

# Kashmir Convener



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## Chillai-Kalan begins

● MeT predicts light snowfall from today

Owais Gul

**SRINAGAR:** The 40-day harshest winter period, known as Chillai-Kalan, is all set to commence from the intervening night of Friday-Saturday with expectations of bringing a light snowfall over a few higher reaches of north Kashmir.

The harshest winter period commenced from December 21 and culminates on January 31 next year, which is followed by a 20-day long Chillai-Khurd (small cold) that occurs between January 31 and February 19 and a 10-day long Chillai-Bachha (baby cold) which begins from February 20 to March 2.

Notably, Chillai-Kalan is a Persian word which means "Major Cold".

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the cold wave has already tightened its grip in Kashmir with all the places across the Valley recording below normal temperatures.



Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, has however, recorded the coldest night of season at minus 6.2 degree Celsius. The station has

recorded the lowest coldest nights consecutively since Thursday.

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## La Niña Impact, Prolonged Dry Spell Led To Cold Wave In Kashmir: MeT

● 'Night temp expected to improve in next few days'

KC NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** The cold wave has tightened its grip across Kashmir with the weatherman claiming that the ongoing weather conditions was the outcome of prolonged dry spell in plains, snowfall in higher reaches and the effect of La Niña as well.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the local Meteorological department

here has predicted the cold wave at isolated places across the Valley.

The MeT has issued a 'yellow alert' for the next couple of days at isolated places.

Talking to KNO, Director MeT, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad said that the cold wave conditions across Kashmir is not a new phenomenon though, but at present it is the

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## Doctors advise extra precautions

Jahangeer Ganaie

**SRINAGAR:** As the harshest part of winter, Chilla-i-Kalan, begins in Kashmir with temperatures already below freezing, doctors have advised extra precautions to avoid respiratory and other illnesses.

Dr Murtaza Ahmad, a general physician at the Directorate of Health Services Kashmir (DHSK), speaking with the news agency—Kashmir

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## CM Omar to attend pre-budget discussion in Rajasthan

Ishtiyaq Kar

**SRINAGAR:** Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who met Union Home Minister Amit Shah yesterday, arrived in Jodhpur today before heading to Jaipur, Rajasthan, for a pre-budget discussion chaired by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Sources told news gathering agency KINS that the Chief Minister will attend a key conference with representatives from states and Union Territories,



where he will push for adequate financial grants for Jammu and Kashmir in the upcoming fiscal

year. Upon his arrival in Jodhpur, CM Omar

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## Gen Rawat death: Par panel report says 'human error' caused Dec 8 chopper crash

KC NEWS NETWORK

**NEW DELHI:** Country's first Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat died in a Mi-17 V5 helicopter crash on December 8, 2021, and a parliamentary panel report has said the reason behind the accident which occurred that day was "human error".

Gen Rawat, his wife Madhulika Rawat, and many other armed forces personnel had died after the military helicopter they were travelling in crashed near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu.

The accident was widely reported in the media.

In the report tabled in Parliament on Tuesday, the Standing Committee on Defence shared the data on the number of Indian Air Force aircraft crashes that took place during the 13th Defence Plan period.

The total number of crashes stood at 34, including nine IAF aircraft accidents that took place in 2021-22 and 11 in 2018-19.

The tabulated data in the report also contained a column titled "reason" that specified the cause of the accidents in this period, against the aircraft type and date and accident.



The data for the 33rd accident listed in the report mentioned the aircraft as "Mi-17", date "08.12.2021"

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## Commissioner Railways to conduct inspection of Katra-Reasi rail link on Jan 5, 6



KC NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India on Friday asked officials of Northern Railways

to arrange movement of inspection carriage nominated for Commissioner of Railway Safety, Northern Circle, New Delhi for statutory inspection of Katra-Reasi rail section in connection with Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla rail line project.

The Ministry held that during the inspection the CAO/USBRL, CBE, CSE, COM-G, CECE from HQ, DRM/FZR and BOs shall accompany the Commissioner Railway Safety. Pertinently the long-awaited Srinagar-New Delhi rail link, a monumental infrastructure project spanning over two decades, is set to become a reality. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to inaugurate the final 17-km

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## Dy CM inaugurates IT Expo 2024



KC NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU:** Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, inaugurated an IT Exhibition here today.

The event, aimed at to showcase the

latest IT products, was participated by more than 40 top brands which are displaying their products and services. This event is meant for students, common public and GeM buyers (Govt Departments) as well. It

also envisages promotion of local traders so that government IT purchases are done through local traders.

While interacting with the organisers, the Deputy Chief Minister said organising these types of Expo gives an opportunity to the companies to showcase the latest innovations in the Information Technology field. Besides, these also serve as a medium

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## Govt Committed To Safeguard Kashmir's Handicrafts

KC NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** The Jammu & Kashmir Government has assured to safeguard the interests of Kashmir's famed handicraft and handloom sector, which is directly linked to the livelihood of lakhs of artisans associated with the heritage craft.

Responding to certain reports that have appeared in a section of the media with regard to proposed revision of tax slab in the upcoming GST Council meeting, a Government spokesman today clarified that the UT Government has already taken up the matter with the Union Ministry for Commerce & Industry, requesting therein for lowering the GST rate structure from

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## Challans to surpass 4 Lakh number by year-end: SSP Traffic Srinagar

KC NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** SSP Traffic (Srinagar) Muzafar Ahmad Shah said on Friday that the number of traffic challans in the city is expected to surpass 4 lakh by the end of this year.

"Traffic police Srinagar, as always, are actively addressing traffic violations. In 2022, the total number of challans issued

was 3.75 lakh, and in 2024 it reached 4 lakh. This year, we expect the figure to exceed 4 lakh," Muzafar Shah told news gathering agency KINS.

While there has been a slight increase in traffic fines and vehicle seizures this year, he emphasized that this is not a new development but rather part of

a consistent effort over the years to enforce road safety.

"The traffic police continue to take action against violators, including minors and parents who allow them to drive. However a positive shift has been observed in

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## Power Perils...

## Unending Saga Of Outages Continues In Kashmir

Riyaz Bhat

**SRINAGAR:** With the onset of Chilai-Kalan—the 40 harshest winter days, people of many areas in Kashmir continue to face the unscheduled outages in both 'metered and non-metered' locales.

The electricity consumers of different areas informed the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDCL) was unable to cater the least expected services to them or were 'making concocted promises' which the DISCOM couldn't deliver.

One of the locals of Kani Mazar in Downtown, Furqan Farooq said that the area is facing long durational power cuts.

Although the Power Development Department (PDD) has installed smart meters in our area, we continue to face unscheduled power outages. It seems that KPDCL has either failed to deliver the promised electricity as

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## Speaker likely to set-up House Committee on framing Rules of Procedure in Assembly

● Committee to have MLAs from different parties

Mubashir Aalam Wani

**SRINAGAR:** The Speaker of the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly would soon set-up a committee of legislators to frame the Rules of Procedure for the Assembly, sources disclosed.

Sources told news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather would soon constitute a nine-member House committee comprising representatives of different parties to frame the Rules for functioning of the House.

According to sources, the committee will consist mostly of experienced lawmakers who are well-versed with procedures governing functioning of the Assembly.



The exercise would be undertaken in light of provisions of Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act-2019, which empower the Assembly to make Rules for conduct of its business.

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# DND flyway to remain toll-free, says Supreme Court



**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court on Friday ruled that the Delhi-Noida-Direct (DND) flyway will be toll-free as it dismissed a plea by a private firm challenging the 2016 decision of the Allahabad High Court order asking it to stop collecting toll from commuters. The decision will benefit lakhs of people who commute daily on the flyway. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan held that awarding a contract to private firm Noida Toll Bridge Company Ltd (NTBCL) to collect toll from commuters plying on the DND flyway was unjust, unfair and arbitrary. "There is no reason for the collection of user or toll fee to continue. We hold that the agreement (for toll collection) is invalid," the bench said. It pulled up the NOIDA authority for delegating toll collection to private firm NTBCL, which did not have any prior experience and said it has resulted in unjust enrichment. The bench said NOIDA overstepped its authority by delegating the powers to NTBCL to collect or levy fees and it has led the general public to part with

hundreds of crores of rupees. The high court, in October 2016, had ruled that there will be no toll collected henceforth from those using the 9.2 km-long, eight-lane Delhi-Noida Direct flyway. The order was passed as the high court allowed a PIL by the Federation of Noida Residents' Welfare Association. The PIL, filed in 2012, had challenged the "levy and collection of toll in the name of user fee by the Noida Toll Bridge Company". In an over 100-page judgment, the high court had held, "the user fee which is being levied/realised is not supported by the legal provisions relied upon by the Concessionaire (Noida Toll Bridge Company), Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services (promoter and developer of the project) and the Noida Authority." It had said the "right to levy and collect user fee from the commuters as conferred upon the Concessionaire under the concession agreement suffers from excessive delegation and is contrary to the provisions of the UP Industrial Development Act".

# ISRO Gears Up For First Ever Space Docking SPADEX Mission On Dec 30

**CHENNAI:**In what could herald yet another milestone in its space journey, and a game changer for future missions, including Chandrayaan-4, the fourth Lunar mission and Gaganyaan, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is all geared up for its maiden space docking mission SpaceX satellite from the SHAR Range on December 30. ISRO will be using its reliable and workhorse launch vehicle PSLV-C60 for the mission which in all likelihood will take place from the First Launch Pad at the spaceport of Sriharikota. In a post on X, ISRO said Spaceflight on X: "Through internal sources, we have confirmed that in addition to SPADEX, ISRO is set to also conduct their tethered satellite capture via robotic arm experiment on their very next mission – PSLV-C60!". "So far, what we already know about this experiment is that it will involve some sort of a free flying cubesat tethered to the POEM platform, which will be captured with the help of a robotic arm fitted on POEM", it said. "Demonstrating this technology will be an important step towards ISRO's future plans to develop space debris capture and deorbit, as well as in-orbit spacecraft servicing and refueling capabilities", ISRO posted. "As of this writing, PSLV-C60 is expected to lift off on December 30, the space

agency said. The Space Docking Experiment (SpaDEX), comprising two satellites, will mark India's first

gearing up for the next mission, the SpaDEX using PSLV-C60 and the preparatory works had already started and the



mission to showcase the autonomous docking technology in space. The mission also proposed to demonstrate technologies vital for India's future human spaceflight, the maiden Gaganyaan mission, scheduled likely in 2025-26. The SpaDEX mission comes in the backdrop of successful launch of European Space Agency's Proba-3 two-satellites formation flying mission using PSLV-C59, which had achieved its launch objectives by precisely injecting both the spacecrafts in the intended orbit on December 5. At that time, ISRO Chairman S. Somanath said the space agency was

launch will take place later this month. ISRO will be again using its XL version for the SpaDEX Mission. SPADEX or Space Docking Experiment is a twin satellite mission developed by ISRO to mature technologies related to orbital rendezvous, docking, formation flying, with scope of applications in human spaceflight, in-space satellite servicing and other proximity operations. SPADEX campaign would consist of two IMS class-2 class (400 kg) satellites, christened Chaser and Target. Both would be launched as co-passengers or auxiliary payloads and

would be injected into slightly different orbits in two components which will then reunite in space, essential for enabling spacecraft refueling, besides extending their operational life, and transferring critical systems between vehicles in orbit. The objectives of the mission was Autonomous rendezvous and docking Controlling one spacecraft with Attitude Control System of other spacecraft while in docked configuration, besides Formation flying and Remote robotic arm operation. Reports said with preliminary studies done in 2016, Space Docking Experiment was approved by the Union Government and cleared in 2017. In June 2019, ISRO was looking for proposals to study remote robotic arm operation, rendezvous and docking related technologies on its PSLV fourth stage (PS4) orbital platform called POEM. The Space firm Ananth Technologies Limited finished the satellite assembly, integration, and testing for ISRO, delivering them to the U R Rao Satellite Centre (URSC). The docking is a crucial component of Chandrayaan-4 and that ISRO intended SPADEX as a forerunner. Satellites for the SPADEX mission are further tested and finished and complete simulation demonstration was performed on it. Both the planned Bharatiya Antariksha Station and Gaganyaan space flights hinges on this mission's success.

## Several Delhi schools receive bomb-threat mail, no suspicious items found

**NEW DELHI:** Several Delhi schools received bomb-threat emails on Friday, making it the sixth such incident in the last 11 days, officials said. Security personnel conducted search operations at the schools, but nothing suspicious was found, an official said. "We received a



call regarding the bomb threat at 5:02 am from DPS, Dwarka, in Sector 23," the Delhi Fire Services (DFS) official said on Friday. Police, the fire department, bomb detection teams, and the dog squad participated in the search operation, but nothing was found so far, another official said. Around five schools in Dwarka, along with some in other districts, received similar emails.

## EVM verification plea to be heard by another SC bench, says CJI Khanna

**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court on Friday said the plea seeking a policy for verification of electronic voting machines will be heard by a bench headed by Justice Dipankar Datta in January next year. A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar said the fresh plea of former Haryana minister and five-time MLA Karan Singh Dalal and one Lakhman Kumar Singla on the issue will be heard by a bench headed by Justice Datta in the week commencing January 20, 2025. A bench comprising Justice Khanna and Justice Datta had delivered a verdict earlier in April rejecting the demand for bringing back the old paper ballots. At outset, senior advocate Maninder Singh, appearing for the Election Commission, sought dismissal of the plea, saying that similar petitions for same reliefs were rejected earlier. The CJI said the bench headed by Justice Datta would hear this now. Earlier on December 13, a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and P B Varale had

refused to hear the plea, saying let it be heard by a bench which had heard similar petitions. Now,



it was listed before the CJI-led bench. In its verdict on April 26, the apex court termed the suspicion of manipulation of the EVMs "unfounded" and said the polling devices were "secured" and eliminated booth capturing and bogus voting. The top court, however, opened a window for the aggrieved unsuccessful candidates securing the second and third places in poll results while allowing them to seek verification of microcontroller chips embedded in five per cent

EVMs per assembly constituency on a written request upon payment of a fee to the poll

panel. The fresh petition of Dalal and Singla has sought compliance of the top court's April 26 judgement delivered in the case of 'Association for Democratic Reforms versus Union of India'. Dalal and Singla secured the second-highest votes in their respective constituencies and sought a direction to the Election Commission (EC) to implement a protocol for examining the original "burnt memory" or microcontroller of the four components of the EVM – the

control unit, ballot unit, VVPAT and symbol loading unit. The top court had mandated that five per cent of the EVMs in every assembly constituency should undergo verification by the engineers from EVM manufacturers after the election results were announced. The petitioners said the poll panel has failed to issue any such policy, leaving the procedure for burnt memory verification unclear. According to the petition, the current standard operating procedure issued by the EC only involves basic diagnostic tests and mock polls without scrutinising the burnt memory for tampering. The petitioners said that their plea did not challenge the election results but sought a robust mechanism for EVM verification. Separate election petitions challenging the results are pending before the Punjab and Haryana High Court. The petitioners have urged the Supreme Court to direct the EC to conduct the verification exercise within eight weeks. The BJP won 48 out of 90 assembly

## RSS chief bats for inclusive society, frowns upon new disputes

**PUNE:** RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has expressed concern over resurgence of several temple-mosque disputes and said certain individuals, after the construction of Ayodhya Ram temple, seem to believe they can become "leaders of Hindus" by raking up such issues. Delivering a lecture on 'India – The Vishwaguru', at Sahjeevan Vyakhyanamala (lecture series) here, Bhagwat advocated for an inclusive society and said the world needs to be shown that the country can live together in harmony. Highlighting the plurality of Indian society, the chief of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) said Christmas is celebrated in Ramakrishna Mission, adding "only we can do this because we are Hindus". "We have been living in harmony for a long time. If we want to provide this harmony to the world, we need to create a model of it. After the construction of the Ram Mandir, some people think they can become leaders of Hindus by raking up similar issues in new places. This is not acceptable," he said. The Ram temple was constructed since it was a matter of faith for all Hindus, Bhagwat said. "Every day a new matter (dispute) is being raked up. How can this be allowed? This cannot continue. India needs to show that we can live together," he said without mentioning any particular site. Several demands for surveys of mosques to unearth temples have found their way to courts in the recent past, though Bhagwat did not mention any by name in his lecture. Some groups that came from outside brought with them staunchness and they want their old rule to return, he said. "But now the country runs as

per the Constitution. In this setup, people choose their representatives, who run the government. The days of hegemony are gone," he asserted. He said the rule of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb was



characterised by such staunchness, though his descendant Bahadur Shah Zafar in 1857 banned cow slaughter. "It was decided that Ram Mandir in Ayodhya should be given to Hindus but the British sensed it and created a rift between the two communities. Since then, this sense of 'algaavwad' (separatism) came into being. As a result, Pakistan came into existence," he said. Bhagwat asked why the "language of dominance" was being used if everybody identifies themselves as Indians. "Who is a minority and who is a majority? Everyone is equal here. The tradition of this nation is all can follow their own forms of worship. The only requirement is to live in harmony and abide by rules and laws," the RSS chief asserted.

## Symbol of Govt's desperation: Priyanka slams FIR against Rahul

**NEW DELHI:** Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Friday said the FIR filed against Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi is a "symbol of Government's desperation" and claimed the BJP is indulging in distraction as it knows that the country will not tolerate its "insult" of B R Ambedkar. The BJP knows that its real feelings about Ambedkar are out in the open and therefore it is afraid of the



Opposition which is raising this issue, the Congress general secretary said in an obvious reference to Home Minister Amit Shah's remarks on Ambedkar in the Rajya Sabha. "This Government is scared. This Government is scared of a debate on the Adani issue, they are scared of any debate. They know their real feelings for Ambedkar ji are out in the open and therefore they are afraid of the Opposition because we are raising this issue," she told reporters in Parliament premises after the Lok Sabha was adjourned sine die. She asserted that national interest is connected with the issue of the insult inflicted on Ambedkar. "Our Constitution has been provided by Dr Ambedkar, the people of the country and the freedom struggle, and the country will not tolerate his insult," she said. Asked about the FIR filed against Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka

desperation. They have become so desperate that they are lodging false FIRs. Rahul ji can never push anyone, I am his sister I know him, he can never do such a thing." The country also knows it and is seeing how desperate the BJP has become that they are filing these arbitrary FIRs because they do not want a discussion on Adani and they know the country will not tolerate the manner in which they have insulted Ambedkar, she said. "That is why they are indulging in distraction," Priyanka Gandhi added. Police on Thursday registered an FIR against Rahul Gandhi, hours after the BJP filed a complaint, accusing him of physical assault and incitement" during a scuffle in Parliament premises. A police officer said the FIR has been registered under sections 115 (voluntary causing hurt), 117 (voluntary causing grievous hurt), 125 (act of endangering life or personal safety of others), 131 (use of criminal force), 351 (criminal intimidation) and 3(5) (common intention) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. The officer said police are likely to call Gandhi for questioning in connection with the case. Police will request the Lok Sabha Secretariat to provide the CCTV footage of the area where the alleged incident happened. On Thursday, separate marches by opposition and ruling party MPs over the alleged insult to Ambedkar led to jostling in Parliament premises, leaving BJP MPs Pratap Chandra Sarangi and Mukesh Rajput injured. The BJP has accused Rahul Gandhi of pushing the senior member, a charge rejected by the Congress leader. The opposition on Wednesday had seized on Shah's remarks on Ambedkar to corner the Government and demanded his resignation for what they called was an insult to the architect of

## RS Deputy Chairman Dismisses Opposition Notice Seeking Removal of VP Dhankhar

**NEW DELHI:** Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh on Thursday dismissed the impeachment notice given by the Opposition seeking the removal of Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar while ruling it as an act of impropriety, being severely flawed and drawn in haste to mar his reputation. In his three-page ruling, which was tabled in the House by Rajya Sabha secretary general PC Mody, the deputy chairman said the impeachment notice is part of a design to denigrate the nation's constitutional institutions and malign the incumbent Vice President. At least 60 opposition members had signed the notice for removal of Dhankhar from his post on December 10, alleging that they did not have trust in him and that he was "biased". The notice was moved by the opposition members under Article 67(b) of the Constitution as intention of a no-confidence motion against the Vice President of India. The deputy chairman ruled that the gravity of this "personally targeted" notice which is bereft of facts and aimed at securing publicity and said it needs to be exposed, it being a "misadventure" in deliberate trivialising and demeaning of the high constitutional office of Vice President of the largest democracy. He also held that the notice was a "misadventure" in "deliberate trivialising

office of the Vice President of the largest democracy.

Worrisomely for the prestige of Parliament and its members, the notice is replete with assertions only to malign the incumbent Vice President, the deputy



chairman ruled. The deputy chairman in his ruling said the notice invoked Article 67(b) peremptorily mandates "at least 14 days' prior notice for any resolution contemplating the Vice President's removal. Thus the December 10, 2024 notice of intention could permit such a resolution only after December 24, 2024, he noted, adding that the current 266th session of the Council of States, as notified on November 6, 2024, commenced on November 25 and is scheduled to conclude on December 20, 2024, as known to all signatories. In full know of the situation that the resolution cannot be brought during this session, this was initiated only to

constitutional office and the Vice President, the deputy chairman said in his ruling.

"In view of the above the notice is held as an act of impropriety, severely flawed, apparently drawn in haste and hurry to marred reputation of the incumbent Vice President and aimed to damage the constitutional institution. The same deserves to be and is hereby dismissed," he said in the order.

Harivansh also said the notice's "lack of bona fides", and subsequent events unfolding revealed "it being a calculated unwholesome attempt to tarnish publicity; run down the constitutional institution; insinuate the the personal image of the incumbent Vice President- notably, the first from the agricultural community to hold this office in the history of independent India".

"A look at the notice reveals it couldn't be more casual and cavalier, wanting on every conceivable aspect and severally flawed- absence of addressee, absence of resolution text, incumbent Vice President's name not correctly spelt in the entire petition, documents and videos asserted not made part, premised on links of disjointed media reports without authentication and many more.

"Worrisomely for the prestige of Parliament and its members, the notice is replete with assertions only to malign the incumbent Vice President asserting events from the time he assumed office in

## Famed village volunteer system disappears in Andhra Pradesh, TDP government faces criticism

The village volunteer system which was one of the hallmarks of YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's government has been watered down by the new Andhra Pradesh government led by the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), slug Soon after coming to power for the first time in 2019, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, fresh from his padyatra (walkathon) of over 3500 km and based on his meetings with lakhs of people, implemented an idea that would provide employment to rural youth and also help in last-mile delivery of government schemes. Around 2.5 lakh volunteers were appointed across the state with each volunteer entrusted with the responsibility of handling 40-50 houses and ensuring that households benefit from schemes and services offered by the government. The volunteers were paid around Rs 5000 per month. The volunteer system proved to be very beneficial for the government during the pandemic as the volunteers along with medical workers took part in fever surveys and vaccination programmes. The model was promoted by the YSRC government as a huge success. Other state governments also studied the volunteer system and showed interest in replicating it. However, in the run-up to the assembly election held early this year, the Jana Sena party (JSP) and the TDP accused the volunteers of aligning themselves with the then YS Jagan government and also misusing the data.



## Bandipora woman turns rooftop into profitable Mushroom Farm

AADIL ABDULLAH

**BANDIPORA:** Asiya Akbar, a 35-year-old woman from Nasoo village in Bandipora district, has become a local inspiration for her innovative rooftop farming initiative, cultivating vegetables and mushrooms.



Asiya's efforts have not only gained her recognition but also significantly contributed to her family's income, as she earns over Rs. 40,000 monthly from her rooftop crops.

Sharing her journey, Asiya explained that she began mushroom cultivation four years ago, exploring its potential alongside vegetables. "During a visit to Kupwara with the Territorial Army, I was inspired to start a business," said

Asiya, who originally hails from Veernag.

"That's when I decided on mushroom cultivation. With guidance from the Agriculture Department, I received support from the local community," she said. She credited the Agriculture Department and local community for their guidance and support in her endeavor.

Asiya highlighted the importance of such initiatives, especially for educated women facing limited government job opportunities. "Growing vegetables and mushrooms at home offers a sustainable alternative for women to support themselves and their families," she remarked.

## DIET Bandipora Concludes Capacity Building Program for Teachers on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy

**BANDIPORA:** The District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) Bandipora on Friday concluded a five-day Capacity

critical need for achieving foundational literacy and numeracy among young learners in concurrence with the National Educa-

Methods to develop numerical proficiency and problem-solving skills, Integrating technology and creative resources in teaching foundational concepts besides monitoring and assessing student progress effectively.

Led by renowned educational experts, the sessions included hands-on activities and insightful discussions to enhance teaching practices.

Principal DIET Bandipora, Kishore Kumar while speaking in the concluding ceremony highlighted the program's significance and said that empowering teachers is crucial to ensuring that every child attains foundational literacy and numeracy skills. "This program is a step towards creating a stronger and more inclusive education system."

Participants expressed their enthusiasm, praising the program's relevance in addressing classroom challenges.

Officials said the initiative marks a progressive step in strengthening the district's education system, ensuring that foundational learning is accessible and effective for all students.



Building Program for teachers, focused on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.

An official spokesperson of the Institution said the workshop, held from December 16 to 20, 2024, aimed to strengthen educational foundations and enhance learning outcomes for students in primary grades. He said the program emphasized the

tion Policy (NEP) 2020. The workshop also sought to equip 50 participating teachers from various district schools with innovative strategies, pedagogical practices, and modern tools for effective teaching.

Spokesperson said the workshop covered key areas, including Effective reading and writing strategies for early learners,

## "Skilled Hands at Risk": Sajad Lone slams GST hike on handmade Kashmiri shawls

**SRINAGAR:** JKPC President and MLA Handwara, Sajad Lone, today strongly opposed the re-

ing it as more than a mere product.

"The Kashmiri shawl em-

time when machines and artificial intelligence dominate industries.

"In an era where machines drive production and AI threatens human jobs, these skilled hands are a rare relic and still economically competitive. Why are we eroding their competitiveness by subjecting them to higher GST tax brackets?" he questioned.

Lone warned that the increased taxation would inevitably reduce demand, shrink supply and push many skilled artisans into unemployment.

"Higher taxes would mean lower demand and, consequently, lower production. Thousands of skilled artisans will face unemployment. Such policies will deal a severe blow to the entire industry," he asserted.

Appealing to policymakers, Lone urged the government to reconsider and restore the lowest GST tax bracket for handmade Kashmiri shawls.

bodies our history and serves as an ambassador of our artistry. It provides livelihood to thousands of skilled artisans," he said.

Highlighting the broader economic realities, Lone emphasized that handmade shawls represent a rare human skill at a



cent increase in GST on handmade Kashmiri shawls, terming it an "oversight" with potentially devastating consequences for artisans and the centuries-old shawl industry.

Lone underscored the cultural and historical significance of the Kashmiri shawl, describ-

## Capacity Building Program on Yoga for PETs, Masters Concludes in Bandipora



Bandipora, Dec 20: The District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) Bandipora organized a four-day Capacity Building Program on Yoga for Physical Education Teachers (PETs) and masters across the district.

An official spokesperson said the program was held from December 17 to 20, 2024, aimed to empower educators with the knowledge and skills required to integrate yoga into school curriculums, fostering holistic development among students.

The inaugural session was presided over by CEO Bandipora Kishore Kumar, who also holds

the charge of Principal DIET.

Speaking on the occasion, the CEO highlighted the significance of yoga in shaping young minds and bodies. "Yoga is a timeless discipline that not only enhances physical health but also instills values of focus, discipline, and harmony in young learners," he stated.

On the occasion, Certified yoga instructors and subject experts conducted the sessions, providing participants with in-depth insights into yoga techniques and their application in an educational setting.

According to the spokesper-

son, the program featured hands-on practice and interactive discussions, enabling participants to confidently incorporate yoga into their teaching methodologies.

He said the initiative reflects DIET Bandipora's commitment to promoting physical and mental well-being in schools, aligning with broader educational goals that emphasize holistic student development. Teachers expressed enthusiasm for the training, acknowledging its potential to transform classroom environments and enhance student well-being.

## Airtel Partners with Zee5 to Enhance Digital Entertainment for WiFi Customers

**SRINAGAR:** Bharti Airtel, one of India's leading telecom service providers, has announced a strategic partnership with Zee5, India's prominent OTT platform, to bring an extensive range of digital content to its WiFi customers.

Under this collaboration, Airtel WiFi users on plans starting at 699 or higher will gain complimentary access to Zee5's vast content library.

An official spokesperson said the partnership will provide Airtel WiFi subscribers with a wide variety of Zee5's exclusive content, including original shows, blockbuster movies, and series in multiple languages. Customers can explore titles such as Sam Bahadur, RRR, Sirf Ek Bandaa Kaafi Hai, Manorathangal, Vikkatakavi, and The Chronicles of Amaragiri, alongside an expansive repository of over 1.5 lakh hours of content.

Amit Tripathi, Chief Marketing Officer and EVP Customer Experience at Bharti Airtel, expressed enthusiasm about the collaboration. "Partnerships are at the core of Airtel's DNA, and we are delighted to partner with Zee5 in our endeavor to build a world-class digital content ecosystem. Zee5's rich library enhances our content portfolio, ensuring a superior experience for our users. We remain committed to delighting our customers with the very best."

Manish Kalra, Chief Business Officer at Zee5, highlighted the importance of the partnership in reaching a broader audience. "At Zee5, our mission has been to democratize access to high-quality entertainment. This collaboration with Airtel strengthens our commitment to offering seamless entertainment across genres, languages, and formats. By integrating Zee5 into Airtel Broadband, we aim to deliver engaging, personalized storytelling to a wider audience."

Spokesperson stated that this collaboration is expected to redefine the entertainment experience for Airtel WiFi customers, reinforcing both brands' commitment to enhancing digital accessibility and user satisfaction.



## Info Deptt condoles with Ex- Jt. Director Inam ul Haq Siddiqui

**SRINAGAR:** Information Department Kashmir today extended heartfelt condolences to former Joint Director Information Kashmir, Inam ul Haq Siddiqui over the demise of his father who passed away after a brief illness.

On the occasion, the Officers and officials of the Department held a condolence meet and prayed for eternal peace to the departed soul and courage to the family to bear this irreparable loss.

They also expressed solidarity and sympathy with Mr. Siddiqui at this hour of grief & sorrow.

## JKGLTF Delegation Meets DSEK Dr. Gh Nabi Itoo, Discusses Key Issues

**Srinagar:** A high-level delegation of the Jammu and Kashmir General Line Teachers Forum (JKGLTF) on Friday called on Director of School Education Kashmir (DSEK), Dr. Gh Nabi Itoo and extended a warm welcome on assuming charge for his second term as the director.



An official spokesperson of the Forum said the delegation comprised of executive council members and district representatives. During the meeting, several pressing issues concerning students and teaching staff were discussed in detail.

Spokesperson said after formally welcoming the Director discussed

the issues including Availability of Books urging to ensure adequate supply of textbooks to schools.

Delegation also raised the issue of Repatriation of teachers from Hard Zones urging the Director to address the return of teachers serving in challenging areas.

Besides, the delegation discussed timely promotions of teachers to master and lecturer positions, Updating seniority lists to expedite promotions, filling positions of recently promoted masters and addressing vacancies for masters and lecturers, conducting transfer drives during winter and restructuring zonation, filling of vacant positions of headmasters, reintroducing senior teacher posts within the department, processing the welfare fund file on a fast-track basis, granting leave salary to teachers who participated in the winter tutorial program, approving increments for teachers and lecturers appointed under SRO 202.

Spokesperson said Dr Itoo gave patient hearing to them and assured the delegation of his commitment to addressing these issues. He provided on-the-spot directions for the resolution of several concerns and promised to prioritize the remaining ones.

The JKGLTF expressed gratitude to the DSEK for his patience, proactive approach, and immediate action on many matters. They reiterated their hope for continued cooperation in addressing challenges faced by educators and students across the region.

## Massive Fire Erupts at Pampore's Chatlam Wetland, Threatens Migratory Birds

Bilal Habib

**PAMPORE:** A massive fire broke out in the dry grass at Chatlam Wetland in South Kashmir's

Responding swiftly, teams from Fire and Emergency Services Pampore, the Wildlife Department led by Incharge Range Officer Imtiyaz Ahmad, and the Pampore Police headed by SHO Naiem Rasheed, reached the site to control the blaze.

mon Teal, Northern Shoveler, Pintail, and Eurasian Wigeon. Officials estimate that over 20,000 migratory birds are currently present in other wetlands of Pampore, including Fashkoori, Krunchoo, and Mainbuh.

the wildlife they host. "Chatlam Wetland is home to thousands of migratory birds, and it is our collective responsibility to ensure their safety," one resident said.

Nadeem Qadri, an environmental lawyer at the High Court of J&K and Ladakh, commended Dr. Basharat Qayoom, Deputy Commissioner Pulwama, for actively monitoring the situation. "The Deputy Commissioner directed all allied departments to provide necessary support to extinguish the fire," Qadri stated. He also mentioned that the Wildlife Department would prepare an assessment report to be submitted to the J&K Government for measures to prevent similar incidents in the future.

The Wildlife Department had already taken steps to enhance the protection of the wetlands, including 24x7 anti-poaching drives and plans to establish additional control rooms in the region. However, the incident has highlighted the urgent need for further safeguards.

The fire is now under control, but authorities continue to monitor the site to prevent any resurgence and assess the damage caused.



Pulwama district on Wednesday evening, sparking concern for the thousands of migratory birds that inhabit the area during winter.

The Chatlam Wetland, spread over 852 kanals, shelters nearly 50,000 migratory birds annually, including species such as Mallard, Gadwall, Com-

Local residents have urged strict action against those responsible for setting the grass ablaze, emphasizing the need to protect the wetlands and



E-Waste Challenge

As the world becomes increasingly dependent on electronic devices, the challenge of managing electronic waste (e-waste) has grown into a significant environmental and public health concern. Recognizing the gravity of this issue, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change revised the E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2016, and introduced the E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2022, which came into effect on April 1, 2023. The revised rules aim to revolutionize e-waste management through a robust Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework. This framework mandates that manufacturers, producers, refurbishers, and recyclers register on a portal developed by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). In tandem with the goals of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, the new rules emphasize reduction, reuse, and scientific disposal of e-waste. By promoting recycling and refurbishing, the initiative helps conserve resources, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and support the transition to a circular economy. This focus on sustainability is critical for addressing the environmental challenges posed by the rapid proliferation of electronic devices. A significant highlight of the 2022 rules is the inclusion of responsibilities for urban and rural bodies. These local authorities are required to ensure that e-waste, when mixed with municipal solid waste, is segregated and sent to registered recyclers or refurbishers. They must also establish systems for the collection and disposal of orphaned e-waste while conducting training programs to build capacity. Such measures are designed to create a comprehensive e-waste management framework that reaches the grassroots level. Producers, too, are held to high standards under the revised rules. They must register on the EPR portal, set and achieve specific targets, and actively create awareness about proper e-waste disposal. India's proactive stance on e-waste management reflects a broader commitment to sustainable development. By fostering collaboration among government bodies, industries, and the public, the revised rules aim to transform e-waste from an environmental hazard into an opportunity for resource efficiency and economic growth. The success of these measures will hinge on their implementation, as well as on the collective efforts of all stakeholders to adopt and promote responsible practices.

Islamic Outreach in the Digital Era: Opportunities and Challenges



Aubaid Ahmed Akhooon

A few days ago, I read an article on digital dawah in one of the leading newspapers, written by a student pursuing a Master's in Islamic Studies at Kashmir University. The article beautifully described the modern evolution of dawah. While my intention is not to critique, I felt compelled to reflect on the topic from a broader perspective. This reflection inspired me to explore the foundational principles of dawah, which form the bedrock of any successful outreach effort.

**Aggressive Thinking: A Dangerous Weapon**

Aggressive thinking, especially when met with peace, often stems from a negative mindset. Whether individual or collective, it is a reflection of weakness. Islam has no place for such thinking. When we resort to aggression as the final response, it signifies a failure to engage in meaningful dialogue and understanding. If we lack the knowledge and skill to communicate thoughtfully, we may fall back on ignorance, misrepresentation, or verbal violence—none of which lead to positive change.

I once engaged in a conversation with a gentleman who claimed that Allah would destroy the disbelievers. I objected, pointing out that such a statement was made without wisdom or understanding. I reminded him that, just a few centuries ago, our ancestors were also disbelievers, and it was through the dawah of others that we became Muslims. If the early callers to Islam had viewed us as "infidels" and rejected us, how would we, as Muslims today, have ever found the truth?

Allah, in His infinite wisdom, instructs Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to invite others to the path of righteousness with patience, wisdom, and beautiful words: "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice, and argue with them in a way that is most beautiful. Verily, your Lord knows best who has strayed from His path and who is rightly guided" (Surah An-Nahl 16: 125).

The qualities of selfishness, narrow-mindedness, and hard-heartedness have no place in a society built on Islam's values of kindness and compassion. The Prophet (PBUH) said, "I have been sent to perfect good manners." This teaching underscores that Islam is not about rigidly proving others wrong; it's about rising above the desire for personal victory and engaging with others in a manner that nurtures understanding, respect, and empathy.

In the Qur'an, over 6,000 verses speak to the importance of moral conduct—both positive and negative values are addressed throughout. The ethics of the Prophets and the righteous are fundamental in guiding our behavior. To be truly moral is not to retaliate under negative influences but to act with wisdom and kindness, regardless of the other party's actions.

**The Legacy of Shah Hamdan: A Model of Dawah**

A powerful example of dawah in Kashmir is Mir Syed Ali Hamdani, also known as Shah Hamdani. He came to the subcontinent, particularly Kashmir, where he spread Islam for over seven centuries. Formerly the son of the King of Hamdan in Iran, he was known by the title of Amir Kabir. Among the famous mosques he built during his preaching is the renowned 'Khankahi Moula,' located on the banks of the Jhelum River, along with the Dargah Shah Hamdan in Srinagar. His personal character stood out in his preaching.

Shah Hamdani's teachings were not focused on a glowing exterior or aggressive tactics, but rather on his integration of dawah with practical life. He promoted

the flourishing of industries in Kashmir, such as carpet making and pashmina weaving, alongside religious preaching. The industrialization that occurred was not the real goal, but rather a means to facilitate dawah. His

an unprecedented opportunity to connect with a global audience, share knowledge, answer questions, and address misconceptions about Islam. These platforms have removed geographical barriers, allowing dawah to reach

of Islam while engaging with the digital community. The potential of digital dawah is vast, but we must remember that it is not the platform itself that carries the message; it is how we choose to use it. The real



methods were grounded in a deep understanding of the people's needs, making dawah relevant and embedded in their daily lives.

This approach sharply contrasts with the modern tendency to view dawah as an academic or ideological contest, where the goal becomes proving others wrong. Such a mindset harms not only dawah but also the well-being of the nation. Dawah must transcend personal vendettas and negative thinking—it is about creating an atmosphere of peace, understanding, and acceptance.

The core message of dawah is simple: we invite others to the path of truth not by condemning them, but by showing them the beauty and wisdom of Islam. As the poet says:

"Mita de apni hasti ko agar kuch martabah chahiye, ki danah khaak mai mil kar gulo gulzaar hota hai."

Meaning: Erase your being if you want honor, for like a seed that mingles with the dust, it is through humility that the flower blooms. True honor and change come when we rise above ego and strive for the greater good.

You Are the Best of Nations: A Reflection on Quran 3: 110

"You are the best of nations produced for mankind: You enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and believe in Allah." (Quran 3: 110)

This profound verse highlights the unique honor and responsibility bestowed upon the Muslim Ummah. It not only establishes the status of this nation but also defines its role as a moral and spiritual guide for humanity. The Muslim Ummah's excellence is not a privilege but a responsibility. This divine designation aligns with the principles of dawah, urging Muslims to embody the core values of faith, morality, and unity. The status of the Muslim Ummah is eternal, grounded in its collective commitment to enjoining good, forbidding evil, and maintaining unwavering faith in Allah. This highlights the responsibility of Muslims to guide others with wisdom and righteousness, a key element of dawah.

**The Role of Digital Platforms in Dawah**

As we move into the digital age, technology has radically transformed how we approach dawah. Digital platforms have become indispensable tools for spreading the message of Islam. Social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram offer Muslims

every corner of the world.

However, with this power comes responsibility. Digital platforms can be powerful servants but dangerous masters. They can facilitate meaningful discussions, create awareness, and build understanding, but they also have the potential to spread misinformation, hatred, and divisiveness. It is crucial for us to use these platforms with caution and wisdom, ensuring that we uphold the values



The qualities of selfishness, narrow-mindedness, and hard-heartedness have no place in a society built on Islam's values of kindness and compassion. The Prophet (PBUH) said, "I have been sent to perfect good manners." This teaching underscores that Islam is not about rigidly proving others wrong; it's about rising above the desire for personal victory and engaging with others in a manner that nurtures understanding, respect, and empathy.



challenge lies in ensuring that the message remains true to the core values of Islam: wisdom, compassion, and respect. Digital tools should serve as bridges, not barriers.

The Importance of Unity

The unity of the Muslim Ummah holds a special place in Islam. Allah warns against straying from the collective path in the Quran:

"Whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has been made clear to him and follows a path other than that of the believers, We will turn him to what he has chosen and cast him into Hell." (Quran 4: 115)

Similarly, the Prophet (PBUH) emphasized: "Allah's mercy is with the congregation. Whoever separates from the group has gone astray." (Tirmidhi)

This unity is foundational for the Ummah's role as a guide for humanity. Through collective adherence to the principles of dawah, we embody the Qur'anic verse: "You are the best of nations." Our unity as Muslims strengthens our ability to enjoin good and forbid evil, fulfilling our divine responsibility.

**Tailpiece:**

In conclusion, while digital dawah is a valuable tool for spreading the message of Islam, it is important to remember that technology itself is neutral. It is up to us to use it responsibly. The principles of dawah—wisdom, kindness, and sincerity—must guide our actions, whether in personal interactions or online spaces. As we continue to navigate the digital age, let us remain mindful of the power we wield and use it to spread the message of Islam with the same compassion, understanding, and wisdom that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exemplified.

"To change the world, we need to combine Ancient Wisdom with new technologies." — Paulo Coelho

Technology plays a climactic role in our lives, making it pivotal for us to be aware of both its boons and banes.

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Domestic Violence: Another scourge in Kashmir



BY: FAHEEM UL ISLAM

Domestic violence, though pervasive globally, has taken an alarmingly unique trajectory in Kashmir. While the region is often celebrated for its natural beauty and cultural richness, the darker realities within many households remain hidden. Behind closed doors, countless women endure physical, emotional, and psychological abuse, their stories often silenced by a society that prioritizes family honor over individual dignity. In recent years, the issue of domestic violence in Kashmir has escalated, demanding urgent attention and action from all quarters of society.

The problem of domestic violence in Kashmir is deeply rooted in its patriarchal social fabric. For centuries, the societal structure has relegated women to subordinate positions, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and mistreatment. The normalization of such behavior is further reinforced by cultural narratives that encourage women to endure and "adjust" for the sake of family cohesion.

Even in cases of severe abuse, victims are often pressured into silence, their voices stifled by fears of stigma and social ostracization. This culture of silence has allowed domestic violence to proliferate unchecked, creating a vicious cycle that traps generations.

The long-standing conflict in Kashmir has only intensified this issue. Decades of instability have inflicted immense psychological stress on individuals and families. The resulting economic uncertainties and prolonged exposure to violence have eroded the fabric of many households. Men, bearing the brunt of unemployment and societal pressures, often vent their frustrations within the confines of their homes. This volatile mix of external conflict and internal oppression has made domestic violence an almost inevitable by-product of the region's broader turmoil.

The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst for an already dire situation. Lockdowns confined families to their homes, forcing victims of domestic violence into close proximity with their abusers for extended periods.

Reports from local NGOs and helplines in Kashmir during this time revealed a significant spike in distress calls from women seeking help. Financial insecurity, exacerbated by job losses and economic slowdowns, further heightened tensions within households, often manifesting as physical

alternatives, forcing many to remain in abusive environments.

The impact of domestic violence in Kashmir extends beyond individual victims to affect the broader community. Children growing up in abusive households often bear the brunt of this trauma. Studies have shown that such environments can lead to long-term psychological damage, including anxiety, depression, and behavioral disorders.

These children are at risk of perpetuating the cycle of violence, either as abusers or as victims in their own adult relationships. The mental health toll on women, too, is significant, with many survivors experiencing chronic anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and suicidal ideation. In a region where mental health services are already stretched thin, the lack of accessible support further exacerbates the crisis.

Despite these challenges, there are glimmers of hope in the form of grassroots efforts to combat domestic violence. Local NGOs, such as the Women's Rights Trust and the Kashmir Women's Collective, have been working tirelessly to provide support to survivors. These organizations offer counselling, legal aid, and safe spaces for women, often stepping in where the state apparatus falls short.

Religious leaders, too, have begun addressing the issue from the pulpit, using their influence to challenge cultural norms that perpetuate violence and promote gender equality. Their efforts, though nascent, signal a growing recognition of the problem and a willingness to confront it.

The solutions to this crisis lie in a multifaceted approach that addresses its root causes while providing immediate relief to victims. Education plays a pivotal role in dismantling the patriarchal norms that enable domestic violence. By incorporating gender equality and respectful relationship education into school curricula, we can begin to instill these values in the next generation. Public awareness campaigns, led by community leaders and religious scholars,



or verbal abuse. The limited accessibility of support services during the pandemic left many women with no recourse, compounding their helplessness.

Another critical factor contributing to the rise of domestic violence in Kashmir is the lack of effective institutional mechanisms to address the problem. While the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) was extended to Jammu and Kashmir in 2019, its implementation remains inadequate.

Many victims are either unaware of their legal rights or reluctant to navigate a justice system that is often perceived as unresponsive and biased. Police officers, who are frequently the first point of contact for victims, may lack the training to handle such cases sensitively, discouraging women from seeking legal recourse. Moreover, the absence of sufficient shelters and counselling services leaves victims with few

can challenge the stigma surrounding domestic violence and encourage victims to come forward.

Equally important is the need to strengthen the region's institutional response. Law enforcement agencies must be trained to handle domestic violence cases with sensitivity and urgency. Fast-track courts dedicated to such cases can ensure swift justice, while increasing the number of shelters and support centers can provide victims with safe spaces to rebuild their lives.

Economic empowerment is another crucial aspect, as financial independence can give women the means to escape abusive relationships. Vocational training programs and microfinance initiatives can help achieve this goal, particularly in rural areas where opportunities are limited.

Domestic violence in Kashmir is a complex issue that cannot be solved overnight. It requires the collective effort of society, from policymakers and law enforcement agencies to community leaders and individuals. Breaking the cycle of abuse will involve not only addressing its immediate symptoms but also tackling the systemic inequalities and cultural attitudes that allow it to persist. For too long, the issue has been relegated to the shadows, dismissed as a private matter unworthy of public attention. It is time for that to change.

The fight against domestic violence is not just about protecting women from harm; it is about building a society where every individual can live with dignity, free from fear and oppression. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "The measure of a civilization is how it treats its women." By this measure, we have a long way to go. But with collective action and a commitment to change, a safer and more equitable Kashmir is within reach. It begins with breaking the silence, one voice at a time.

**(The author hails from Achan Pulwama. He has done his PG in international politics at AMU)**



# Satish Sharma assumes charge as President of J&K Bharat Scouts & Guides

Stresses on close synergy between concerned departments for fool-proof arrangements

**JAMMU:** JAMMU, DECEMBER 20: Minister for Food Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Youth Services and Sports, Transport, Science and Technology, Information Technology, ARI and Trainings, Satish Sharma, today assumed charge as President of J&K Bharat Scouts & Guides in presence of National Commissioner, Bharat Scouts & Guides Wing, Cdr M.M Joshi.

Chief State Commissioner J&K Bharat Scouts & Guides, R.S Tara, Former State Commissioner, J&K Bharat Scouts & Guides I.D Soni and State Training Commissioner,



J&K Bharat Scouts & Guides, R.P Kotwal

J&K Bharat Scouts & Guides felicitated the Minister as new President of the organisation.

Satish Sharma was apprised of ongoing activities of the organisation in J&K. He was also informed that J&K Bharat Scouts & Guides stood 2nd in overall national level ranking and has received Rs. 50,000 cash award from its Chief Patron Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha.

## DDMA Kupwara Approves 34 Cases for relief under SDRF

**KUPWARA:** The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan who is also Chairperson, District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) today convened a meeting of concerned officers to review the cases pertaining to property damage in the district.

On the occasion, the DC directed the concerned officers to ensure submission of joint assessment report of damaged infrastructure in their jurisdiction within a weeks' time positively and also ascertain the reason of the incident and duly mention it in the report so that relief is disbursed among the affected families without any delay.

She took a detailed case wise review of all the claims pertaining to property and livestock damages in the district.

## Javed Rana inaugurates tube well at Channi

JAMMU, DECEMBER 20: Reaffirming government's commitment of providing safe drinking water to every household in Jammu and Kashmir, Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment, Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, today inaugurated a tube well at Panch Mandir, Channi Himmat.

MLA, Ch. Vikram Randhava along with other officers and local residents were also present on the occasion.

After inaugurating the tube well, Javed Rana said that commissioning of the tube well will augment water supply in the area and provide much needed succour to the residents.

It is pertinent to mention that Javed Rana had recently directed for inauguration of tube wells that are ready to be functional.

Emphasizing the importance of adhering to quality standards, Javed Rana called for strenuous

efforts to complete the pending works on other two tube wells infrastructure. Work on other tube wells in Sanjay Nagar and



in Sanjay Nagar and Vhour Camp, within the set deadlines.

The tube-well at Channi will be having a capacity of 2.00 lac gallons of water with a safe discharge of 10,000 gallons/hr.

The tube-well is part of augmentation of water supply in water deficit areas of Channi Himmat, Sanjay Nagar and Vhour Camp under which 3 tube wells were proposed to be drilled with other allied civil and mechanical

Vhour Camp is underway.

The scheme was taken up for execution in 2022-23 under UT CAPEX and shall be fully commissioned by March 2025. The total estimated cost of the project is 652.78 lakh.

Vikram Randhawa and local residents expressed their gratitude for the project that has ensured access to clean drinking water and alleviating the hardships associated with water scarcity in the area.

# Public grievance redressal in JK-Samdhan, CPGRAMS Portals reviewed at Ganderbal

**GANDERBAL:** As part of the ongoing Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore initiative under Good Governance Week 2024, the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Ganderbal, Gulzar Ahmad today chaired a comprehensive meeting to assess the status of public grievance redressal on the JK-Samdhan and CPGRAMS portals.

The meeting, held in the Conference Hall of Mini Secretariat Ganderbal, conducted a detailed review of the grievances registered on these portals and sought updates on the actions taken by concerned departments to address these issues. In order to ensure transparency and accountability,

the ADC cross-verified the actions with complainants who were present at the meeting.

The ADC directed all

the core focus of grievance redressal mechanisms.

Highlighting the significance of the Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore



departmental representatives to prioritize the prompt and satisfactory resolution of grievances within a stipulated time frame. He emphasized that public satisfaction must remain

campaign, the ADC stated that this national initiative is designed to enhance governance at the grassroots level by improving service delivery and effectively addressing public grievances.

"Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore campaign is not just a slogan but a transformative step towards bringing governance closer to the rural populace," he remarked.

He urged all departments to redouble their efforts in ensuring efficient grievance redressal and service delivery, thereby contributing to the larger vision of good governance. The ADC reiterated the administration's commitment to creating a responsive governance system that meets the expectations of the public, particularly those in rural areas. The meeting was attended by senior officials from various departments, ensuring a coordinated approach to grievance resolution.

# DC Srinagar urges youth to avail benefits from Self- Employment schemes

**SRINAGAR:** In connection with the nationwide campaign 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Aur' under Good Governance Week-2024, the District Administration Srinagar, Friday organized a Grievance Redressal Camp at Lasjan in Srinagar Panchayat Block of the District.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Dr Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat presided over the Grievance Redressal Camp.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from Lasjan-A, Lasjan-B and other adjoining areas of the Panchayat Halqa during which Public representatives and local residents raised issues including augmentation of drainage system, sanction of Higher Secondary School, ATM facility, upgradation of play field, early completion of foot bridge at Bongam, approach road from Wathpora bridge and other development issues.

The DC after listening to the issues

patiently directed the Officers to ensure time bound resolution of the grievances.

Addressing the occasion, the DC said



that Prashasan Gaon Ki Aur campaign is aimed at bringing the Administration closer to rural communities for prompt grievances redressal and efficient service delivery.

He added that the purpose of holding such grievance redressal Camps is to take appraisal of local issues from the general public for precise and on ground assessment for their time bound redressal. He said such programmes also provide feedback to the

Administration to tailor its interventions for the public good and reach to the doorstep of the people instead of them visiting Government Offices.

The DC underlined the importance of responsive Governance and urged Officers to prioritize grassroots concerns for inclusive development and welfare of people. He remarked that the Good Governance Week also reflects the administration's resolve to ensure transparency, accountability, and development at the grassroots level.

Dr Bilal urged the local youth to come forward and take benefit from Government sponsored self employment schemes to earn livelihood with honour and dignity.

During the programme, awareness was generated among the general public regarding key Government initiatives. The DC also inspected the stalls setup by Agriculture,

# Arrangements for conduct of JKP constable exam reviewed at Kupwara

**KUPWARA:** To ensure smooth and fair conduct of JKSSB examination, the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Kupwara, M Rouf Rehman who is also Chief Inspector, today held a meeting



with concerned officers to review the arrangements for conduct of the examination for the post of Police Constable (Photographer) scheduled to be held on December 22.

The meeting focused on various critical aspects to ensure a seamless and fair examination process. During the meeting, the Centre Superintendent and other officers were briefed in detail on their critical responsibilities to ensure the smooth conduct of the JKSSB examination.

Emphasizing the significance of their roles in maintaining the integrity of the process, they were apprised of the need for vigilant supervision and adherence to guidelines of JKSSB.

Among others, District Treasury Officer Kupwara, Tehsildar Machil, BDO Trehgam and other concerned attended the meeting.

## DC B'la reviews implementation of PM- Vishwakarma scheme

**BARAMULLA:** The District Development Commissioner (DDC) Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, Friday presided over a meeting of the District Level Implementation Committee (DLIC) here to assess the progress of the PM Vishwakarma scheme's saturation in the district.

At the outset, the chair provided a comprehensive overview of progress made with respect to the implementation of Vishwakarma scheme in the district.

The DDC directed the officers to ensure the scheme's coverage in all villages and facilitate the enrollment of artisans from every panchayat across the district.

Meanwhile, Minga Sherpa instructed the officers to ensure that comprehensive trainings are conducted for all the artisans who have enrolled for the Vishwakarma scheme for different trades.

The meeting was attended by the General Manager, DIC, Nightat Alam; Chief Planning Officer Baramulla, Assistant Commissioner Development and other concerned officers.

## DC Shopian for effective implementation of Udyam Jagriti



**SHOPIAN:** The Deputy Commissioner (DC), Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar today presided over a meeting on Udyam Jagriti (Mission Yuva) at Mini-Secretariat Shopian to discuss the its implementation at the Panchayat level.

At the outset, Assistant Director Employment briefed the meeting by explaining the significance of Udyam Jagriti under Mission Yuva and its benefits on establishment of enterprises in the district.

A PowerPoint presentation was also delivered by the Employment Officer DECC offering a visual overview of the Udyam Jagriti under Mission Yuva. The DC said that the Mission Yuva has designed an application "Youth Skill & Entrepreneurship App" freely available at Google Play store, which will benefit the youth in entrepreneurship development, from starting point to the culmination of the entire process. The DC directed all Tehsildars and BDOs to aware the people regarding Mission Yuva and schedule the awareness camps to have a full impact of Mission Yuva on people across the district.

Shahid said that the scheme is aimed at fostering sustainable employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for the youth to promote entrepreneurship and sustainable employment.

The DC held in-depth discussion with the Officers on the mission's effective implementation, directing all line departments to focus on key action points and understand their roles to achieve the mission's objectives effectively and efficiently, and emphasized for strong coordination among the departments and stakeholders.

# Work begins on the construction of Nayabat Office-Soibugh Budgam

**BUDGAM:** The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Akshay Labroo Friday conducted an on-site review of the under-construction Nayabat Office Soibugh, emphasising timely completion of the project.

During the inspection, the DC directed the concerned officials and executing agency to ensure strict adherence to the set deadlines.

He emphasised the administration's focus on completing the project on time with quality work.

The Nayabat Office Soibugh has been recently approved and the project aims to enhance administrative efficiency and provide better services to the local population of Soibugh area.

also interacted with local residents and listened to their suggestions and projected issues.

It is pertinent to mention that approval has

also been granted to construction of Tehsil Office, BK Porā; Nayabat Nagam, Nayabat Kachwari, Additional NT Complex, Pakherpora in district Budgam under the larger objective of augmenting administrative infra and public service delivery offices of Revenue functionaries



in the district for swifter delivery of services to the citizens of Budgam.

The DC was accompanied by ACR Budgam, CPO Budgam, AEE R&B Budgam and other officials during the visit.

# Good Governance Week-2024: DC Kupwara reviews preparations for week-long programme

**KUPWARA:** The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan Thursday chaired a meeting of concerned officers to review the preparations for conduct of Good Governance Week-2024.

The objective of the programme is taking administration to the doorsteps of the common people to strengthen good governance through

the district. She directed them to ensure cent percent coverage of the targeted beneficiaries under different schemes of their respective departments.

The officers were also directed to ensure reduction of grievances lingering on different online portals to zero within a week's time by



inclusive and transparent service delivery.

The programme is also aimed at empowerment of rural citizens especially poor and underprivileged sections by prioritizing governance initiatives that address rural challenges such as lack of connectivity, slow service delivery and limited awareness.

On the occasion, DC stressed upon all the officers to work with added zeal and greater coordination to ensure smooth and successful conduct of the 'Good Governance Week' across

providing quality resolution to these grievances. She also emphasized for disseminating good governance practices and success stories to encourage active public participation for their betterment and overall welfare.

It was given out in the meeting that special grievance redressal camps shall be conducted at tehsil, block and panchayat levels to redress the grievances and issues of the people at all levels. Besides,

online grievances through various platforms including CDGRAMS and state portals will have to be redressed completely within a week's time, thus reducing them to zero.

Meanwhile, a weekly plan has also been devised by the District Administration at Tehsil, Block and panchayat level across the district starting from December 19th to ensure outreach of the administration at the doorsteps of the common people especially living in far flung and hard to reach areas.

## Farm Machinery Mela/ Awareness programme held at Chitragam, Shopian

**SHOPIAN:** Department of Horticulture Shopian today organized a farm machinery mela cum awareness programme at Block Headquarter Chitragam Kalan. The event witnessed the participation of a large number of orchardists. MLA Zainapaora, Showkat Hussain Ganie was the chief guest on the occasion. Speaking at the event, MLA urged the orchardist community to adopt the scientific techniques to enhance the production and quality of horticulture produce. He enjoined the participants to approach the horticulture department for the introduction of latest trends and techniques. Chief Horticulture Officer, Shopian acquainted the orchardists regarding modern techniques/practices of farming and about various schemes of the department including the schemes under Holistic Agriculture Development Programme.

## MVD Anantnag takes action against violators to improve Road Safety

**ANANTNAG:** In a bid to address the rising number of road accidents in the region, the Motor Vehicles Department (MVD) Anantnag conducted a special Naka (checkpoint) operation at Khanabal and Mattan, today.

The initiative, which follows the directives of the Transport Commissioner of Jammu and Kashmir, is part of ongoing efforts to enhance road safety across the valley.

During the drive, a total of 80 vehicles were checked, resulting in the issuance of 28 challans for violations under various sections of the Motor Vehicle Act. Rs. 60,000 is anticipated to be collected as fines from these challans.



In addition to the fines, the MVD team seized four vehicles for violating permit conditions and impounded two motorcycles for lacking valid documents.

Speaking to the press, ARTO Dr. Showkat Ahmad Bhat highlighted the importance of such operations in reducing road accidents and saving lives. He assured

that similar drives would continue with greater intensity in the future. "The goal is to minimize accidents on our roads and ensure public safety. This requires the active cooperation of all road users," Dr. Bhat said.

He also urged all road users, drivers, passengers and pedestrians to follow traffic rules and act responsibly. "Road safety is a collective effort, and everyone must play their part to reduce accidents and save lives," he added.

The drive reflects a growing commitment to road safety in Anantnag, and authorities are hopeful that these measures will lead to a significant reduction in road accidents in the coming months.



# Will potatoes make me fat? MYTHS DEBUNKED!

We love to dichotomize foods as good and bad. For example quinoa good, candy bad, spinach good, pizza bad, flaxseeds good and potatoes bad, bad and bad!

When it comes to potato, we only think about it as a carb laden food, which makes us gain weight. Many don't even think it qualifies to be called a vegetable - after all vegetables are supposed to be healthy. But much to your surprise (and delight of foodies), this is not entirely true. Today we debunk nine myths about potatoes which will change the way you view them.

**MYTH:** Sweet potatoes are good and white potatoes are bad

**FACT:** Both the types of potatoes have their own benefits and nutritional value. 100 grams serving of both type of potato contain:

Sweet potato White potato  
Fibre: 3 grams Fibre: 2.1 grams  
Potassium: 5% Potassium: 3.5%  
Vitamin C: 33% Vitamin C: 16%  
Magnesium: 6% Magnesium: 5%

Iron: 4% Iron: 6%  
So, the conclusion is that they both are not that different to occupy opposite ends as good or bad. In fact looking at the values we can say that they are somewhat similar.

**MYTH:** Potatoes spike blood sugar because they are full of carbs

**FACT:** Glycemic index ranks foods based on how much they increase blood sugar levels. So, to avoid drastic increase in blood sugar it is said you must have foods that have a low glycemic index.

Potatoes have a medium glycemic index and do not raise the blood sugar levels dangerously high. Glycemic index of potato is 56. The main thing is the form in which you consume the potato. Deep frying and shallow frying makes them fattening.

**MYTH:** You should eat only 1 potato a month

**FACT:** Consumption of potato depends on the level of your activity and nutrition you need in a day. If your daily activity is average and you also have a balanced diet, you can eat

one potato a day.

**MYTH:** Potatoes are full of calories

**FACT:** A big fat sized potato, which is generally not available in Indian grocery store contains 258 calories (flesh and skin) which includes 0.37-gram fat, 57.97-grams carb and 6.2-grams protein. Potatoes lead to weight gain only if consumed regularly in large amount. Also, what matters is the form in which they are consumed. Baked and steamed potatoes are considered to be the best form.

**MYTH:** Potato is not a vegetable

**FACT:** Potatoes are botanically classified as a vegetable, but they are classified nutritionally as a starchy food. This is because when eaten as part of a meal, they are generally used in place of other starchy carbohydrates, such as bread, pasta or rice.

**MYTH:** Potatoes ruin weight loss plan

**FACT:** When potatoes are cooked in a healthy way like baked, boiled, roasted or steamed they



cause no harm to any weight loss plan. In fact, since they are complex carbohydrates, they aid weight loss. But if you team up potatoes with cream, cheese, butter or any other dip, they will surely contribute to weight gain. Things like fries and chips should be avoided.

**MYTH:** Potatoes contain simple carbohydrates

**FACT:** This is untrue. Potatoes contain complex carbohydrates which provide our body with much needed energy. By providing instant calories, they replenish the level of glucose in the blood. This is a

primary reason why climbers feed on potatoes before any hectic event.

**MYTH:** Potatoes make you gain weight as they are full of carbs

**FACT:** Carbs are not our enemy, in fact, our brain functions solely on carbs so we need a certain amount of it to keep our thinking sharp. Cutting carbs does not make us skinny. In fact, researchers suggest that high carb diets are more successful in weight loss than low carb diets. And there has been no convincing evidence yet which relate intake of potatoes with the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes or cardiovascular disease.

**MYTH:** Peeling potatoes takes away all its nutrients

**FACT:** Potatoes are an excellent source of vitamin C and potassium more than a banana. It also has Vitamin B6 and carbohydrates. A small potato packs about 110 calories in it. The only thing you are losing out on by peeling those potatoes is the fiber. In other words, it's not a make or break scenario if you can not stand eating the peel.

## One in 100 people in north India suffer from celiac disease, say experts

One in 100 people in north India suffer from celiac disease, a disorder in which the lining of the small intestine is damaged when foods with gluten such as wheat, rye, and barley are eaten, AIIMS' doctors said.

Celiac disease is an autoimmune disease that occurs due to ingestion of a protein called gluten which is present in cereals.

In these patients, the gluten protein is not digested completely leading to damage to the small intestinal mucosa where food is absorbed.

The damaged small intestine does not absorb the food and thus, the patients fail to grow in height or gain weight and develop chronic diarrhoea, anemia (lack of blood), and weakness of bones, said Dr Govind Makharia, professor of Department of Gastroenterology and Human Nu-

trition at AIIMS.

The AIIMS doctors conducted a study which covered 23,000 people out of which 0.6 per cent (1 in 160) had celiac disease. It was more common in the northern part of India (1.2 per cent) as compared to north eastern (0.8 per cent) and southern part (0.1 per cent).

According to Makharia, approximately one-third of Indians have genetic susceptibility to develop celiac disease and the only treatment is to avoid food items made from wheat.

"100 gm of wheat contains 80 per cent of gluten protein. Around 50 mg of gluten which is equivalent to a bite of a chappati may be harmful to patients suffering from celiac disease," the doctor said at the 17th International Celiac Disease Symposium.

Celiac disease is not reported



extensively in India, Makharia said, adding that the biggest impediment in its prevention and treatment was the limited awareness about the disease and its causes.

It is for the first time that this international symposium was being organised and it would provide insights, perspectives to the

disease and help in making further breakthroughs on the research being done in this area.

"The need of the hour is both research and creating awareness about the condition. Overall, celiac disease has now become a disease of public health importance," he said.

Dr B S Ramakrishna Director, Institute of Gastroenterology, SIMS Hospital, Chennai, said a lot was happening in the area of research on celiac disease.

"There are many highly sensitive and specific serological tests, anti-endomysial antibody and anti-tissue transglutaminase antibody assays, available today which can help in the detection of this condition," he said.

However, it was alarming to note that currently only those with the most typical manifestations were checked and ultimately diagnosed with the disease, he said.

Screening programmes within populations indicated that the disease was under-diagnosed and what was clinically detected represents only the tip of the iceberg. Management of celiac disease involves a gluten-free diet primarily, he added.

## SMOKING is injurious to health



DR. V. SATHYANARAYANAN

Smoking leads to poor health outcomes and is has a statutory warning printed on all cigarette packs. But yet people smoke. Most people associate smoking to lung cancer etc. but in all probability they do not understand that smoking has an impact on all aspects of health such as follows:

a. Poor oxygen to lungs leading to heart conditions  
b. Increases storage of unwanted fat in the body leading to higher cholesterol  
c. Genetic abnormality in children where mothers are smokers  
d. It increases blood glucose and blood pressure

Diabetes is on the rise. Lately smoking has been clearly associated with diabetes as it increases the blood glucose levels and reduces the efficiency of insulin activity. Smoking is now proven to be an independent risk factor for diabetes, and amongst diabetics it increases the risk of complications. The more you smoke, the more chance you have of getting diabetes. If you smoke 16 to 25 cigarettes a day, your risk for Type 2 Diabetes is 3 times greater than a non-smoker's risk. When you quit smoking, your risk decreases during the years.

The fact that smoking

increases blood glucose levels and leads to type 2 Diabetes is getting more and more well established. In the recent past some major studies have pointed in this direction. In fact it has been declared by US department of Health in 2014 that smokers are at 30-40% increased risk of developing diabetes .

A recent research article has compared several such studies where a link was established between hyperglycemia and smoking. They compared hyperglycemia and nicotine impact on body in terms of insulin sensitivity and pancreatic  $\beta$  cells. These were an assessment of population based studies to highlight the epidemiologic and functional association between smoking and hyperglycemia and to create a process that makes smoking assessment as a part of the protocol for diabetes diagnosis and management process.

Smoking is definitely injurious to health but not just for cancer but also for many other associated lifestyle disorders. It may be contributing factor to poor diabetes management outcomes.

**Dr. V. Sathyanarayanan, M.D., C.Diab., Consultant Diabetologist and Physician, Sathya Diabetic Centre & Dental Clinic, Kancheepuram**  
E-mail: s\_sathyas@hotmail.com

## This jeera-ginger drink promises to cut tummy flab in 10 days!

Tummy flab is the biggest hurdle when it comes to weight loss. Not only does it look awkward in a saree or high waist pants, but also becomes the talk of the town because of its sheer prominence. Worry no more, here we bring to you the magical combination of the most common ingredients found in your kitchen- ginger and cumini!

**ADVANTAGES OF GINGER:** The most ancient ingredient found in the Indian kitchen, ginger is a rhizome known for its medicinal use and the flavour it brings in our food and chai. Ginger has been used as a digestive relief for a million years. This is because it has thermogenic properties which also produces heating effect in the body leading to a boost in our metabolism. It is due to these reasons that ginger can be considered a multi-dimensional stem.

**BENEFITS OF CUMIN:** Another strongly flavoured spice, cumin is originally a native to the Mediterranean countries. Cumin is loaded with potassium, iron and dietary fiber. Cumin seeds also contain small amounts of vitamin C, E and K. Cumin can help eliminate body fat and decreasing unhealthy cholesterol levels.

**THE RECIPE:** All you need is one tablespoon of cumin seeds (either whole or powdered) and add it to 500 ml of water. Bring this water to a boil and let it reduce to half its volume (approximately 250 ml- one glass). If you wish to enhance the flavour of this drink, you can add cinnamon and cardamom with a dash of lemon juice (freshly squeezed). Strain this combination and have this as your morning drink for ten days for best results. Follow this up with a minimum of 45 minutes exercises and proper diet.

**HOW DOES THIS COMBINATION HELP?:** This combination of cumin and ginger will help you increase your metabolism, a perkquisite if you wish to lose weight. Increasing your metabolism will help burn more calories as your property during this day will be fuelled actively. Other than this, this combination will also help reduce cravings and hence prevent you from unnecessary and unhealthy binging.

## Here's a way to prevent cognitive decline

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle may be key to preventing cognitive decline - the loss of ability to think - with age, according to a new advisory from the American Heart Association.

Both the heart and brain need adequate blood flow, but in many people, blood vessels slowly become narrowed or blocked over the course of their life, a condition known as atherosclerosis, the cause of many heart attacks and strokes.

Many risk factors for atherosclerosis can be modified by following a healthy diet, getting enough physical activity, avoiding tobacco products and other strategies.

"Research summarised in the advisory convincingly demonstrates that the same risk factors that cause atherosclerosis, are also major contributors to late-life cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's disease," said Philip Gorelick, from Mercy Health Hauenstein Neuroscience Center in the US.

"By following seven simple steps - Life's Simple 7 - not only can we prevent heart attack and stroke, we may also be able to prevent cognitive impairment," said Gorelick.

Life's Simple 7 outlines a set of



health factors developed by the American Heart Association to define and promote cardiovascular wellness.

The Life's Simple 7 programme urges individuals to manage blood pressure, control cholesterol, keep blood sugar normal get physically active, eat a healthy diet, lose extra weight and not smoke.

A healthy brain is defined as one that can pay attention, receive and recognise information from our senses; learn and remember; communicate; solve

problems and make decisions; support mobility and regulate emotions. Cognitive impairment can affect any or all of those functions.

The advisory, which is published in the journal Stroke, stresses the importance of taking steps to keep your brain healthy as early as possible, because atherosclerosis - the narrowing of the arteries that causes many heart attacks, heart failure and strokes - can begin in childhood.

## SOFT DRINKS- ACT HARD ON YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

DR. V. V. MUTHUSAMY

With modern lifestyle and food habits, consumption of aerated drinks is on high. Sugared soft drinks are among the most heavily consumed drinks worldwide. Carbonated soft drinks were first invented as a way to make "healthier" water that looked like natural carbonated waters that were found in European spas in the mountains. Unfortunately, we no longer realize any health benefits of carbonated waters. There's plenty of evidence that guzzling sugared drinks like sodas can harm your

health. The extra calories can lead to obesity and contribute to heart problems and diabetes. Now researchers say the sweet beverages may shoot up blood pressure as well.

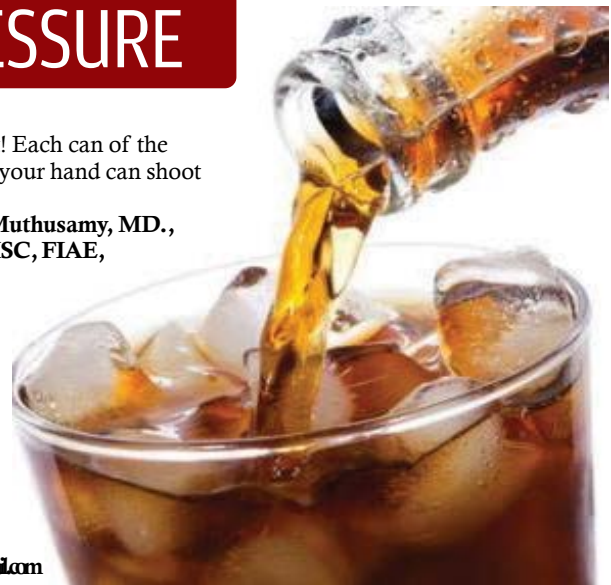
Several studies have reported that consumption of soft drinks is associated with increased risk of high blood pressure in western countries. A study conducted for 10.4 years in middle aged Korean population reveals that soft drinks consumption contributes to increased risk of high blood pressure, being prominent in obese participants. There is a mile-long list

of studies that show the negative impact of consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, and this study is one more proof that something needs to be done to change the disease burden caused by these fizzy drinks.

Sugary drinks add calories but don't fill you up, and people who drink them may not compensate for those extra calories by eating less food. That leads to weight gain, which can raise blood pressure. Plus, people who drink sugar-sweetened beverages also tend to eat fewer healthy foods and exercise less, suggests a study

Watch out! Each can of the fizzy drink in your hand can shoot up your BP!

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## Govt announces winter vacation for Degree Colleges

KC NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: The Government of Jammu and Kashmir has officially announced the winter vacation schedule for all Government Degree Colleges in the Union Territory for the academic year 2024-2025.

According to a government order, issued by the Higher Education Department, the winter break will be observed as follows:

Jammu Division (Summer Zone): Winter vacations will begin on January 1, 2025 till 10th January. Kashmir Division: Winter vacations will commence from December 27, 2024, and will continue until February 14, 2025.

Jammu Division (Winter Zone): These colleges will also follow the same vacation period as Kashmir Division, from December 27, 2024, to February 14, 2025.

## Gulmarg braces up for Khelo India Winter Games



SRINAGAR: The preparations for the fifth edition of Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG) are in full swing at Gulmarg with officials claiming that the successful event in the last couple of years have brought the number of tourists up at the famous ski-resort of Kashmir.

"After the first successful Khelo India Winter Games in 2020, the Gulmarg has witnessed a rise in the footfall of tourists with many people

getting fascinated with the destination's potential of hosting the winter games related to the snow," the officials told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

They said such is the potential of Gulmarg that it is hosting the event for the fifth time in February next year, commencing on February 22nd and culminating on February 25th.

The officials further divulged that the preparations are going on at present to make the event grand success in which skiing, mountaineering and other programmes are expected. "Above 1000 participants are expected in the event, who will participate in different games," he said. Pertinently, the KNO has already reported that for the first time, the drone show is all set to take center-stage in the upcoming Khelo India Winter Games.

## Div Com Kashmir reviews arrangements for celebration of Republic Day-2025

Stresses on close synergy between concerned departments for fool-proof arrangements

SRINAGAR: With an aim to ensure smooth and hassle free celebration of ensuring Republic Day-2024 in Kashmir, the Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Vijay Kumar Bidhuri Friday chaired a high level meeting of concerned Officers to review the civil and security arrangements to be put in place.

The meeting was attended by, CEO SSCL/Commissioner SMC, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Director School Education Kashmir, Director Health Services Kashmir Director Floriculture, Chief Engineers of PWD (R&B), KPDCI, PHE, UEED, MED Kashmir; Joint Director Information Kashmir, HoDs and representatives of Hospitality & Protocol, Fire & Emergency Services, Academy of Art Culture & Languages Kashmir.

## Sopore Police destroys narcotic substances worth over Rs. 1 Cr

KC NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: In a significant move to curb drug abuse, the District Drug Disposal

Committee, led by SSP Sopore destroyed narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances valued over Rs. 1 crore.

This action was carried out in accordance with the orders of the special Court (NDPS) Baramulla.

Sopore police said that the seized narcotic and psychotropic substances, which had been confiscated in 21 separate NDPS cases from various police stations within Sopore Police District, were destroyed by incineration at an approved facility

in Lassipora, Pulwama. The destruction process adhered strictly to the legal requirements under the Rules, 2022, and was conducted under the supervision of the relevant authorities.

The consignment destroyed included 123.728 kg of poppy straw/powder, 2,811 bottles of Codeine Phosphate, and 28,316 capsules of Spasmodoxyvon, all of which were eliminated in compliance with the directions issued by the Hon'ble Special Court (NDPS) Baramulla.

## Prolonged Dry Weather Declines Saffron Production By '70 Percent

Ishtiyaq Kar

SRINAGAR: Kashmir's saffron cultivation, renowned for producing one of the world's most expensive spices, has been severely impacted by prolonged dry spells and climate change. In other words, the dry spell and climate change has spelled doom on this priced crop.

Farmers in Pulwama and Budgam have observed significant declines in yield, with some reporting reductions of up to 70 percent compared to previous years.

"It was almost the dry season this year. Without water, how can we sustain our crops?" lamented Mohammad Yousuf, a saffron farmer in Pampore.

The valley has experienced intense heat since June, with temperatures reaching 34°C. On July 3, 2024, Kashmir recorded a temperature of 35.6°C, the highest in the last 25 years.

"The dry spells have become longer, and the rains, when they come, are too heavy,

washing away what little we have left. It's heartbreaking to see our fields barren," said Shakeela Begum, a grower

dry spells.

"The National Saffron Mission had good intentions, but the implementation



from Pulwama.

Official data indicates that saffron production over the past two decades has decreased by 65 percent, dropping from 15.95 tonnes in 1990 to 2.6 tonnes in 2023-24. Additionally, the area under saffron cultivation has shrunk from 5,707 hectares in 1996-97 to 2,387.71 hectares in 2018-19.

In response to these challenges, the government introduced a drip irrigation system in 2010 as part of the Rs 412-crore National Saffron Mission to combat prolonged

faced technical and logistical challenges. We are working to address these issues," admitted an official from the Agriculture Department.

The ongoing crisis has serious implications not only for the saffron growers but also for the regional economy. Saffron, often referred to as the "golden spice," is an integral part of Kashmir's agricultural heritage, and its decline threatens the livelihoods of thousands of farmers who depend on it for their income.

"We used to produce

enough to support our families, but now, I have had to borrow money just to survive. This isn't just about saffron—it's about our lives," said Abdul Gani, a seasoned grower in Budgam.

Climate experts have also weighed in on the issue. "The rising temperatures and changing rainfall patterns are not temporary.

The government and farmers must adapt quickly to preserve this iconic crop," stated Dr. Farooq Ahmad, a leading climate expert in the region.

The challenges faced by Kashmir's saffron farmers due to prolonged dry spells and climate change highlight the urgent need for effective government interventions and climate-resilient farming practices.

"We have invested significantly in infrastructure and research, but changing climate dynamics require long-term and collaborative solutions. Farmers also need to adopt modern practices," said a senior official in the Horticulture Ministry.

## Continued From P1...

### Chillai-Kalan

Gulmarg, a famous ski-resort, recorded a minimum temperature of minus 6.0 degree Celsius. Pahalgam, a famous tourist destination, recorded a low of minus 8.2 degree Celsius while Shopian in South Kashmir recorded a low of minus 10.0 degree Celsius.

Also, Qazigund, a gateway of Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 7.6 degree Celsius while Kupwara in north Kashmir recorded minus 6.5 degree Celsius. Kokernag in South Kashmir recorded a low of minus 5.8 degree Celsius.

Meanwhile, the Meteorological department (MeT) has predicted light snowfall over a few higher reaches of north Kashmir from Saturday.

Furthermore, the weather is expected to remain dry for the next 24 hours while light snowfall is expected over a few higher reaches on December 21 and 22, Director Meteorological department (MeT), Dr Mukhtar Ahmad said.

From December 23 to 24, a dry weather condition is expected in J&K followed by a light snowfall over higher reaches towards 27th late evening or night to 28th forenoon, he said, adding that the weather would remain generally dry on December 29 & 30.

He added that the light snow is also expected at a few higher reaches on December 31st.

Furthermore, the MeT in its advisory has said that the cold wave is expected to continue at isolated to scattered places.

In view of fresh snowfall, sub-freezing temperature & icy conditions over roads of important passes and higher reaches, the tourists, travelers and transporters are advised to follow administration and traffic advisory

### CM Omar

Abdullah was warmly welcomed by Devendra Budhiya, the National President of Vishnoi Mahasabha, and his associates.

Speaking about the discussion, CM said, "This pre-budget meeting with the Union Finance Minister is a crucial opportunity for me to highlight the needs of Jammu and Kashmir's business community, traders, and craftsmen. I aim to address our region's financial concerns and advocate for policies that support its growth."

### Gen Rawat

and the reason cited was "HE(A)" or "human error (aircrew)". The defence ministry informed the Committee that 34 inquiries have been conducted into these accidents during the period.

"The ministry also informed that the recommendations by these Inquiry committees review the process, procedure, training, equipment, culture, operations, maintenance and administration holistically with intent to prevent recurrence of an accident," the report said.

The ministry further informed that "all remedial measures stipulated by Chief of the Air Staff remarks are binding and actioned". "Most have been actioned while a few are under implementation," it added.

### Doctors advise

News Observer (KNO) said the ongoing severe cold wave in Kashmir can exacerbate respiratory issues, particularly among children and the elderly.

He said children and the elderly are more vulnerable due to weaker immune systems. "Children's immune systems are still developing, making them less effective at fighting off infections like colds, flu or pneumonia, while ageing leads to a decline in immune function, reducing the ability of elderly individuals to combat respiratory infections," he said.

Dr Showkat, a child specialist, said that children's smaller airways are more prone to inflammation and blockage caused by cold air. Meanwhile, chronic conditions like asthma, bronchitis or COPD are common among elderly people, and cold weather further exacerbates these issues by constricting airways.

"Breathing in cold air can cause bronchospasm (tightening of airway muscles), leading to difficulty in breathing, particularly in children and the elderly," he said.

Children with conditions like asthma or allergies are at higher risk of exacerbations during cold weather, while elders with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease or emphysema are more susceptible to respiratory problems.

Dr Showkat further said that children's bodies are less efficient at maintaining core temperature. This, he said, increases the risk of hypothermia, which can worsen respiratory distress. Similarly, ageing reduces the body's ability to sense and respond to temperature changes and leads to complications.

Doctors have advised people to keep living spaces warm but well-ventilated to avoid indoor pollution, ensure children and elderly people dress in warm, layered clothing, provide a balanced diet with plenty of fluids and immunity-boosting foods, avoid outdoor exposure during extremely cold or foggy conditions and seek medical advice at the first sign of respiratory distress.

They said children and elderly persons should avoid unnecessary outdoor activities, especially during early mornings and late evenings when temperatures are lowest. "Maintaining hydration, nutrition, proper ventilation and vigilance for symptoms of hypothermia or frostbite—such as shivering, numbness, or confusion—is crucial," they added. "Immediate medical attention must be paid if these symptoms occur."

Chilla-i-Kalan, the 40-day period marking the harshest phase of winter in Kashmir, begins annually on December 21 and lasts until January 31. During this time, temperatures often plunge below freezing point, freezing water bodies like Dal Lake and water supply lines in several areas.

### La Niña Impact

outcome of prolonged dry spell, snowfall in the higher reaches and also the impact of La Niña.

Pertinently, Kashmir parts, mostly plains, are experiencing the prolonged dry spell while the deficit rainfall in this season starting from October 01, 2024 to December 18, 2024 increasing to 78 per cent across Jammu and Kashmir. The increase in the deficit precipitation has been witnessed amidst no forecast of any major wet spell for the next ten days in Jammu and Kashmir.

Moreover, the MeT Director said the situation is expected to continue for the next few days, but the night temperatures would likely improve between December 27 and 31st.

"We have seen such conditions in the past as well and today the prolonged dry spell, snowfall in the higher reaches and the impact of La Niña is leading to the present situation," he said.

### Dy CM inaugurates

of exchange between local companies and national players as well, he added.

"We have to be aware of the latest technological interventions as it is imperative in the present age to be competitive and being relevant", maintained the Deputy Chief Minister.

### Govt Committed

existing 12% to 5% uniformly, including shawls priced above Rs.1,000, with the objective of reducing the tax burden on this artisan-driven industry and supporting marketability.

The spokesman described Handicrafts as a labour-intensive industry which constitutes 80% of human workforce. He further stated that all efforts shall be made to revive the handicrafts sector, keeping in view the stiff competition from global markets and machine-made imitations.

### Challans to surpass 4

the wake of the recent "Tengpora incident". Parents have become more proactive in preventing minors from driving," SSP said.

He noted that there is now more public awareness and concern about road safety, particularly with regard to minors driving vehicles.

He pointed out that while traffic police continue to enforce the law, the collective responsibility of the public, including parents and road users, is essential to reducing accidents.

the power supply by nearly 100-150 MWs.

"Recently, some important decisions were taken by the Chief Minister Omar Abdullah regarding the electricity issues in Jammu and Kashmir. We have implemented those decisions to reduce the power cuts," the official had said.

He said, "KPDCI was receiving 1500 MWs of power and now it has been further increased to 1600-1650 MWs to address the unscheduled and distress power cuts. The same amount of power is already being supplied."

### Commissioner Railways

section of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project on January 26, 2025. This section, connecting Reasi to Katra, will complete the 272-km railway line, bringing the much-anticipated Vande Bharat train service between New Delhi and Srinagar to life.

### Speaker likely

According to section 46 of Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act-2019, the Legislative Assembly may make rules for regulating, subject to the provisions of this Act, its procedure and the conduct of its business.

The Reorganisation Act also provides that until these rules are made, the rules of procedure and standing orders in force immediately before the commencement of this Act, with respect to the Legislative Assembly of the existing State of Jammu and Kashmir shall have effect in relation to the Legislative Assembly of the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir subject to such modifications and adaptations

## NOTICE

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# Ashwin's Desire To Evolve All The Time Made Him Stand Out: Shastri

Ravichandran Ashwin's constant drive to evolve and excel in his craft, coupled with his focus on self-improvement rather than being concerned about the opponents made him stand out, says former India coach Ravi Shastri.

The 38-year-old surprised the cricketing

world by announcing his retirement in the middle of the Test series against Australia after the end of the third Test in Brisbane on Wednesday.

"What stands out for me was his wanting to evolve all the time. He wasn't the kind of guy satisfied as to where he started," Shastri said on 'The ICC Review'.

"For me it was his guile, wanting to excel in his craft and (especially) in the last two-three years the way he got the ball to the way, gave it a rip and got it to dip on the batsman with drift made him stand out," Shastri said.

Known for his relentless drive to develop his game, Ashwin consistently worked on new deliveries and refined his action, even in the

later stages of his career.

"He wanted new tricks to be learned. He pursued it, practiced hard at it and continued to look for new things as his career progressed, to keep up with the times," Shastri said.

"His legacy will be of being a terrific match-winner, a fabulous record, 537 sticks. I mean anyone over 500 (in Test cricket) is special."

Ashwin, who made his debut in 2011 against the West Indies, quickly cemented his place in India's Test side. He retired as India's second-highest wicket-taker with 765 scalps, including 537 in Tests.

Ashwin and fellow spinner Ravindra Jadeja often bowled in tandem, leading India to numerous victories. Shastri felt the "spin twins" played a role in each other's success.

"And for him to do it in his span and the way he has done it, especially when it came to bowling in the last four or five years, I think in India, along with Jadeja, I think they were a terrific pair, the real spin twins."

"They complemented each other well and they spurred each other on, so I would say a lot of Jadeja's wickets in the last five-six years have come because of Ashwin and vice-versa."

Shastri highlighted that Ashwin's nearly identical record against left and right handed batters -- 269 wickets against right-handers and 268 against left-handers -- demonstrated just how versatile and effective the spinner was, regardless of the opponent or their playing style.

"You look at his record against right-handers, against left-handers, it's pretty much similar, you know, which says it all. It didn't matter to him who he was bowling against. He was up for it," he added.



Shastri highlighted that Ashwin's nearly identical record against left and right handed batters -- 269 wickets against right-handers and 268 against left-handers -- demonstrated just how versatile and effective the spinner was, regardless of the opponent or their playing style.

## Coastal City Of Gwadar In Balochistan To Host PSL Draft: PCB

KARACHI: The PCB on Friday announced that the coastal city of Gwadar in the restive province of Balochistan will host the players draft for the Pakistan Super League (PSL) on January 11.

Pakistan was also contemplating England and Dubai as possible venues.

PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi said other details like timing of the draft and venue would be shared later.

Gwadar is the heart of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and has one of the most beautiful and scenic grounds in the country but due to recent attacks at its security installations and surrounding areas, it has not hosted any cricket matches.

Naqvi said the decision to select Gwadar was aimed at taking the game to the people in the province and inspire the next generations.

"Gwadar, with its stunning coastline and strategic importance, represents the heart of Pakistan's economic future. By hosting the PSL player draft here, we aim to highlight its cultural and economic significance while celebrating the unity cricket brings to our nation," Naqvi said.

"I look forward to welcoming all the franchises and the relevant stakeholders to the beautiful city of Gwadar as we take an exciting step towards marking the start of the 10th edition of Pakistan's biggest sporting extravaganza."

The PCB has announced the list of Pakistani players placed by their franchises in the platinum and other categories but the final list of foreign players who will be available in the draft is yet to be released.

This is the first time the PSL, launched in 2016, will clash with the Indian Premier League as it would be held in the same window which is usually reserved every year for the IPL.

The PCB and its franchises are making efforts to rope in the high-profile overseas players who went unsold in the IPL auction last month.





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## Sports Minister Declares Open “37th Sub-Junior National Softball Championship”

JAMMU: Minister for Youth Services and Sports, Satish Sharma, today declared open 37th Sub Junior National Softball Championship at MA Stadium, Jammu.

The championship has brought together 38 teams from 24 states, with over 1,000 players and technical officials participating in this prestigious event. The event is being organised by the J&K Softball Association in collaboration with the J&K Sports Council under the aegis of Softball Association of India.

The vibrant inaugural function featured captivating Dogri Sangeet performances, various sports demonstrations and a grand march past by the participating teams.

Speaking at the event, the Minister expressed his pride in J&K hosting a national-level championship of this magnitude. He congratulated the athletes and officials and emphasized the government's commitment towards transforming J&K into a hub of sports excellence. "We are determined to provide young athletes with world-class infrastructure, coaching facilities and platforms to showcase their talent," he remarked.

The Minister highlighted J&K's rising status as a host of multiple national championships this year and assured the participants of the best facilities. "The youth of J&K are brimming with talent and their achievements in national competitions are a testament to their potential. We aim to provide more opportunities for them to excel," he added.

The championship will continue till 24th December, exhibiting promising intense competition and camaraderie among young athletes from across the country.

The opening ceremony witnessed presence of Rajinder Singh Tara, Director General, Youth Services and Sports; Nuzhat Gul, Secretary, J&K Sports Council; Rajeev Sharma, Member, J&K Sports Council; and several dignitaries and guests from participating states.

