 13-fold increase compared to pre-2021 averages. Over

four years, investments exceeded those made in the preceding 70 years. Start-ups rose from 69 in 2020 to 1,305 in FY 2025–26, while Udyam registrations surged from 24,000 in 2021 to 6.16 lakh this year.

The Lieutenant Governor also outlined four pressing challenges for MSMEs including affordable credit, technology upgradation, and supply-chain integration to ensure market access and brand-building for small entrepreneurs. He also called for administrative reforms, wherever required to eliminate the red tape to create an enabling environment.

The Lieutenant Governor called for a forward-looking roadmap with sustainable trade that will encourage MSMEs to adopt green technologies and renewable energy. He also stressed on formalisation of micro industries to Expand institutional credit access. The Lieutenant Governor asked the participants to focus on education–industry partnerships and establishment of incubation centres and design studios within industrial clusters.

"The fourth objective is to strengthen export competitiveness, and I believe that this opportunity is especially significant for Jammu Kashmir. Our climate and distinctive cultural and traditional production chains provide us with an exceptional position in the export sector. Therefore, initiatives such as "One District, One Export Hub" need to be promoted on a large scale," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasized that India's economic progress cannot be complete without acknowledging the perseverance and entrepreneurial spirit of MSMEs.

"Our bright future rests upon the aspirations of small and medium businesses. Let us build an ecosystem that is robust, globally competitive, environmentally conscious, and inclusive. On the strong foundation of MSMEs, we must develop an economy, in which every region, every section, and every talent in Jammu Kashmir finds opportunities to advance, and where young people do not merely seek jobs but create employment," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor also spoke on the challenges that the country is facing today. He called upon the industry leaders and all the key stakeholders to make their significant contribution in building a terror-free, corruption-free, merit based and prosperous society.

"There is a lot of discussion in the country regarding temple offerings. A respected member of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board suggested in a meeting that the manual counting process should be stopped. So, two Cash Recycler Machines (CRM) have been installed there, and the remaining CRMs will be installed in 15 days. The human interface itself has been eliminated. No employee of the Shrine Board or the bank will have any direct involvement in it," he said.

Shri Vikramjit Singh, Commissioner Secretary, Industries and Commerce Department J&K; Shri Rahul Sahai, Chairman, ICC Jammu Chapter; Shri Vikramaditya Singh, Trustee, Dharmarth Trust; Shri Rakesh Sinha, CEO, Quintes Global; Dr Arun Kumar Manhas, Director, Industries & Commerce Department Jammu, senior officials, members of Indian Chamber of Commerce, Industry Leaders and Experts, Investors and representatives of various trade and business organisations attended the conclave.

Ms Dewyani Rana, Member of Legislative Assembly from Nagrota, Dr Rakesh Minhas, Deputy Commissioner Jammu, Shri Devansh Yadav, Municipal Commissioner Jammu, Shri Harvinder Singh, CEO Mission Yuva, Shri Joginder Singh, SSP Jammu, senior officers of civil and Police administration, were also present.

SMVDU Has Emerged

successful in their careers but also socially responsible citizens.

Extending warm greetings to the University family, the Lieutenant Governor described the day as a celebration of foresight, resolve, and sustained efforts that has transformed SMVDU into a centre of knowledge, innovation, and social responsibility. He emphasised that the University, blessed by Mata Vaishno Devi, carries in its name the tradition of devotion, strength, and faith, inspiring millions across India and the world.

The Lieutenant Governor said that a university is not built by its buildings but by ideas, dreams, and possibilities. He highlighted the role of visionary leadership, dedicated faculty, and curious students in shaping institutions that nurture not only knowledge but also humility, sensitivity, and responsibility towards society.

Reflecting on SMVDU's journey, the Lieutenant Governor lauded its achievements in education and research. He noted that faculty members have secured around 140 research projects, including international collaborations, and established a state-of-the-art AI and Deep Learning Lab. The University has received 14 patents, incubated 30 start-ups, and launched innovative programmes such as peer-learning. He urged the institution to strengthen industry–academia relations by organising open-house meetings to commercialise patents and innovations.

The Lieutenant Governor stressed that the true measure of a university's success lies in its students and alumni, who carry forward its reputation through their contributions to society and the nation. He encouraged SMVDU to leverage government initiatives such as the Rs. One lakh crore research fund announced by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi on 15th August 2026 and the PM Research Chairs scheme launched earlier this year, to ensure maximum participation in national innovation efforts.

"In the contemporary world, research and innovation becomes meaningful when it finds solutions to real problems, improves the quality of life in society and brings positive change to the lives of ordinary citizens through its contributions across different fields.

On 15 August, the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, made a historic announcement from the ramparts of the Red Fort and allocated Rs.1 lakh crore. He called upon the youth of the country to focus on research and innovation, saying that they should come forward with ambitious dreams. The Government of India had created a robust system of financial support, and that no young person would now face lack of resources.

I would like the Vice-Chancellor to constitute a team comprising faculty members and selected students so that the maximum possible number of applications may be submitted from this University," the Lieutenant Governor said.

In his speech, the Lieutenant Governor underscored that education is the most powerful investment for universities, society, and the nation. He cited foreign university's success in generating revenue through innovation and research as an example, urging Indian universities to aspire to similar heights by focusing on research, innovation, leadership, and entrepreneurship.

The Lieutenant Governor identified key challenges facing Indian universities, including limited research, shortage of faculty, lack of accountability and weak industry linkages. He called for a change in mindset, urging institutions to ask not "What should we teach?" but "What problems must we solve?"

He emphasised that India's youthful population, creativity, and risk-taking ability are its greatest assets, and universities must transform students into creators of opportunities rather than mere job seekers.

Highlighting India's strengths, the Lieutenant Governor pointed to the nation's ability to innovate at low cost, its cultural and linguistic diversity, and its vast diaspora. He urged SMVDU to connect these strengths with its research ecosystem and create solutions for real-world challenges in healthcare, rural economy, urbanisation, and digital innovation.

The Lieutenant Governor also emphasised the importance of holistic education, calling for the promotion of sports, arts, literature, debates, and cultural activities alongside science and technology. He encouraged the University to engage with rural communities, promote sustainable development, and adopt best practices from global education models such as emphasis on fieldwork, industry partnerships, and a strong vocational training system.

Looking ahead, the Lieutenant Governor presented a comprehensive vision for SMVDU by 2040. He urged the University to become a leading global knowledge centre, establish advanced research facilities in AI, robotics, biotechnology, and climate science, and develop digital learning networks across rural Jammu Kashmir. He also called for international student-exchange programmes to strengthen global collaboration.

He said the ultimate purpose of education is not limited to economic development but also the creation of creative human beings who understand themselves, respect nature, and recognise their responsibility towards humanity. He urged SMVDU to harmonise modernity with human values and to resolve to become a pilgrimage centre of knowledge, a laboratory of innovation, and a beacon guiding society towards progress.

"On this Foundation Day, I urge all of you to move beyond established paths and work courageously on the important issues. As efforts are undertaken in this direction, we should ask ourselves: What do we possess that other countries do not? Our nation's greatest wealth and strength is the passion, ingenuity and daring spirit of our youth. We must remember, the light of education becomes complete only when it moves beyond the walls of the University and reaches the last person in society," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor invited suggestions from various stakeholders for the establishment of the state-of-the-art International Museum of Goddess at Katra. On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor also inaugurated the Self-Help Group's Bakery unit at SMVDU.

Dr Ashok Bhan, Shri Suresh Kumar Sharma and Ms Gunjan Rana- Members of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board; Dr Mandeep K. Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor; Prof. Pragati Kumar, Vice-Chancellor, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University; Shri Bhim Sen Tuti, IGP Jammu; Shri Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; Shri Sachin Kumar Vaishya, CEO, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board; Shri Shiv Kumar Sharma, DIG, Udhampur-Reasi Range; Shri Kumar Abhishek, Deputy Commissioner Reasi; Members of University's Executive Council; Heads of various educational institutions; senior officials, faculty members, staff, and students of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University attended the foundation day celebrations.

Flash Floods Hit

reported from several parts of north, central and south Kashmir, besides Reasi, Rajouri, Poonch, Banihal-Ramban, Kishtwar and adjoining areas.

It said the current spell of rain and thundershowers was continuing over many places, with brief intense heavy showers reported over Tral and adjoining areas, parts of Ganderbal including Kangari, hilly areas of Budgam, Shopian and Kulgam, and parts of Poonch, Rajouri, Reasi, Ramban and Kishtwar.

The weather department warned that intense heavy showers could trigger

localised flash floods, mudslides and landslides, particularly in hilly areas. It also cautioned about the possibility of shooting stones and landslides at vulnerable locations.

Jammu recorded 88.7 mm of rainfall in the 24 hours ending at 8-30 am, while Samba received 85 mm and Kathua 76.6 mm, according to rainfall data compiled by Kashmir Weather.

Katra recorded 48.2 mm, Reasi 39 mm, Udhampur 32.2 mm, Batote 28.8 mm, Banihal 20.7 mm, Doda 9 mm, Ramban 6.5 mm, Jammu Airport 33 mm and Baderwah 1.8 mm during the period.

Poonch recorded 1.5 mm, while no rainfall was recorded in Rajouri and Kishtwar during the same period.

The Meteorological Centre has forecast generally hot and humid conditions in J&K from August 20 to 22, with one or two spells of light to moderate rain or thundershowers at scattered to many places and brief intense heavy showers in a few districts during early morning and afternoon hours.

From August 23 to 27, generally hot and humid weather is expected, with brief spells of rain or thundershowers at scattered places during the early morning and afternoon hours.

The weather department advised people, particularly those in vulnerable and hilly areas, to remain cautious during intense rainfall spells.

It also said farmers could continue harvesting and other agricultural operations, subject to local weather conditions—(KNO)

CM Takes Early-

specifications and taking into account the requirements of Seismic Zone-V.

The Chief Minister was briefed that the bridge is expected to facilitate smoother movement of commuters heading towards Shehara-e-Khaas, streamline traffic flow, improve road safety and strengthen urban mobility in the historic core of the city.

The Chief Minister also inspected the newly constructed building of the Urban Primary Health Centre (UPHC), Maharaj Gunj. The upgraded facility, located in the historic heart of Shehara-e-Khaas, is intended to strengthen primary healthcare delivery and improve patient care through enhanced infrastructure.

The project has an estimated cost of ₹262.54 lakh under UT CAPEX and is being executed by the Public Works Department (R&B), Kashmir. Work commenced in November 2024 and is scheduled for completion by November 20, 2026.

During his inspection of the medical facility, the Chief Minister was informed that brickwork, internal plastering, door and window framework, tile work on all three floors and window fixing have been completed. Electrical works are about 85 per cent complete, while the fire-fighting system has been completed. Roofing of the adjacent building (Structure-B) has also been completed and overhead water tanks installed.

At Mirza Kamil Sahib Chowk, Hawal, the Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for the beautification, upgradation and junction improvement project, aimed at improving traffic management, pedestrian movement and the overall appearance of the important urban junction.

The project, under the UT Sector, has a cost of ₹132.85 lakh. The proposed works include upgradation of the existing road pavement, development of pedestrian-friendly footpaths, new kerbs and drainage arrangements, road markings, traffic signage, bollards, delineators and glow studs. The project also provides for modern LED street lighting, decorative illuminated butterfly and tree sculptures, and solar traffic blinkers at pedestrian crossings to enhance pedestrian safety.

At Sub District Hospital (SDH) Habak, Hazratbal, the Chief Minister inspected the ongoing construction of the new hospital building and reviewed the progress of the long-pending project.

The project had remained stalled for a considerable period and was revived after the present Council of Ministers granted the required norm relaxations, paving the way for its resumption and eventual strengthening of medical services in the area.

The Chief Minister inspected the ongoing upgradation of SDH Habak, Hazratbal, which has a revised project cost of ₹54.49 crore and envisages a two-phase facility comprising two basements, four stores and a 50-bed hospital. He directed the concerned authorities to maintain momentum and ensure that the upgraded facility is completed within the stipulated timelines.

The Chief Minister next inspected the ongoing conservation and restoration of the historic Aali Masjid at Eidgah, being undertaken by the Department of Culture. Reaffirming the immense historical, architectural and spiritual importance of the centuries-old monument, he directed the authorities to ensure meticulous conservation and timely completion of the project while maintaining the character and heritage value of the structure.

The first phase of the conservation and restoration project has a cost of ₹487.94 lakh and is being executed by the Public Works Department (R&B), Kashmir, under the Archives head. Work commenced in July 2025 and is expected to be completed by October 2026.

The scope of the project includes waterproof cement concrete works, wooden flooring, CGI sheets and painting, KhatamBand work, papier-mâché, chiselling of Devri, strengthening of roofing, ashlar stone work and Devri cornices. The Chief Minister was informed that roofing, wooden flooring inside the mosque and Khatam Band work have already been completed.

The Chief Minister also reviewed the major road-safety infrastructure project involving construction of flyovers at Parimpora and Shalteng Junctions on the Srinagar Bypass (NH-44).

The project, being executed under Road Safety Works on EPC mode, has an approximate total length of 2,000 metres, with elevated portions of 105 metres at Parimpora and 92 metres at Shalteng. The six-lane facility has a deck width of 14 metres for the specified carriageway arrangement and provides for approaches, service roads, drainage and utility corridors.

The estimated cost of the project is ₹85 crore with a project duration of 48 months. The Chief Minister was also briefed that strengthening of the truss has been completed.

At SKIMS Medical College and Hospital, Bemina, the Chief Minister reviewed the progress of two major institutional buildings—the 250-bedded IPD Block and the College/Laboratory Block.

The 250-bedded IPD Block has an approved cost of ₹83.94 crore. The project has achieved 80 per cent physical progress and is targeted for completion by December 2026.

The College/Laboratory Block has an approved cost of ₹88.23 crore. The project has achieved 66 per cent physical progress and is targeted for completion by December 2027.

The Chief Minister also inspected the site of the new High Court Complex at Rakhi-Aksha, Bemina, a comprehensive project having an approved cost of ₹908.20 crore.

The main building, comprising two basements, ground floor and six upper floors, will house courtrooms, Judges' chambers and lounge, Bar rooms, meeting rooms and podium parking.

The proposed Western Block, comprising two basements, ground floor and five upper floors, will accommodate the judicial branch, Registrar chambers, library, lawyers' chambers, cafeteria, medical branch, archives and podium parking. The Eastern Block, also comprising two basements, ground floor and five upper floors, will house the administration branch, Registrar chambers, meditation chamber, lawyers' chambers, cafeteria, archives and podium parking. These two blocks are yet to be tendered.

The project also envisages, in Phase-II, a police constabulary, judicial block, guest house, auditorium and residential quarters. The overall complex is planned to provide 1,600 car-parking spaces, including 265 spaces in Podium-1 and 115 spaces in Podium-2 of the main building.

The Chief Minister subsequently inspected the site for the proposed Morninab Vehicle Underpass (VUP), intended to reduce traffic congestion and facilitate seamless movement along the National Highway.

The proposed four-lane RCC T-Beam slab type underpass will have a 22.50-metre main carriageway, service roads with paved shoulders on both sides, a one-kilometre total main-carriageway approach length and drainage/utility corridors. The viaduct will have a vertical clearance of 5.5 metres.

The Chief Minister also reviewed associated traffic infrastructure proposals, including the underpass at Nowgam Railway Station and the Foot Over Bridge at Children Hospital, Bemina. The Nowgam underpass will have a 25-metre main carriageway, service roads on both sides and a 5.5-metre vertical clearance, besides a 270-metre railway approach road. The proposed FOB at Children Hospital, Bemina, will have a length of 48.8 metres and width of 3.19 metres, with steel fabrication and staircases on both sides. Lift provision has also been envisaged for persons with disabilities, senior citizens and women.

The combined sanctioned amount for these works is ₹31.52 crore.

At Gindun Sports Complex, Rajbagh, the Chief Minister inspected the recently completed main swimming pool, a state-of-the-art aquatic facility aimed at promoting competitive swimming, diving and other aquatic sports in Jammu and Kashmir.

The project, which was initiated in 2014 and had remained languishing during 2019–20 due to paucity of funds, was subsequently revived. Completed in November 2025 and commissioned in July 2026, the facility has been developed at a cost of ₹20.60 crore.

The international-standard swimming facility has a 50-metre by 25-metre pool with 10 lanes, a maximum depth of 3.88 metres and minimum depth of 1.40 metres, along with 1-metre, 3-metre and 5-metre diving platforms. It includes gender-based changing rooms and washrooms, 50 storage lockers, seating capacity for 300 spectators, modern filtration, circulation and disinfection systems, lifeguard and pool management facilities, equipment storage, barrier-free access and fire-safety and emergency provisions.

The Chief Minister also reviewed the Training-cum-Toddler/All-Weather Heated Pool facility and inspected the newly completed Gymnastic Hall at Gindun, Rajbagh. The gymnastic hall, measuring 110 feet by 70 feet and covering around 8,700 square feet, has been developed as a dedicated facility for gymnastics training and indoor sports activities. The project was initiated on June 19, 2023, at an advertised cost of ₹328.77 lakh, and was completed in July 2026.

Speaking after the tour, the Chief Minister described the extensive visit as a recognition of the importance of Srinagar and the need to give focused attention

to both capital cities of Jammu and Kashmir.

"We are the only area in this country where there are two capitals—Srinagar in the summer and Jammu in the winter. It is obvious that both cities need to be given special attention. We left at 6:30 in the morning to inspect some important projects, and around 10–12 projects were reviewed in the city. Most of the projects are in good progress. We need to give a push to one or two of them," he said.

He said that field visits provide an opportunity to assess the actual position of projects and compare it with the information available at the Secretariat.

"The benefit of these tours is that we get a chance to compare what is told in the Secretariat and the ground reality. I assure the people of Srinagar that similar projects will be taken up. The big bottlenecks will be corrected. We need to decongest Srinagar from traffic jams, for which some important steps have to be taken. In Shehara-e-Khaas, there is a huge problem of parking, and we will address and resolve that issue also," the Chief Minister said.

During the tour, the Chief Minister was accompanied by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary, Minister for Health & Medical Education Sakina Itoo, Minister for Sports Satish Sharma, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, MLA Khanyar Ali Mohammad Sagar, MLA Habba Kadal Shamim Firdous, MLA Eidgh Mubarik Gul, MLA Zaidibal Tanvir Sadiq, MLA Hazratbal Salman Ali Sagar, MLA Chanapora Mushtaq Guroo and MLA Lal Chowk Sheikh Ahsan Ahmed.

Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, Commissioner Secretary Youth Services & Sports, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Commissioner Srinagar Municipal Corporation, Director Health Services Kashmir, Engineer-in-Chief R&B, Secretary Sports Council, senior engineers of executing agencies and other concerned officers and officials also accompanied the Chief Minister during the tour.

CS Reviews UNDP

Department to constitute a dedicated team to work in close coordination with the UNDP team and formulate a comprehensive roadmap identifying the interventions required under each SDG for achieving the desired targets over the coming years.

He emphasised the need to undertake a comprehensive mapping of Centrally Sponsored Schemes and UT Government schemes against the respective SDGs so that the contribution of each scheme towards individual goals and targets is clearly established. He further called for identifying the additional interventions and resource requirements that may be necessary to bridge existing gaps and accelerate progress towards the identified targets.

The Chief Secretary stressed that achievement of the SDGs cannot be confined to individual departments or isolated schemes, as several goals require cross-cutting interventions and coordinated action across multiple sectors. He called for leveraging existing schemes and programmes while simultaneously assessing the requirement for additional funding under appropriate budgetary provisions.

He further directed that the exercise should identify the targeted population and beneficiaries for various interventions so as to facilitate focused implementation and measurable outcomes. He laid emphasis on convergence of schemes, coordinated implementation and outcome-based monitoring over a defined period of time.

The Chief Secretary's directions are aimed at moving the exercise beyond a simple tagging of budgetary allocations and towards preparation of a practical, time-bound and results-oriented action plan for achieving SDG targets in Jammu & Kashmir.

On this occasion the Additional Chief Secretary, Finance, Shailendra Kumar, emphasised the need for assigning a clear role to every scheme in achieving the respective SDG targets.

He called for mapping each scheme against the relevant SDG and assessing its contribution towards the concerned goal, including the extent of contribution that can reasonably be achieved on the ground. Such an exercise, he observed, would provide greater clarity on what needs to be done, where the intervention is required and within what timeframe.

He also stressed the importance of capacity building of officers and departmental functionaries alongside preparation of the SDG-aligned budgeting framework to ensure that the proposed system is implemented effectively at the operational level.

The ACS Finance further called for initiating the exercise immediately so that its early benefits could be realised and the necessary framework incorporated into the next year's budgetary exercise by the concerned departments.

The UNDP proposal envisages a three-year programme aimed at integrating SDGs into the budgeting and public financial management systems of Jammu & Kashmir. The proposed framework seeks to establish a direct linkage between budgetary inputs, departmental outputs, measurable outcomes and SDG targets, thereby enabling more informed decisions on allocation and utilisation of public resources.

The strategy involves three principal components including SDG Budget Tagging Framework; an integrated digital platform linked with IFMS; and institutional capacity building through an Output–Outcome Monitoring Framework (OOMF).

Under the proposed SDG Budget Tagging Framework, departmental schemes and expenditure heads would be mapped against specific SDG goals and targets, with expenditure proposed to be classified as Directly Contributing, Indirectly Contributing or Neutral. The framework envisages coverage of all 20 departments as well as district budgets.

A web-based SDG-IFMS portal has also been proposed for tracking, analysing and visualising budgetary allocations and expenditure against SDGs. The portal would be integrated with the existing IFMS architecture and SDG dashboard and would provide a department, goal- and district-wise view of SDG expenditure.

The proposed framework would also facilitate quarterly reporting of SDG expenditure vis-à-vis outcomes, enabling departments to assess the effectiveness of spending and helping policymakers redirect resources towards areas where development gaps are more pronounced.

The UNDP team also highlighted the progress made by Jammu & Kashmir in its SDG journey. As per the NITI Aayog SDG India Index 2023-24, it was revealed that J&K's composite SDG score improved from 53 in 2018 to 74 in 2023-24, a gain of 21 points, making J&K the second fastest-improving Union Territory nationally and ranking it second among all Union Territories.

The presentation noted that J&K has already established important institutional foundations for SDG localisation. The SDG Coordination Centre (SDGCC) was established with technical support from NITI Aayog and UNDP, while State and District Indicator Frameworks have been finalised and progress reports prepared for all 20 districts with a live monitoring dashboard also operational here.

The proposed intervention is expected to strengthen the shift from input-based to outcome-based governance, enabling departments to assess the actual contribution of public expenditure towards development goals.

The framework would also help identify underfunded SDG areas, improve convergence among schemes, avoid duplication and support evidence-based rationalisation of schemes

J&K sets district-wise roadmap for sports infrastructure: CS YSS

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Commissioner Secretary, Youth Services & Sports department, Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, Wednesday chaired a review of the department's sports infrastructure, ongoing capital works, Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS), Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) projects and programmes for strengthening sports and youth engagement across Jammu and Kashmir.

The review took stock of the work undertaken by the department over the past several months. It set out a district-level roadmap for expansion, upgradation and better utilisation of sports facilities, with particular emphasis on equitable access, athlete development and time-bound completion of projects.

The meeting was attended by Director General Youth Services & Sports J&K Anuradha Gupta, senior officers of the department, Planning, Financial Advisor and Sports Council representatives, Chief Planning Officers, District Statistical and Evaluation Officers and District Youth Services & Sports Officers from across the Union Territory.

A detailed presentation was made on the portfolio of sports infrastructure projects taken up under Capex, SASCI and CSS, along with the status of ongoing works, funding, execution and future requirements. The department has taken up 210 new sports projects under Capex and 17 projects under SASCI, with a cumulative investment of over 500 crore. Against these projects, around ₹160 crore have already been released to the concerned Heads of Departments and executing agencies.

Dr Shahid Iqbal directed the concerned agencies to expedite tendering and execution while maintaining quality standards and ensuring that projects



are completed within the approved timelines. He stressed that the focus should not only be on creation of new assets but also on making existing infrastructure functional, accessible and suitable for regular sporting activity.

The Commissioner Secretary directed the Chief Planning Officers, District Statistical and Evaluation Officers and District Youth Services & Sports Officers to undertake a comprehensive district-wise assessment of sports infrastructure, including playfields, stadiums, indoor facilities and other sporting assets.

The assessment will identify infrastructure gaps, underserved areas and facilities requiring augmentation. Existing assets will be mapped and geotagged and district plans will form the basis for prioritising new infrastructure as well as upgradation of existing facilities.

Dr Shahid Iqbal called for greater involvement of local youth and sporting communities at the planning stage so that facilities are designed around actual local requirements and receive sustained community utilisation. He asked for according particular attention to border and remote areas, hilly and difficult terrain, tribal areas and other underserved regions besides ensuring adequate sporting opportunities in schools, colleges and other educational institutions. The approach will seek to create a more balanced sports ecosystem in which access to facilities

is not determined by geographical location, he added.

The Commissioner Secretary emphasised that infrastructure planning must be linked with a clear pathway for identification, nurturing and development of sporting talent. Facilities are to be assessed not merely as physical assets but for their ability to support regular coaching, competitions, access to equipment, fitness and conditioning, talent identification and progression of promising athletes. The department will accordingly work towards strengthening the sporting ecosystem from the grassroots, with appropriate linkages between schools, colleges, district-level facilities, coaching programmes and higher-level training opportunities, he added.

He also directed that the existing playfields and indoor facilities be assessed for essential equipment, amenities and support systems so that the substantial public investment already made translates into greater utilisation and sporting outcomes.

The meeting also reviewed the status of regularisation of Rehbar-e-Khel (ReKs) engaged by the department.

The Commissioner Secretary was informed that the proposed regularisation of around 1,800 ReKs are at an advanced stage while a proposal covering another 500 ReKs has been submitted to the Finance Department.

Dr Shahid Iqbal directed

that the process be pursued on priority and with the objective of completing the regularisation process for all eligible ReKs during the current year, subject to completion of requisite statutory and financial formalities.

The meeting also reviewed the status of Physical Education Masters, Zonal Physical Education Officers and Physical Education Lecturers, with particular focus on career progression, regularisation and convening of Departmental Promotion Committees at different levels. Directions were issued for completing the pending processes in a time-bound manner.

The Commissioner Secretary said that a strong sports system requires investment not only in infrastructure but also in coaches, physical education professionals, athletes and institutional capacity. He directed the officers to maintain close coordination across the Youth Services & Sports, Planning and Statistical Evaluation wings so that planning, funding, execution and monitoring remain aligned.

He directed for preparation of district-level action plans, close monitoring of project timelines and continued assessment of infrastructure and human-resource requirements to ensure that sports facilities across Jammu and Kashmir are increasingly accessible, functional and responsive to the needs of young people and athletes.

Royal Premier League returns to Pulwama amid sporting enthusiasm

10 teams from across Valley compete in day-night cricket tournament

JAHANGEER GANAIE

PULWAMA: The second edition of the Royal Premier League (RPL), the day-and-night cricket tournament that created considerable excitement among sports enthusiasts in south Kashmir last year, began in Pulwama on Wednesday evening with renewed enthusiasm and participation from teams across the Valley.

The tournament, is being hosted at the Sports Stadium Pulwama, where matches are being played under floodlights, providing local players and spectators with an opportunity to experience competitive night cricket closer to home.

The first edition marked a significant moment for the district's sporting landscape, becoming the first major day-and-night cricket tournament of its kind in the area and attracting thousands of spectators to the stadium. Its success encouraged the organisers to return with a second edition, this time with ten teams representing different parts of the Valley.

The participating teams include Sultan Warriors



Baramulla, The Real Sultan Sumerbugh, Al Noor Kings, Bhat Lions Kupwara, Valley Star Ganderbal, Murad Cricket Club, Al Fallah Cricket Club, United Imports Srinagar, Valley Fresh Cold Chain and Royal Goodwill Cricket Club.

The tournament is providing a competitive platform for emerging cricketers to showcase their skills while also encouraging young people to take up sports and remain engaged in healthy and constructive activities.

MLA Pulwama Waheed-ur-Rehman Para underlined the importance of creating more opportunities for young athletes and said that such tournaments would continue to be encouraged to nourish sporting talent in the district.

"These events provide our young athletes with an opportunity to showcase their talent and also give them a positive platform to channel their energy. Pulwama has immense sporting potential, and we will continue to support initiatives aimed at nurturing our budding athletes," Para said.

With the second edition now underway, the enthusiasm among players and spectators appears to have grown further. For many local youngsters, the tournament is not merely a series of cricket matches but an opportunity to witness organised competitive cricket in a professional atmosphere.

Residents and cricket enthusiasts have welcomed the continuation

of the tournament, saying that sporting events of this scale can help identify and promote talent from different parts of the Valley.

However, alongside the excitement, residents have urged the district administration and traffic authorities to make adequate arrangements for traffic regulation and public convenience during the matches.

A Pulwama resident said people fully support sporting activities but stressed that the convenience and safety of commuters should not be overlooked.

"We fully support sports and such initiatives, but the convenience and safety of the general public should also be taken into consideration. Proper arrangements should be made so that people can enjoy the tournament without creating difficulties for those who are travelling through the area," he said.

Residents recalled that the day-and-night matches during the previous edition had led to considerable traffic congestion, particularly on the stretch between Murran Chowk and the Sports Stadium.

PGTI Tour: Shaurya Bhattacharya extends his lead at halfway stage in Kolar Open

IAN S

KOLAR (KARNATAKA): Shaurya Bhattacharya shot a five-under 67 to extend his lead to three strokes at nine-under 135 on Day Two of the second edition of the INR 1 crore Kolar Open at the ZION Hills Golf County on the outskirts of Bengaluru on Wednesday. The 23-year-old from Delhi, a two-time winner on the PGTI and currently 16th in the season rankings, began the day with a one-shot advantage. He made six birdies against a lone bogey to strengthen his position at the top of the leaderboard.

Starting from the 10th tee, Bhattacharya dropped his only shot of the day on the par-four 12th and remained one-over for his round through seven holes. However, he remained confident because of the quality of his ball-



striking. "I made a slow start and was one-over through seven holes, but I knew I was hitting good shots," said Bhattacharya.

His patience was rewarded on the 17th, where a well-struck drive

set up the first of five consecutive birdies. Bhattacharya continued his run through the 18th, first, second and third holes to take control of the tournament. "I struck a very good drive on the 17th and converted the opportunity, which started the run," he said. "I kept giving myself good looks over the next few holes and managed to take advantage."

Bhattacharya added one more birdie and did not drop another shot as he followed his opening 68 with the best round of the day.

Hyderabad's Mohd Azhar (70-68), who began the day tied fifth, climbed to second place at six-under 138. Azhar mixed six birdies with two bogeys in a four-under 68 to emerge as Bhattacharya's nearest challenger. Greater Noida's Arjun Sharma (69-72), Chandigarh's Angad Cheema (73-68) and Bangladesh's Badal Hossain (69-72) shared third

place at three-under 141.

The wind strengthened during the second round, forcing players to control their ball flight on the exposed 7,330-yard layout. Bhattacharya felt his ability to adapt to the changing conditions played an important role. "The conditions required me to manufacture shots and control the flight of the ball, particularly when playing into the wind," he said. "I thought I handled that well, found plenty of fairways and missed in the right places."

Bhattacharya finished runner-up to Kshitij Naveed Kaul by two shots in the inaugural edition last year and is once again well-placed heading into the weekend. "I have good memories of this course despite coming up just short last year," he said. "I'm in a good position and looking forward to the last two rounds."

135TH DURAND CUP:

Defending champs NorthEast United meet Mohun Bagan in high-stakes semifinal

IAN S

SHILLONG: Defending champions NorthEast United FC will look to qualify for their third straight final when they take on 17-time winners Mohun Bagan Super Giant in the second semifinal of the 135th Durand Cup, which will be played at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Shillong on Thursday.

NEUFC have been relentless in their title defense. The Highlanders stormed into their fourth consecutive Durand Cup semifinal following a breathtaking quarterfinal victory over home favourites Shillong Lajong FC. Overcoming a 2-1 half-time deficit, they turned the tide with a spectacular four-goal blitz in the second half to seal a 5-2 triumph.

Meanwhile, Mohun Bagan, the most successful club in the tournament's history with 17 titles, have built their campaign on defensive solidity and clinical execution. After a flawless group stage without conceding a single goal, the Mariners held their nerve in a gripping quarterfinal. Following a 1-1 regulation-time draw against Jamshedpur FC, they survived a marathon sudden-death penalty shootout (9-8), courtesy of goalkeeper Vishal Kaith's heroics.

For the Highlanders, this encounter carries the weight of history. They are chasing a third consecutive Durand Cup crown, eyeing an unprecedented "three-



peat" to firmly stamp their authority on the Indian football landscape.

Acknowledging the magnitude of the task ahead, NorthEast United head coach Juan Pedro Benali emphasised the challenge posed by their star-studded opponents. "It's the semifinal of the Durand Cup, a very important game for us, and also for Mohun Bagan," said Benali. "It will not be easy for either team. We're talking about an opponent where nearly all their domestic players are national team regulars, combined with highly talented foreign players and a great coach."

On the flip side, MBSC's newly-appointed head coach Panagiotis Dilmeris will be desperate to secure his maiden silverware with the club ahead of the ISL 2026-27 campaign. Benali also touched upon his familiarity with his opposite number, adding, "Panos is a friend, but inside the field, there are no friends. He is a great coach leading a very good team."

Adding to the pre-match intrigue is the all-time head-to-head record, which heavily favours the

Kolkata outfit -- in 13 past meetings, Mohun Bagan have emerged victorious 10 times, compared to NEUFC's two wins and a solitary draw. Both camps head into the fixture boasting fully fit rosters.

For the Mariners, Sahal Abdul Samad has been in sublime touch under Dilmeris. The attacking midfielder has already netted five goals, putting him firmly in the Golden Boot race--while continuing to orchestrate the team's creative play. At the back, their defensive rigidity heavily relies on the structural discipline of the back four led by Subhashish Bose.

NEUFC's quarterfinal resurgence was fueled by a sensational hat-trick from Moroccan forward Alaeddine Ajaraie. However, their defensive anchor, Spanish centre-back Eneko Satrustegui, will be equally crucial. Still adapting to Indian conditions, his vast LaLiga experience against European juggernauts like Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid will be vital to neutralize Mohun Bagan's lethal attacking trio of Jamie Maclaren, Dejan Drazic, and Liston Colaco.

INOX

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