

BLAZING TALES

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LG Sinha hoists National Flag at Lok Bhavan on 80th Independence Day



Blazing Tales News Service

SRINAGAR, SEP: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha hoisted the National Flag at Lok Bhavan in Srinagar on the occasion of the 80th Independence Day, paying tribute to freedom fighters and civilians who lost their lives in natural calamities while calling for greater focus on inclusive growth, women and youth empowerment, employ-

ment generation and environmental sustainability.

A ceremonial police contingent presented the National Salute following the flag hoisting ceremony.

Paying homage to the countless freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for the country, Sinha recalled the difficult journey, struggle and sacrifices that culminated in India's independence.

"On this historic day, I join all citizens in paying heartfelt tributes to our founding fathers and the valiant sons and daughters of Mother India who sacrificed their lives for country's freedom. Let us strive to realize their cherished dreams of building a peaceful, prosperous Jammu Kashmir and a great nation," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor also paid tribute to civilians who tragically lost their lives in natural calamities this year.

He said the most meaningful tribute to the martyrs and freedom fighters would be a collective resolve to work with integrity and protect the freedom achieved through their sacrifices.

"The truest tribute we can pay

(Contd on Pg 2)

CM Omar hoists National Flag, reiterates commitment to restore J&K statehood



Blazing Tales News Service

SRINAGAR, SEP: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah hoisted the National Flag at the 80th Independence Day function at Bakhshi Stadium, Srinagar, and took the salute at the ceremonial parade and march-past, reiterating his government's commitment to restoring statehood and constitutional guarantees for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Beginning his address with the patriotic verse, "Sare Jahn Se Achha,

(Contd on Pg 2)

DIPR celebrates 80th Independence Day at Srinagar



Blazing Tales News Service

SRINAGAR, SEP: The Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) celebrated the 80th Independence Day with patriotic fervour and enthusiasm at the DIPR Media Complex in Srinagar.

The celebrations were led by Director Information Shreya Singhal, who hoisted the National Flag at the complex in the presence of officers and officials of the Directorate.

On the occasion, Singhal extended warm Independence Day greetings to all officers and officials of DIPR and highlighted the significance of the day.

Recalling the sacrifices of the freedom fighters who contributed to India's struggle for independence, she emphasised the enduring values of unity, democracy, integrity and national service that continue to guide the country.

She urged the officers and officials to uphold these values in

(Contd on Pg 2)

Regimes changed, State became UT, but J&K schools still cry for teachers, basic facilities

VIKAS SHARMA

JAMMU, SEP: Regimes changed, Jammu and Kashmir moved from being a State to a Union Territory, education policies were rewritten and conferences were held on strengthening school education. Yet, decades later, the fundamental concerns confronting thousands of government schools remain strikingly familiar — shortages and uneven availability of teachers, single-teacher schools and gaps in basic infrastructure.

The latest data of the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) placed before the Rajya Sabha recently has once again brought the long-standing challenges of Jammu and Kashmir's school education system into focus.

According to UDISE+ 2025-26 data, Jammu and Kashmir has 1,544 single-teacher schools across all management categories. At the same time, the number of teachers in position from pre-primary to secondary level stood at 1,56,404 during 2025-26, marginally lower than 1,56,832 in 2024-25 and 1,56,840

in 2023-24.

The figures raise serious questions about teacher deployment and the continued existence of schools where a single teacher is expected to handle multiple classes, subjects, administrative responsibilities and other duties. Jammu and Kashmir had 24,228 schools in 2025-26, compared with 24,192 in 2024-25 and 24,296 in 2023-24. In government schools, the UDISE+ data showed 18,748 teachers at the primary level, 38,988 at the upper-primary level, 17,578 at the secondary level and 16,255 at the higher-secondary level.

While governments have repeatedly announced reforms, recruitment drives and measures to improve learning outcomes, education experts believe the real challenge is not merely the total number of teachers but their equitable deployment and availability at the school level.

School education experts said the presence of more than 1,500 single-teacher schools should not be viewed merely as a statistical figure.

"A single teacher cannot realistically perform the work of an entire

school staff. The teacher has to manage multi-grade teaching, different subjects, administrative work, student records and interaction with parents. This directly affects the quality of classroom teaching, particularly in remote and rural areas," school education experts said.

Educationists argue that the problem has survived successive governments because policy discussions often remain disconnected from ground realities.

"We regularly hear about national and international conferences, workshops and policy dialogues on strengthening school education. Important resolutions are passed and reports are prepared.

"But the real test of education reform is whether a child sitting in a remote government school has enough teachers, classrooms, toilets, electricity, drinking water and learning resources. Unless these basic issues are addressed, many decisions will remain confined to papers and conference halls," experts observed.

(Contd on Pg 2)

LG Sinha hoists National Flag at Lok Bhavan on 80th Independence Day

to our martyrs and freedom fighters is to resolve to work with integrity and safeguard our hard-earned freedom,” Sinha said.

Calls for inclusive growth

While acknowledging the challenges ahead, Sinha expressed confidence in India’s potential to emerge as a global leader. He called upon citizens to work collectively towards building an inclusive society that places public interest at the centre and extends compassion and support to underprivileged sections.

He stressed the importance of balanced economic and social development, particularly the empowerment of women.

“Let us strive for balanced growth and the economic empowerment of women to build a more humane and compassionate society,” he said.

The Lieutenant Governor also identified youth empowerment, job creation and environmental sustainability as key priorities.

CM Omar hoists National Flag, reiterates commitment to restore J&K statehood

Hindustan Hamara; Hum Bulbulein Hain Iski, Yeh Gulistan Hamara,” Omar Abdullah said the words reflected the love, pride and emotional bond people share with the country.

He said Independence Day was an occasion not only to celebrate but also to remember the sacrifices made for India’s freedom and reflect on whether the vision of those who made the supreme sacrifice had been fully realised.

“Today is a day of joy, a day of remembrance and a day of gratitude,” the Chief Minister said, paying tribute to those who sacrificed their lives for the country’s freedom.

He reaffirmed his government’s resolve to build a stronger Jammu and Kashmir and take the Union Territory to new heights of development, prosperity and progress.

Statehood and constitutional guarantees

A major focus of the Chief Minister’s address was the restoration of statehood and constitutional guarantees for Jammu and Kashmir.

Omar Abdullah said his government would continue to represent and serve the people while working to fulfil the aspirations of those who sacrificed their lives for the freedom and future of the region.

“We will continue to represent you. We will continue to serve you. We will continue to do our work to bring Jammu and Kashmir to that level,” he said.

The Chief Minister said the government would continue its efforts for restoration of the constitutional guarantees of Jammu and Kashmir and regaining its statehood, while simultaneously working to usher in a new era of development.

“Whether it is to bring Jammu & Kashmir to that level again, whether it is to restore the constitutional guarantees of Jammu and Kashmir, whether it is to regain the special status of Jammu & Kashmir, or whether it is to start a new era of progress in J&K, your government is not only a promise for all these things, but your government will make it a reality,” he said.

DIPR celebrates 80th Independence Day at Srinagar

the discharge of their professional responsibilities and continue contributing towards effective public communication and service.

Joint Director Information (Headquarters) Zahoor Ahmad Raina, Deputy Director Information (PR/AV) Javid Ahmad Rather and other officers and officials of DIPR were present on the occasion.

The celebration concluded with a reaffirmation of the Directorate’s commitment to public service and responsible dissemination of information while upholding the democratic and constitutional values associated with the nation.

Regimes changed, State became UT, but J&K schools still cry for teachers, basic facilities

The concern becomes more significant in Jammu and Kashmir, where geography creates additional challenges. Schools in hilly, border and remote areas often require greater attention because teacher availability, transportation and infrastructure constraints can be far more severe than in urban centres.

The Ministry of Education has maintained that recruitment, service conditions and deployment of teachers fall within the administrative domain of the respective States and Union Territories. Teacher vacancies arise due to retirement, resignation, creation of new posts, rationalisation of deployment and changes in student enrolment.

The Centre periodically advises States and Union Territories to fill vacant teaching posts through transparent and merit-based recruitment processes and provides financial assistance under Samagra Shiksha to help maintain appropriate pupil-teacher ratios.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasises maintaining a pupil-teacher ratio of below 30:1 in each school and below 25:1 in areas with a high proportion of socio-economically disadvantaged students.

However, experts point out that an overall pupil-teacher ratio does not always reflect the reality inside individual schools.

“A satisfactory average ratio can hide serious inequalities. One school may have more teachers than required, while another may be functioning with just one teacher. Therefore, the focus should shift from only State-level averages to school-wise and region-wise teacher availability,” education experts said.

The issue is not confined to Jammu and Kashmir. At the national level, India had 1,00,843 single-teacher schools across all management categories in 2025-26.

The number of teachers in position from pre-primary to secondary level across the country increased to 95,74,324 in 2025-26, compared with 94,38,291 in 2024-25 and 91,55,644 in 2023-24. India had 14,66,682 schools in 2025-26.

The national data shows progress in the overall teacher workforce, but the existence of more than one lakh single-teacher schools indicates that the challenge of equitable teacher distribution continues across the country.

For Jammu and Kashmir, the question is whether the transition from State to Union Territory has translated into visible improvement at the grassroots level of school education.

Experts believe future reforms must focus on timely recruitment, rational and transparent deployment, special incentives for teachers serving in remote and difficult areas, reduction of non-teaching workload and regular school-level monitoring of infrastructure requirements.

“School education cannot be strengthened through announcements alone. Every policy must finally reach the classroom. A school without adequate teachers or basic infrastructure cannot deliver the quality education envisioned in NEP 2020, regardless of how strong the policy framework appears on paper,” they maintained.

As governments continue to discuss the transformation of school education, the latest UDISE+ data serves as a reminder that for thousands of students and teachers, the struggle remains rooted in basic necessities.

ITI Shopian organises NAPS Mela at GDC Shopian

Blazing Tales News Service

SHOPIAN, SEP: The Industrial Training Institute (ITI) Shopian, in collaboration with the District Administration Shopian, organised a District-level National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) Mela at Government Degree College (GDC), Shopian, today.

Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Shopian Dr. Nasir Ahmed Lone was the Chief Guest on the occasion.

Addressing the gathering, the ADDC stressed the need for greater awareness about NAPS and called for maximum registration of youth and establishments on the NAPS portal within the stipulated timeframe to bridge the gap between industry and education.

He urged local industrial units and commercial establishments to actively enrol local youth under NAPS, with the objective of building a self-reliant and skilled workforce in Shopian.

Awareness session on apprenticeship

An awareness session was conducted by Assistant Advisor Apprenticeship, ITI Shopian, Suhail Ahmed, who delivered a detailed presentation on the salient features, objectives, financial benefits and registration process of NAPS.

He highlighted that the scheme provides stipend support, practical training and improved employability opportunities for youth.

The mela witnessed overwhelming participation, with more than 1,000 students and ITI trainees attending the event along with representatives of over 50 reputed industrial establishments.

SKUAST-K, Mission Poshan sign MoU to boost nutrition through Poshan Vatika

Blazing Tales News Service

SRINAGAR, SEP: Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir

Union Territory.

The initiative will support the implementation of Mission Poshan 2.0, aimed at improving nutritional outcomes among children aged 0-6



(SKUAST-K) and Mission Directorate Poshan, Jammu and Kashmir, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote nutrition-sensitive agriculture and establish sustainable Poshan Vatika at Anganwadi Centres across the

years, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

The MoU was signed in the presence of SKUAST-K Vice Chancellor Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai. He said the collaboration would leverage the university's exper-

tise in agriculture, horticulture and nutrition with the government's extensive nutrition outreach network to provide technical guidance and capacity building in nutrition-sensitive agriculture.

The initiative is expected to promote sustainable and locally relevant approaches to improving nutrition through the establishment and development of Poshan Vatika at Anganwadi Centres.

Officials attend MoU signing
The event was attended by Prof. Raihana Habib Kanth, Director Extension; Prof. Irfan Bisati, Directorate of Research; Prof. Massarat Shafi, Head, Community Science; Prof. Ishfaq Abidi, Head, Vegetable Sciences; Dr. Sajad Bhat, Head, Food Science and Technology; and Dr. Iffat Ganai, Community Science, along with various officers of the university.

Satish Sharma tours Chhamb Constituency, reviews development works

Blazing Tales News Service

CHHAMB, SEP: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Information Technology, Youth Services & Sports, Science & Technology and ARI & Trainings, Satish Sharma, undertook an extensive tour of the Chhamb Assembly Constituency and reviewed ongoing developmental activities besides laying foundation stones for several new projects aimed at strengthening civic infrastructure and improving public amenities.

During the tour, the Minister interacted with local residents, public representatives and officers and reviewed the pace of development works in different areas. He directed the concerned departments to ensure timely execution of projects while maintaining quality and transparency.

At Khour Town, Satish Sharma laid the foundation stone for construction of storm-water drains in different wards of Khour Town at an estimated cost of Rs 4.50



crore. The project is aimed at improving drainage infrastructure and addressing waterlogging and related problems faced by residents.

He also laid the foundation stone for construction of lanes and drains in all wards of Mu-

nicipal Committee Khour at a cost of Rs 99.06 lakh, aimed at improving local connectivity, sanitation and civic infrastructure across the town.

At Rakh Malal, the Minister laid the foundation stone for a Multipurpose Hall and cre-

ation of facilities for a Reading Room at an estimated cost of ₹19.43 lakh. He also laid the foundation stone for construction of a Tin Shed at Baba Badbachaig Dev Sathan, Rakh Malal, at a cost of Rs 5 lakh, aimed at improving facilities

for devotees and visitors. At Nikkia in Tehsil Khour, Sharma laid the foundation stone for improvement of the existing Devsthan/religious site, including augmentation of the shed, development of public amenities, provision of a ramp and washroom for specially-abled persons, tile work and allied works. The project has an estimated cost of Rs 60 lakh.

Another major project taken up during the tour was construction of a 16-metre vented crossway connecting Romali to Thun Naryani, for which the foundation stone was laid at an estimated cost of ₹70 lakh. The project is expected to improve connectivity and facilitate movement of people between the adjoining areas. The projects for which foundation stones were laid during the tour have a combined estimated cost of approximately Rs 7.03 crore, covering drainage, roads and lanes, public amenities, religious-site infrastructure and connectivity.

Speaker directs accelerated execution of new Legislative Assembly Complex

Blazing Tales News Service

JAMMU, SEP : Speaker, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather, visited the new Leg-



islative Assembly Complex and reviewed the progress of ongoing works, taking detailed stock of the physical and infrastructural development achieved so far.

During the visit, concerned officers briefed the Speaker on the status of various components of the prestigious

project, including works completed, those nearing completion and activities presently in progress. A detailed assessment was also made of the pending works and the pace of

execution of different components.

The Speaker was informed that several important works have already been completed in full, including internal plumbing, granite work on service stairs, door and window frames and plastering, which have achieved 100 per

cent completion. He was further apprised that work on other components of the project is also progressing at a brisk pace and is presently in full swing. Taking note of the progress, Speaker Rather emphasised that the New Assembly Complex is a prestigious and important institutional project expected to provide modern and comprehensive facilities for the effective functioning of the Legislature. He underscored the need to maintain sustained momentum in execution so that all components are completed within the prescribed timeframe. Speaker Rather stressed that the October 2027 deadline for completion of the project must be adhered to in letter and spirit. He directed the concerned agencies to put in place an effective execution and monitoring mechanism so that remaining works are taken up simultaneously, wherever feasible, without compromising quality and prescribed standards.

CS inspects progress on High Security Prison at Dambra



Blazing Tales News Service

KATHUA, SEP : Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo today visited the construction site of the High Security Prison coming up at Dambra in Tehsil Mahanpur of Kathua district and reviewed the progress of ongoing works.

The Chief Secretary took stock of the progress of various components of the project and was apprised that work on different sections of the prison complex, besides other associated buildings and amenities, is nearing completion.

Dulloo directed the concerned officers to complete the remaining works at the earliest while ensuring strict adherence to the prescribed quality standards.

He also reviewed the progress of associated infrastructure and emphasised the need for expeditious completion of the project so that the facility can be made operational within the stipulated timeframe.

Div Com Jammu reviews status of NAPS-PRAGATI implementation



Blazing Tales News Service

JAMMU, SEP : Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Ramesh Kumar chaired a meeting to review the status and to decide the way forward for proper implementation of the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS)-PRAGATI in Jammu Division.

Director, Skill Development Department, J&K, Dr Owais Ahmad; Managing Director, JPDCL G P Singh; all Deputy Commissioners of Jammu Division; Director, Geology and Mining J&K; Excise Commissioner J&K; Regional Officer, NHAI, Jammu; senior officers of NHIDCL, NHPC, BRO/SAMPARK and other concerned departments attended

the meeting in person and through virtual mode.

Director, Skill Development Department, J&K, Dr Owais Ahmad briefed the Divisional Commissioner on the progress achieved under the scheme and apprised the meeting about establishment and candidate registration, apprenticeship targets, participation of CPSUs, contractors and private establishments and issues related to e-KYC and portal data. The Divisional Commissioner directed the Deputy Commissioners and concerned departments to ensure registration of all eligible establishments, with special focus on major establishments having 30 or more employees, besides bringing eligible contractors, vendors,

project-level establishments, industries, hotels, private schools and other establishments on the NAPS portal.

He further directed major CPSUs and organisations to register their eligible projects separately, wherever applicable and ensure that their contracting agencies also register and engage apprentices. The DCs were asked to undertake establishment-wise mapping in their respective districts and designate Nodal Officers for regular monitoring and reporting. Emphasising time-bound action, the Divisional Commissioner directed all concerned to complete the registration exercise and achieve the assigned targets by the stipulated deadline. He also stressed resolving e-KYC and other technical issues promptly so that actual registration figures are accurately reflected on the portal.

The Divisional Commissioner underscored the need to maximise apprenticeship opportunities for local youth by strengthening coordination among departments, CPSUs, industries and private establishments and linking eligible youth with workplace-based training and employment opportunities.

Div Com reviews implementation of National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme



Blazing Tales News Service

SRINAGAR, SEP: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg chaired a meeting to review the implementation of the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) across Kashmir Division.

The meeting was attended by Director, Department of Skill Development; Deputy Commissioners of Kashmir Division; Director, Airport Authority of India; and senior officers from NHPC, BEACON, KPDCL, Industries & Commerce, Excise and other concerned departments and agencies.

During the meeting, Director Skill Development, Dr. Owais Ahmad, gave a detailed presentation on the contours of the NAPS, covering eligibility criteria, benefits, registration of establishments, trades covered, registration of apprentices, training components, and the potential for engagement by Central and State PSUs, Corporations and Banks.

It was informed that NAPS aims to enhance apprenticeship engagement, support establishments, and promote skilling across 12 strategic domains comprising 261 designated trades, by organizing specialized vocational training into structured industrial pipelines.

Addressing the meeting, the Divisional Commissioner stated that department-wise targets have already been fixed to enhance workforce engagement under the scheme.

He urged all departments, PSUs, MSMEs and contracting agencies to register their establishments on the NAPS portal and engage apprentices in the prescribed band of 2.5% to 15% of their total workforce.

He further instructed corporations and executing agencies to ensure project-wise registration on the portal.

FCS&CA Director orders crackdown on unfair trade practices in Rajouri

Blazing Tales News Service

RAJOURI, SEP: Director Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA) Rajesh K. Shavan has directed field officers to intensify action against unfair trade practices and ensure uninterrupted supply of essential commodities to consumers across Rajouri district. The directions were issued during a review meeting held with field officers to assess the functioning of the FCS&CA Department in the district. Advance three-month ration distribution, LPG e-KYC, issuance of SK-

Oil licences and departmental infrastructure were among the key issues reviewed during the meeting. Tehsil Supply Officers briefed the Director on the tehsil-wise status of ration distribution and LPG e-KYC. Shavan directed the officers to ensure 100 per cent completion of LPG e-KYC and complete the distribution of three months' advance ration by September 15. He also called for close monitoring of ration lifting and distribution to ensure that beneficiaries receive their entitled supplies smoothly. Progress on the

issuance of SK-Oil licences and other supply-related matters was also reviewed. Later, the Director inspected departmental stores and godowns at Sunderbani, Thanamandi, Rajouri and other locations. He took stock of the infrastructure, storage capacity and other requirements at the facilities.

The officers were directed to identify facilities requiring repair, renovation or augmentation and prepare Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) wherever necessary for taking up their upgradation with the concerned agencies.

Symposium on Road Safety held at GHSS Boys Rajouri

Blazing Tales News Service

RAJOURI, SEP: Traffic Police Rural Jammu, in collaboration with Government Model Boys Higher Secondary School Rajouri, organised a symposium on the topic "Right to mobility comes with the responsibility to follow traffic rules" at the school premises.

The event was part of the ongoing two-week awareness-cum-enforcement drive against traffic violations involving two-wheelers. Around 600 students and 60 teachers participated in the programme. Principal of the school Mohammad Muslim Wani welcomed SSP Traffic Rural Jammu Farooq Qaiser and other guests. The stage proceedings were conducted by Senior Lecturer Fazal Hussain.

Interacting with the students, SSP Traffic Rural Jammu Farooq Qaiser discussed the prevailing scenario of road accidents and their major causes. He emphasised the importance of observing traffic rules, responsible driving and developing a strong sense of civic responsibility among young people.

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In a first: cycling picks up in Jammu, PBS records over 8.80 lakh rides, users cover 1.66 lakh km



VICKY VERMA

JAMMU, SEPT : At a time when the number of vehicles on winter capital's roads is increasing, bicycles are slowly finding their place back in the

city. The growing use of bicycles, particularly through the Public Bicycle Sharing (PBS) system, is giving residents an option to combine daily travel with fitness while also reducing dependence on fuel-driven vehicles.

According to Jammu Smart City data up to August 31, 2026, the Public Bicycle Sharing system recorded 49,595 downloads between May 1, 2022 and August 31, 2026. During this period, users undertook 8,80,976 rides and covered a cumulative distance of 1,66,808 kilometres.

The data also shows that bicycle use helped avoid around 41,702 kg of carbon emissions during the period. The figures indicate that shared bicycles are gradually becoming a part of short-distance travel for many people in Jammu. Cycling adds fitness to daily travel.

Apart from providing an affordable mode of transport, cycling also gives people an opportunity to include physical activity in their daily routine. For those using bicycles for regular short-distance journeys, cycling becomes part of their everyday travel instead of requiring separate time for exercise.

The increasing number of rides recorded under the PBS system also reflects the growing acceptance of bicycles as a convenient option for travelling within the city.

Over 8.80 lakh rides recorded

Since the launch of the PBS system, more than 8.80 lakh rides have been recorded. Users have collectively covered 1.66 lakh kilometres on bicycles.

The sustained use of the service shows that bicycles are not being used only occasionally, but are gradually becoming an option for short-distance mobility in different parts of Jammu. A cleaner option for short journeys

Every short journey made on a bicycle instead of a fuel-powered vehicle can help reduce fuel consumption and vehicular emissions. The reported 41,702 kg of carbon emissions avoided through the PBS system highlights the environmental benefit of encouraging cycling in the city.

With the continued use of the PBS system, cycling in Jammu is gradually emerging as more than just a transport facility. It is bringing together daily mobility, fitness and a cleaner alternative for short-distance travel.

DC Samba reviews implementation of National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme



Blazing Tales News Service
SAMBA, SEP: Deputy Commissioner Samba Ayushi Sudan chaired a meeting to review the implementation of the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) in the district.

The meeting focused on assessing the progress of apprenticeship registrations and placements, identifying gaps in implementation and ensuring greater participation of local industries and establishments.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned departments to intensify awareness campaigns, facilitate registration of eligible candidates and em-

ployers and ensure effective coordination among all stakeholders.

Emphasis was laid on providing skill development and employment opportunities to local youth through apprenticeship training and strengthening industry-institution linkages in the district. Sudan stressed the need for timely achievement of prescribed targets and directed the concerned officers to closely monitor progress and resolve implementation-related issues on priority. The meeting was attended by GM DIC Gurpreet Singh, ALC Suninderjeet Kour and other concerned officers.

Commissioner Secretary chairs UTLIMC meet to review computerisation of PACS in J&K

Blazing Tales News Service

JAMMU, SEP: Commissioner Secretary Cooperative Department, Yasha Mudgal chaired a meeting of the Union Territory Level Implementation and Monitoring Committee

Training Board (JKSTCB); representatives of the System Integrator besides other senior officers of the Cooperative Department.

During the meeting, a detailed PowerPoint presentation was made on the current

detailed deliberations on the implementation status and associated operational issues, with emphasis on ensuring adequate support to PACS at the field level to facilitate their smooth transition to the computerised



(UTLIMC) constituted to review implementation of the Centrally Sponsored Project for Computerisation of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The meeting was attended by the Registrar Cooperative Societies, J&K; Deputy General Manager, NABARD; representative of the Finance Department, J&K; Managing Director, J&K State Cooperative

status of implementation of the PACS computerisation project. The Committee was apprised of the progress achieved so far. Various issues and requirements related to handholding support to PACS, scanning and digitisation of legacy data, deployment of manpower and reconciliation of data were also placed before the Committee for consideration. The Committee held

system. While reviewing the progress, Yasha Mudgal directed the System Integrator to ensure that all assigned deliverables are completed strictly within the stipulated timelines. She stressed that the approved implementation schedule must be adhered to in letter and spirit and that avoidable delays should not be allowed to impede the overall objectives of the project.

DC Samba reviews meeting to assess progress under PCPNDT, NQAS, NTEP



Blazing Tales News Service

SAMBA, SEP: A review meeting on the implementation and progress of PCPNDT, NQAS and NTEP was held under the chairpersonship of Deputy Commissioner Samba, Ayushi Sudan.

At the outset, CMO Samba Dr. Vidhi Bhatial welcomed the Chair, members of the District Advisory Committee and all officers.

The meeting was convened to review the progress of various activities under the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, National

Quality Assurance Standards (NQAS) and National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) in the district.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner took a detailed review of the progress achieved under the respective programmes and assessed the status of ongoing initiatives. She emphasised the need for effective implementation of the prescribed guidelines, regular monitoring and inter-departmental coordination to ensure that the intended objectives of these

programmes are achieved.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned officers to maintain strict compliance with the provisions of the PCPNDT Act, strengthen quality standards in healthcare facilities under NQAS, and ensure timely identification, diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis cases under NTEP. She stressed upon the officers to work with dedication and adopt a proactive approach towards improving healthcare delivery and ensuring better health outcomes for the people of District Samba.

Director AYUSH reviews AYUSH programmes, infrastructure, digital initiatives

Blazing Tales News Service

KATHUA, SEP: Director AYUSH, J&K, Dr. Ajay Kumar Tickoo, visited District Kathua to review the progress of AYUSH infrastructure, programmes and various departmental initiatives. He was accompanied by Assistant Director Dr. Rakesh Raina; Section Officer (Planning) Sandeep Sharma; NAM Account Manager Ekta Soni and Nishad Khajuria.

District Officer Dr. Rakesh Kumar briefed the visiting officer on the functioning and achievements of the AYUSH Department in the district.

During the visit, the Director AYUSH inspected the progress of work on the 50-bedded Integrated AYUSH Hospital coming up at Mandli, Billawar. He interacted with the officers associated with the project and directed PWD engineers to ensure timely completion of the construction work while adhering to prescribed quality standards.

The Director also visited the office of the Deputy Commissioner, Kathua, where he held detailed discussions on the bottlenecks, infrastructure requirements and other issues concerning AYUSH services in the district. The issues were deliberated upon with the concerned authorities, with emphasis on their timely resolution and further strengthening of AYUSH healthcare delivery.

Later, the Director chaired a comprehensive review meeting with the officers and staff of the AYUSH Department. The meeting reviewed the implementation and progress of the AYUSH programmes, functioning of departmental portals, service delivery and strengthening of field-level activities.

Special emphasis was laid on the full-scale implementation of the A-HMIS (AYUSH Hospital Management Information System) portal. Dr. Ajay Kumar Tickoo directed the concerned staff to ensure its effective and comprehensive implementation to strengthen digital record-keeping, transparency, monitoring and delivery of AYUSH healthcare services.

Director Agriculture reviews Digital Crop Survey operations

Blazing Tales News Service

KATHUA, SEP: Director Agriculture Jammu Anil Gupta visited the fields in Kathua district to review the ongoing field-level operations under the Digital Crop Survey (DCS). He was accompanied by SMS-RL/Nodal Officer DCS Jammu Division Krishan Kant, Chief Agriculture Officer Kathua Jatinder Kumar, district-level officers, SDAOs, SMSs and field staff of the Agriculture Department.

ment.

The Director interacted with the Agriculture Surveyors engaged in the exercise and observed the Digital Crop Survey process at the field level.

The Director Agriculture directed the Agriculture Surveyors to ensure timely and quality completion of assigned targets, stressing that accuracy and authenticity of the data must be ensured through proper field verification.

DC Kathua convenes public grievances redressal camp at Bhaddu

Blazing Tales News Service

KATHUA, SEP: A Public Grievances Redressal Camp

Mohammed Syed Khan, CPO Ranjeet Thakur and other district and sectoral officers attended the camp.

The Deputy Commissioner gave a patient hearing to the demands and assured the public that the issues within the domain of dis-



was organised at Bhaddu in Block Billawar. Deputy Commissioner Kathua Rajesh Sharma chaired the camp. A large number of public representatives and residents projected local demands and issues seeking prompt redressal of the same.

ADC Billawar Vishavjeet Singh, PO ICDS

Former Sarpanches from different Panchayats of Block Billawar projected a number of demands related to road connectivity, healthcare, water supply, revenue services, tourism, agriculture and horticulture, Panchayat works and other developmental issues.

tract administration would be resolved on priority, while those requiring intervention at higher levels would be appropriately projected to the concerned authorities. "Such demands will be taken into consideration while preparing future plans, as these require intervention and funding at the govern-

GCW Parade celebrates Teachers' Day

Blazing Tales News Service

JAMMU, SEPTEMBER: The Student Welfare Committee, Government College for Women (GCW), Parade Ground, today celebrated Teachers' Day with great enthusiasm and reverence. The programme was organised to honour the dedication, commitment and invaluable contribution of teachers in shaping the future of students and society.

The celebration commenced with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by Principal of the college Dr. Naveen Anand, faculty members and members of the Student Welfare Committee.

A melodious Saraswati Vandana presented by the students followed the lamp-lighting ceremony. The students expressed heartfelt appreciation for the guidance, encouragement and unwavering support provided by their teachers.

Addressing the gathering, the College Principal emphasised the pivotal role of teachers in nation-building and encouraged students to imbibe the values of dedication, discipline and life-long learning. He appreciated Dean Student Welfare, Dr. Seema Malpotra, and committee members for organising the event.



Modi says Global South trust in BRICS growing as voices are heard

NEW DELHI, SEP: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the trust of Global South nations in BRICS has grown because their voices are heard and their experiences are respected within the organisation.

Addressing the BRICS leaders' outreach summit with partner and invited guest countries, Modi said rising tensions across the world are having a significant and far-reaching impact on ordinary people. He emphasised the need to strengthen resilience within the BRICS grouping to respond effectively to emerging

global challenges.

Highlighting the impact of pandemics, climate disasters and supply-chain disruptions, the Prime Minister said that in an interconnected world, no crisis remains confined to a single region. He stressed the importance of identifying challenges early, preparing for them and taking immediate action.

With Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian among the leaders attending the summit, Modi said the growing participation reflected the strength, appeal and trust associated with BRICS.

He emphasised that the strength of the grouping lies in its diversity and coopera-

tion and said the experiences



and voices of developing countries should remain central to efforts to find solutions.

India announces new BRICS initiatives

Modi announced a series of initiatives aimed at strengthening cooperation among BRICS countries, particularly in areas relevant to developing nations.

These include a BRICS Integrated Early Warning System for prevention of and response to infectious diseases, a BRICS Logistics Supply Chain Cooperation Framework, the BRICS Incubator Network, a Startup Innovation Fund, and a BRICS MSME Cooperation Portal. Other initiatives announced include a Digital Centre of Excellence for Smart Grids and Energy Storage, an Urban Mobility Hub, and Centres of Excellence for Agro-Ecology and Regenerative Agriculture.

Outlining India's priorities under its BRICS chairmanship, Modi said the country's efforts have focused on four pillars—Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and

Sustainability.

On innovation, he said the BRICS Incubator Network would connect start-ups and incubators across member countries, while the proposed BRICS Startup Innovation Fund would promote innovative and scalable solutions.

Modi said India's approach was aimed at transforming the shared vision of BRICS members into practical, mutually beneficial cooperation and strengthening the grouping's role in addressing challenges faced by developing countries and the wider Global South.— Agencies

BJP-led NDA governments in 21 states will introduce UCC before 2029: Amit Shah

NEW DELHI, SEP:- Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that governments in all 21 states ruled by the BJP-led NDA will introduce the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) before the next parliamentary elections in 2029. Shah also said discussions were underway with alliance partners regarding the implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) across the country. He said the government would identify and take action against illegal infiltrators. The Home Minister made the remarks while speaking about the 'Seva Sankalp Abhiyan', a month-long nationwide outreach campaign being organised by the BJP and its state governments to mark Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 25 years in public life and governance, first as Gujarat Chief Minister and later as Prime Minister. Shah said the UCC had already been introduced in several states and expressed confidence that it would be implemented across all 21 BJP-led NDA states before 2029. He also highlighted the government's approach towards national security, saying that operations including surgical strikes, air strikes and Operation Sindoor had demonstrated a policy of zero tolerance towards terrorism.— Agencies

Student housing emerges as key issue in DUSU election campaign

NEW DELHI, SEP: Student housing has emerged as a major issue in the campaign for the Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) elections, with candidates focusing on affordability and safety amid concerns over limited institutional hostel capacity.

The issue has gained further prominence following the building collapse in Satya Niketan in which seven people, including five students, were killed. The incident has renewed concerns over the dependence of university students on private accommodation, including paying guest facilities and

rented housing.

The DUSU elections are scheduled to be held on September 18, with results to be declared the following day. Major contenders, including the AISA-SFI alliance, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and Association of Students for Alternative Politics (ASAP), have placed student housing prominently in their election agendas.

The AISA-SFI alliance has called for enforcement of the Rent Control Act within a two-kilometre radius of every college. Its demands also include university assistance and subsidies for

verified private accommodation and provision of at least two hostels in every college. The RSS-backed ABVP has placed Awas (housing) as the first of the four pillars of its manifesto. It has promised separate hostels for girls in every college, a dedicated Student Housing Cell and helpline, besides fire safety audits of paying guest accommodations and hostels across Delhi. The focus on housing reflects a wider concern among students over the availability, affordability and safety of accommodation in the national capital.— Agencies

India approves export of up to 654 MW electricity to flood-hit Nepal

NEW DELHI, SEP: The Ministry of Power has approved the export of up to 654 MW of electricity to Nepal from September 13 to December 31 to help the neighbouring country address a power shortage following extensive damage to its hydropower infrastructure caused by devastating flash floods.

Under the arrangement, electricity will be supplied to the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) for 18 hours a day, from midnight to 6 pm, the Ministry of Power said.

Of the approved capacity, up to 600 MW will be supplied through the Muzaffarpur-Dhalkebar 400 kV double-circuit transmission line. Another 54 MW will be supplied through the Tanakpur-Mahendranagar 132 kV single-circuit transmission line. The Ministry said the arrangement was approved as an immediate measure to help Nepal overcome the shortfall in domestic power generation after the

floods severely affected several hydropower facilities. The power export is aimed at providing immediate support to Nepal's electricity supply system during the period of reduced domestic generation. The Ministry further stated that the quantum of electricity to be exported from January 2027 will be reviewed in December 2026 based on the prevailing situation and requirements. The move comes as Nepal continues to deal with the extensive impact of recent flash floods and landslides, which have caused significant damage to infrastructure across several areas of the country.— Agencies

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EDITORIAL

India's Youth Cannot Be Left Waiting: The Alarming NEET Challenge

INDIA'S young population is often described as one of the country's greatest strengths. With millions of young Indians entering the education system and the workforce every year, the country has an enormous opportunity to benefit from its demographic dividend. But a recent NITI Aayog report highlighting the number of young people aged 15–29 who are neither in education, employment nor training presents a disturbing picture that India cannot afford to ignore.

A young person who is not studying, not working and not learning a skill is not simply an unemployed individual. Such a situation can represent a much deeper disconnection from the opportunities that education, the economy and society are expected to provide. Every year spent without learning or meaningful work can make it harder for a young person to enter the labour market later. It can also lead to frustration, loss of confidence and uncertainty about the future.

The issue becomes even more serious because India is at a stage where the country needs a skilled and productive workforce. Industries are changing rapidly, technology is transforming workplaces and new opportunities are emerging in areas that did not exist in the same form a decade ago. Yet many young people continue to struggle to understand what skills are actually required and where they can acquire them.

There is also a gap between education and employment that needs urgent attention. A young person may spend years completing a degree but still find it difficult to secure suitable employment. Employers increasingly expect practical knowledge, communication abilities, digital skills, problem-solving capacity and some understanding of the workplace. Merely possessing a certificate is often not enough.

At the same time, vocational education and skill-based training need greater social acceptance. For too long, academic degrees have often been considered more prestigious than technical or vocational skills. This thinking needs to change. A skilled technician, electrician, healthcare worker, designer, digital professional, craftsman, entrepreneur or media professional can make an important contribution to the economy just as much as someone following a conventional academic career.

The responsibility does not lie with young people alone. Families, schools, colleges, employers and governments all have a role to play. Young people need better information about career choices and training opportunities. Schools should give students greater exposure to different professions and practical skills. Colleges should create stronger links with workplaces and industries. Employers can contribute through internships, apprenticeships and practical training.

Most importantly, the success of a skill-development programme should not be measured only by how many people register or receive certificates. The real question is what happens afterwards. Do they find employment? Do they earn better incomes? Do they start their own businesses? Do they acquire skills that are actually useful in the market? These are the outcomes that should matter.

The NITI Aayog findings should therefore be seen as a reminder that India's demographic advantage cannot be taken for granted. A young population becomes a demographic dividend only when young people are given the opportunity and the support to become educated, skilled and economically productive. Simply having a large number of young citizens does not automatically create economic growth. There is another dimension that deserves attention. Young people who remain outside education, employment and training can gradually become disconnected from the mainstream economy. The longer this continues, the more difficult it can become to return to formal education or employment. Early intervention, counselling, skill development and accessible opportunities can therefore make a significant difference.

Vivekananda's Voice for a New India – Interpreting His Vision in the 21st Century

Dr. Aniket Mahapatra
Dr. Vivek Sharma

AS India commemorates the anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's historic Chicago Address of 1893, the nation has an opportunity not merely to celebrate a remarkable speech, but to rediscover a timeless vision that continues to shape our national character. More than a century ago, a young monk from India stood before the Parliament of the World's Religions and began his address with the immortal words, "Sisters and Brothers of America."

In that single greeting, he conquered hearts across the globe and introduced the world to the civilizational ethos of India—an ethos rooted in tolerance, universal brotherhood, spiritual wisdom, and respect for diversity. For every proud Indian, Vivekananda's Chicago address remains far more than a historical event. It symbolises India's confident engagement with the world—not through conquest or coercion, but through ideas, values and moral leadership.

At a time when India was under colonial rule and its civilisation was often dismissed by imperial powers, Vivekananda restored the nation's self-belief. He reminded Indians that their greatest strength lay not merely in political power or economic wealth but in an ancient culture that celebrated knowledge, compassion and the unity of humanity. The relevance of that message has only grown in the twenty-first century.

Today's India is one of the world's fastest-growing economies, a leader in digital innovation, space exploration, healthcare and entrepreneurship. Indian scientists have reached the Moon, Indian technology powers global businesses, and Indian professionals contribute to every corner of the world. Yet the true measure of India's rise cannot be limited to economic indicators or geopolitical influence. Swami Vivekananda envisioned an India that would combine material progress with moral and spiritual excellence.

His emphasis on education remains particularly significant. Vivekananda believed that education should build character, courage,



and confidence rather than merely produce degrees. As India invests in innovation, artificial intelligence, research and skill development, his philosophy reminds us that knowledge without ethics is incomplete.

The India of the future must produce not only skilled professionals but also responsible citizens who place national interest and social welfare above narrow self-interest. Equally enduring is his message of harmony among religions and cultures. In an age marked by polarisation, conflict, and identity politics across many parts of the world, Vivekananda's vision of "acceptance" rather than mere tolerance offers a path toward lasting peace. India's strength has always been its diversity. Our many languages, faiths, customs, and traditions are not weaknesses but the very foundation of our democratic and cultural resilience. Preserving this unity while respecting differences is perhaps the greatest tribute we can pay to his legacy.

The youth, whom Vivekananda described as the architects of India's destiny, remain central to this vision. With one of the youngest populations in the world, India possesses an unprecedented demographic advantage. But demographic strength alone is not enough. It must be matched by discipline, innovation, integrity and a commitment to nation-building. Vivekananda called upon young Indians to culti-

vate fearlessness, self-confidence and a spirit of service.

These qualities remain indispensable as the nation navigates the challenges of climate change, technological disruption, social inequality and global competition. As a proud Indian, I see Vivekananda's Chicago message reflected in the aspirations of a confident nation that seeks not domination but partnership; not isolation but constructive global engagement.

India's growing voice in international affairs, its commitment to democratic values and its philosophy of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"—the world is one family—echo the ideals that Vivekananda presented before the world over a century ago. Celebration must also inspire introspection. On this anniversary of the Chicago Address, let us remember that Swami Vivekananda did not ask Indians merely to admire their heritage; he challenged them to live up to it. His vision was of an India that was confident without arrogance, modern without losing its roots, prosperous without forgetting its moral obligations, and powerful because it served humanity.

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Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessar-

Trump says Russia and Ukraine agree to avoid strikes on energy targets

WASHINGTON, SEP: US President Donald Trump said on Monday that Russia and Ukraine have agreed not to attack each other's energy targets, while attributing the recent rise in global diesel prices largely to the Russia-Ukraine war rather than the conflict involving Iran.

"Ukraine has agreed not to hit Russian Energy targets. Russia has agreed to do, likewise!" Trump wrote in a post on Truth Social. He also said the rise in the world's diesel prices was "mostly caused by the Russia/Ukraine War, not Iran."

Trump's remarks came a day after he criticised Kyiv over strikes on Russian oil refineries.

Meanwhile, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte said on Monday that the alliance would increase its support for Ukraine following a series of Russian drone attacks near the Ukraine-Poland border.

Rutte said the Russian strikes "close to NATO territory" demon-



strated Russian President Vladimir Putin's "desperation" and his desire to spread fear and terror.

"Russia is growing increasingly reckless as it continues its terrible war against Ukraine," Rutte said, according to the Associated Press. He added that Putin was wrong if he believed Russia could prevent countries from supporting Ukraine or undermine NATO's unity.

Russia dismisses strike near Polish border Following the reported strike near the Polish border, Russia said it would continue attacking targets across Ukraine.

When asked about the strikes, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the incident concerned Ukrainian territory.

"Our military are fulfilling their tasks on the whole territory of Ukraine... They will continue to do so," Peskov said, according to AFP.

Poland has been a longstanding ally of Ukraine. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk warned on Sunday that the coming weeks and months could see intensified Russian military activity and said that an escalation affecting Polish territory could not be ruled out.

The latest developments come amid continued international efforts to contain the Russia-Ukraine conflict and prevent the fighting from expanding beyond Ukraine's borders.

— Agencies

Iran steps up attacks on US and Gulf targets amid oil blockade

TEHRAN, SEP Iran has intensified attacks on US and Gulf targets as Tehran seeks to challenge an American blockade on its oil exports, while also attempting to increase pressure on Washington as President Donald Trump focuses on the November mid-term elections.

Iran said it had attacked 10 ships this week, including two US vessels, near the Strait of Hormuz, according to reports. Tehran claimed the vessels had violated rules it was seeking to impose on the strategically important waterway.

The United States, however, denied that any of its ships had been hit and said its forces had destroyed five Iranian oil tankers.

Iran's attacks have also extended beyond maritime targets. On Tuesday, Iranian forces fired dozens of missiles at the Muwaffaq Salti air base in Jordan, a key US military facility in the region. Nine US warplanes were reportedly damaged in the attack.

Saudi Arabia also temporarily shut its 745-mile East-West oil pipeline on Friday after drones targeted the facility. The pipeline provides Saudi Arabia with an alternative route for transporting oil without relying on the Strait of Hormuz.

The drones involved in another reported attack were launched from Iraq, which is investigating the incident. Trump said on Saturday that Iran was "probably" behind the attack. Iran has meanwhile increased the number and range of its strikes, targeting more locations with larger numbers of missiles.

According to shipping intelligence firm Kpler, no Iranian crude oil has crossed the US blockade since it was reinstated in July. US forces have allowed only limited shipping through the affected area.

The blockade has placed further pressure on Iran's economy. Inflation is reportedly around 88 per cent, according to official figures, while the International



Monetary Fund expects Iran's economy to contract by 5.4 per cent this year. The conflict has also contributed to higher energy prices. Brent crude has crossed \$100 a barrel, while petrol prices in the United States have risen above \$4 a gallon and diesel prices have exceeded \$6.

Trump has defended the higher prices, arguing that they are necessary to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. He has also promised a \$5,000 payment to every American adult if Republicans retain control of both the House of Representatives and Senate. Trump has said the war would end immediately after the elections.

Iranian officials have also indicated a shift in their military response. Mohsen Rezaei, head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said Iran was using anti-destroyer missiles against enemy ships for the first time.

Iranian parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said Tehran had abandoned its earlier policy of responding to attacks in proportion to the damage inflicted.

Iran is also reportedly cooperating with Russia on supersonic anti-ship missiles, a development that could further increase the risks to maritime traffic in the region.

— Agencies

Pakistan lists Masood Azhar among most wanted terrorists

ISLAMABAD, SEP: Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has reportedly included Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief Masood Azhar in its 2026 list of most wanted terrorists, with the reward for information leading to his arrest reportedly increased from PKR 20 lakh to PKR 70 lakh.

Azhar is among India's most-wanted terrorists and has been linked to several terror attacks in India.

The move comes ahead of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) plenary scheduled for October, as Pakistan seeks to avoid being placed back on the organisation's grey list. FATF is the international body that establishes standards to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.

FIA increases reward for Masood Azhar

Pakistan has maintained since 2021 that Azhar is no longer in the country and had escaped to Afghanistan. The FIA had announced a PKR 50 lakh reward for information leading to his arrest that year.

Five years later, the reward has reportedly been increased to PKR 70 lakh in the agency's latest list.

The FIA's latest Red Book also reportedly names 19 terrorists linked to the November 2008 Mumbai attacks. They are accused of supporting the attackers by providing funds, logistical assistance or helping arrange boats used by the operatives.

The inclusion of Azhar on Pakistan's most-wanted list comes amid continued international scrutiny of Islamabad's efforts to tackle terrorism financing and militant networks operating from or linked to its territory.

Indian-origin lab owner declared fugitive in \$93 million Medicare fraud case

WASHINGTON, SEP: An Indian-origin laboratory owner has been declared a fugitive in the United States after allegedly running a \$93 million Medicare fraud scheme involving genetic testing, according to the US Department of Health and Human Services.

Khadeer Khan Mohammed, 46, allegedly used his Texas-based laboratory, American Premier Labs LLC in Richardson, to submit fraudulent claims to Medicare, the US government-funded healthcare programme.

Authorities said Mohammed allegedly directed others to submit claims between approximately August 2023 and October 2024 for genetic testing that was not eligible for reimbursement, had not been requested by authorised medical providers or was not provided as represented by the laboratory.

\$65 million paid by Medicare
American Premier Labs allegedly

submitted approximately \$93 million in fraudulent Medicare claims, according to the authorities. Medicare paid at least \$65 million against those claims. In one 10-day period in 2023 alone, Medicare reportedly paid approximately \$13 million against suspected fraudulent claims. A key element of the alleged scheme involved the unauthorised use of personal identifying information belonging to other physicians. According to authorities, the information was allegedly used to submit claims for genetic tests for Medicare beneficiaries who had no treatment relationship with those physicians. The case forms part of US efforts to investigate alleged healthcare fraud involving genetic testing and fraudulent Medicare billing. Mohammed's fugitive status means authorities are seeking his apprehension in connection with the allegations.

— Agencies

Pakistan faces pressure to balance Saudi defence ties and Iran diplomacy

ISLAMABAD, SEP: Pakistan has been attempting to maintain a delicate diplomatic balance this year, facilitating backchannel talks between the United States and Iran while simultaneously strengthening its defence relationship with Saudi Arabia, a key Gulf rival of Tehran.

However, recent fighting between Saudi forces and Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels has complicated Islamabad's efforts to maintain both relationships. Over the weekend, Pakistan moved to reassure Saudi Arabia amid questions over whether Islamabad would honour its defence commitments to the Kingdom. The two countries have a defence agreement under which Pakistan is required to respond if Saudi Arabia comes under attack.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif spoke by phone with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, reiterating Islamabad's "strongest condemnation" of the Houthi attack on Saudi Arabia.

The call came after Pakistan appeared to soften its earlier tough position on military action against the Houthis. Sharif expressed "complete solidarity" with Saudi Arabia and warned that the attacks posed a threat to regional security and global energy supplies, according to a statement from Pakistan's Prime Minister's Office. The Mecca Pact test

Sharif's conversation with the Saudi crown prince came a day after Riyadh temporarily shut its 1,200-km East-West oil pipeline following a drone attack launched from Iraq.— Agencies

India crush Sri Lanka by 72 runs to win record eighth Women's Asia Cup title



DUBAI, SEP: India produced a dominant all-round performance to defeat Sri Lanka by 72 runs and clinch a record-extending eighth Women's Asia Cup title. Openers Shafali Verma and vice-

20 overs.

Earlier, India made a flying start after opting to bat. Shafali attacked from the outset, striking Athapaththu for two sixes and a four in the opening over. India reached 57 without loss in the Powerplay and 98 at the half-way stage.

Mandhana initially played the supporting role before accelerating after Shafali reached her half-century. She struck several boundaries and brought up her 36th T20I fifty from 35 balls.

The opening partnership was finally broken when Shafali was caught off Chamudi Praboda. Mandhana followed soon after, being run out while attempting to respond to a call with Harmanpreet Kaur.

India were 140 for two after 15 overs but lost some momen-

tum towards the end, managing 43 runs in the final five overs. Richa Ghosh contributed 17 off 13 balls, while Gunalan Kamalini provided a late boost with an unbeaten-looking cameo of 15 from five deliveries.

Despite India's late slowdown, the strong opening stand proved decisive as the team posted a formidable 183 before restricting Sri Lanka to 111.

India's triumph further strengthened their dominance in the Women's Asia Cup, with the team extending its record to eight titles.

In a separate development following the final, India's women's team declined to collect the Asia Cup trophy from Asian Cricket Council president Mohsin Naqvi, mirroring a similar stance taken by the Indian men's team during their previous Asia Cup triumph.— Agencies

District Jammu wins Inter-District Divisional-Level Boys U-19 Kabaddi Tournament



Blazing Tales News Service

JAMMU, SEP: District Jammu emerged victorious in the Inter-District Divisional-Level Boys Under-19 Kabaddi Tournament, defeating District Ramban by a narrow margin of two points in a closely contested final held at the Indoor Stadium.

The three-day tournament was organised by the District Youth Services & Sports Department, with teams from various districts of the Jammu Division participating in the championship.

The tournament was conducted in accordance with the Activity Calendar issued by the Directorate of Youth Services & Sports, J&K, and as per the assignment entrusted by the Joint Director, Jammu.

The final witnessed an intense contest between Jammu and Ramban,

with District Jammu eventually securing the championship by a margin of two points. District Ramban put up a determined performance to finish as the runners-up.

The tournament provided young players an opportunity to compete at the divisional level and showcase their skills, competitive spirit, discipline and sportsmanship. The encounters throughout the championship also reflected the growing interest in Kabaddi among young sportspersons of the region.

The concluding ceremony was attended by Chief Planning Officer (CPO) Manish Kumar as the Chief Guest. He congratulated the participating teams for their performances and appreciated the Department of Youth Services & Sports, Doda, for providing young players opportunities to compete at the divisional level and showcase their sporting talent.

The successful conduct of the championship was facilitated by a dedicated team of technical officials, referees and departmental staff. The technical panel was headed by Ashok Kumar, Convener, and included Imran Mughal, Koshal Sharma, Muzamil Hussain, Parmod Thakur, Satya Devi, Mohd. Saleem, Bashir Ahmed, Sandeep Kumar, Shafitullah, Suraj Parkash, Vijay Kumar, Vinod Bandral, Ajay Sharma, Archana Devi, Bandana Devi, Shallu Devi, Bandu Devi, Veena Devi, Ishtiaq Hussain, Khalid Hussain, Naveed-ul-Rehman, Mohd. Yousuf and Mohd. Iqbal.

The YSS Doda congratulated Team Jammu on winning the championship and appreciated Team Ramban for its spirited performance. The efforts of all participating teams, coaches, physical education staff, technical officials, referees and organising personnel were also acknowledged for ensuring the smooth and fair con-



Team J&K makes strong mark at 13th Ladakh Marathon

Blazing Tales News Service

LADAKH, SEP Team J&K made a strong mark at the 13th Ladakh Marathon, organised and promoted by the High-Altitude Sports Foundation Ladakh (HASFL), with runners from Jammu & Kashmir delivering notable performances in demanding high-altitude races.

The 2026 edition featured six categories, including the 122-km Silk Route Ultra (SRU), 72-km Khardung La Challenge (KC), Full Marathon, Half Marathon, 11.2-km Run and 5-km Run for Fun.

Balvinder Sharma created a milestone by becoming the fastest J&K runner to complete the 122-km Silk Route Ultra, finishing in 17 hours 58 minutes. Rajesh Koul and Ravinder Sharma also completed the gruelling race in 20 hours 16 minutes and 21 hours 13 minutes, respectively.

In the 72-km Khardung La Challenge, Sqn Ldr Neha Devi secured overall third position with a timing of 8 hours 56 minutes. She also became the first non-Ladakhi woman in all 13 editions of the event to break the nine-hour barrier. Sawan Nagpal and Aman Gupta emerged as the fastest J&K runners in the Khardung La Challenge, clocking 9 hours 3 minutes and 9 hours 5 minutes, respectively. Other J&K finishers included Manish (9:33), Raghav (9:57), Dr. Malla (11:20), Satbir Singh (11:30), Harmeeek Singh (12:55), Praveen Raina (13:26) and Ajay Sawhney (13:40). In the Full Marathon, Constable Hansraj secured third position with a timing of 2 hours 53 minutes.

Other J&K finishers in the Full Marathon included Gagandeep Singh (4:34), Deepak Singh (4:49), Narinder Khajuria (4:54), Ravinder Kumar and Sunil Kak (5:18 each), Anil Mehra (5:24), Balvinder Sharma (5:38) and Anil Katoch (6:12). Neha Devi also completed the Full Marathon in 4 hours 8 minutes, securing second position in her age category.

Satish Sharma launches Hyderabad Hawks jersey



Blazing Tales News Service

SRINAGAR, SEP: Minister for Youth Services & Sports, Jammu & Kashmir, Satish Sharma, reaffirmed the government's commitment to promoting para sports and empowering differently-abled sportspersons, stating that every athlete deserves equal opportunities to excel and bring laurels to the nation.

The Minister made these remarks while interacting with a delegation of the JK Divyang Welfare Association (JKDWA), which called on him at the Civil Secretariat in Srinagar.

During the meeting, Satish Sharma formally launched the jersey of Hyderabad Hawks, a franchise participating in the upcoming Radiant World Para Cricket League, scheduled to be held from October 6 to 11, 2026, in Agra, Uttar Pradesh.

The delegation comprised Sayed Shah Aziz, Captain of the Indian Differently-Abled Cricket Team and Hyderabad Hawks; General Secretary JK Divyang Welfare Association Pirzada Sayed Nissar Hussain Shah; and association member Manmohan Singh.

Congratulating Sayed Shah Aziz on his achievements, the Minister described him as a role model for aspiring athletes and a source of pride for Jammu & Kashmir.

Sharma said Aziz's journey from Poonch to leading the Indian Differently-Abled Cricket Team reflects the determination, talent and resilience of the youth of Jammu & Kashmir.

The Minister reiterated the importance of creating an inclusive sporting environment where athletes with disabilities receive adequate opportunities, support and platforms to showcase their abilities at the national and international levels.

Samba District Netball Championship concludes at Indoor Stadium

Blazing Tales News Service

SAMBA, SEP: The Samba District Netball Championship concluded at the Indoor Stadium, Samba, with teams from across the district participating with enthusiasm and competitive spirit.

The championship was organised with the aim of promoting netball at the grassroots level and providing a platform to identify promising players for upcoming state and national-level competitions.

International netball player, certified umpire and referee, and Sher-e-Kashmir Awardee Akash Batra graced the concluding ceremony as the Chief Guest. He interacted with the participating players and appreciated their enthusiasm and performances throughout the championship.

Officials of the Netball Association of Jammu & Kashmir (NAJK), including Arjun Soni, Akshit Arora,



Rajendra Singh and Rohit Sharma, were also present on the occasion.

The dignitaries appreciated the efforts of the participating players and lauded the organisers for ensuring the smooth and successful conduct

of the championship.

The event provided young players an opportunity to showcase their talent and gain competitive experience while contributing to the promotion of netball in the district.

Over 1,000 runners participate in Devika Half Marathon 2026

Blazing Tales News Service

UDHAMPUR, SEP: The Devika Half Marathon 2026 was held at Subhash Stadium with enthusiastic participation from people across different age groups. More than 1,000 runners took part in the event, which featured 21-km, 10-km and 5-km runs.

Organised by Devika Sports India in collaboration with the Indian Army and other organisations, the event promoted fitness, healthy living and community participation while highlighting the spiritual and cultural significance of River Devika.

The active participation of the Indian Army also reinforced the bond between the armed forces and

the people of Udhampur. The marathon was inaugurated by Maj Gen Sumit Mehta, GOC, 71 Sub Area, in the presence of MLA Balwant Singh Mankotia.

Speaking to the media, Mankotia described the event as a historic occasion for Udhampur, noting that participants from different age groups, including children as young as five years, took part. He appreciated the support extended by the district administration and various organisations for making the event a success.

A representative of Devika Sports India said the marathon marked the organisation's first such event and expressed satisfaction over the overwhelming response. He thanked the Indian Army and other supporting organisations for their cooperation and said the organisers hoped to conduct more sporting events in the future.

DC Srinagar reviews infrastructure upgradation plan for Bakshi Stadium

Blazing Tales News Service

SRINAGAR, SEP: Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Akshay Labroo chaired a meeting of concerned officers at the Conference Hall of the DC Office Complex to review the proposed plan for comprehensive infrastructure upgradation of Bakshi Stadium.

The proposed upgradation aims to improve the stadium's infrastructure and facilities, enhance seating capacity and provide roofing for public stands, besides improving accessibility and the drainage system to enable the venue to host sporting events and other major activities throughout the year.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed the proposed infrastructure interventions



in detail, with particular focus on increasing the seating capacity of the Central Pavilion, expansion and improvement of the North and South Pavilions, roofing of public stands and upgradation of the

entrance to the main ground.

Various allied works required to strengthen the overall infrastructure of the stadium and improve facilities for players, spectators and officials were also discussed.

The DC directed the concerned officers to work out the requirements in detail and prepare a comprehensive Detailed Project Report (DPR) incorporating all proposed infrastructure works and allied interventions required for the overall improvement and modernisation of Bakshi Stadium. He stressed the need for comprehensive planning so that the proposed works address infrastructure, accessibility and spectator requirements while enhancing the stadium's capacity to host major sporting and

Alexander Zverev beats Ben Shelton to win US Open men's singles title

NEW YORK, SEP: Germany's Alexander Zverev defeated American Ben Shelton 6-3, 7-6 (2), 5-7, 6-2 to win the US Open men's singles title, claiming his second Grand Slam championship in New York.

The victory ended Shelton's hopes of becoming the first American man since Andy Roddick in 2003 to win the US Open title. It also extended the wait for an American men's Grand Slam singles champion.

Zverev, the top seed, made a strong start in his first US Open final, capitalising on Shelton's early errors before producing a near-flawless performance in the second-set tiebreak.

Shelton fought back in the third set, winning it 7-5 and energising a partisan home crowd that had backed the 23-year-old American throughout the contest. Zverev, however, regained control in the fourth set and closed out the match 6-2.

The German had already enjoyed a breakthrough year at the Grand Slam level after winning the French Open earlier in the season. His US Open triumph also provided redemption after he narrowly missed out on the title in New York in 2020.

Shelton was attempting to make history by becoming the first American man to win the US Open since Roddick and the first Black man to claim the men's singles crown since Arthur Ashe in 1968.

Zverev produced a composed performance under pressure throughout the final, maintaining his advantage despite Shelton's third-set comeback.

In an unusual moment after the final point, Zverev initially appeared unaware that he had won the championship, moving back behind the baseline as though preparing to receive serve. He soon realised the match was over and raised his arms in celebration.

Ayurveda moves towards the global health mainstream



NEW DELHI, SEP: Ayurveda is increasingly moving from the margins of global health discussions towards the mainstream, as India's expanding Ayush economy, growing domestic use of traditional systems and rising interest in wellness and medical value travel create new opportunities for the ancient health system.

As India prepares to mark the 11th Ayurveda Day on September 23, 2026, under the theme "Ayurveda for a Healthier Tomorrow", the fo-

cus is increasingly shifting towards connecting traditional knowledge with modern research, quality standards and international healthcare frameworks.

The challenge, however, extends beyond taking Ayurveda to international markets. Building credible evidence, institutional capacity, quality standards and regulatory frameworks will be essential for its responsible global expansion.

Ayush economy expands

The Ayush sector has recorded

significant economic growth over the past decade. The Ayush market expanded from USD 2.85 billion in 2014 to USD 43.4 billion in 2023, while Ayush exports rose from USD 1.09 billion to USD 2.16 billion during the same period.

Government initiatives have also sought to strengthen micro, small and medium enterprises and startups, supporting entrepreneurship, innovation and investment across the sector.

Domestic acceptance provides another important foundation. The first exclusive All-India Survey on Ayush, conducted by the National Sample Survey Office during July 2022-June 2023, covered 1,81,298 households, including 1,04,195 rural and 77,103 urban households.

The survey recorded Ayush awareness levels of 94.8 per cent among rural residents and 96 per cent among urban residents. It found that 46.3 per cent of rural residents and 52.9 per cent of urban residents had used Ayush for treatment or prevention during the preceding 365 days.

Ayurveda emerged as the most commonly used Ayush system for treatment, highlighting its substantial domestic base and potential role in preventive healthcare and wellness.

Opportunities in medical value

travel

India is also seeking to tap growing international demand for holistic healthcare through medical value travel.

A dedicated Ayush Visa was introduced on July 27, 2023, for foreign nationals seeking treatment under Ayush systems. The government has also partnered with the India Tourism Development Corporation to identify tourism circuits with potential for Ayurveda and other traditional systems.

The global medical value travel market, estimated at USD 115.6 billion in 2022, is projected to reach approximately USD 286.1 billion by 2030. Ayurveda and other traditional systems could therefore become an important component of India's medical value travel and wellness ecosystem by bringing healthcare, wellness and tourism together.

Roadmap for global expansion

A significant policy development has been the release of NITI Aayog's Strategic Roadmap for Making Ayurveda Global in July 2026.

Envisioned as a long-term pathway up to 2047, the roadmap focuses on regulation and standards, research, education, international collaboration, exports, branding and medical value travel.

It emphasises quality standards, robust infrastructure, credible research, trained professionals, consistent products and regulatory frameworks that can be understood and recognised internationally.

The roadmap seeks to establish the institutional and quality ecosystem required for Ayurveda's responsible expansion and to build greater confidence in its services and products in international markets.

Stronger global engagement

India's efforts are closely linked with its wider engagement in global traditional, complementary and integrative medicine.

The WHO Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025-2034, adopted by the 78th World Health Assembly in 2025, provides a global framework for strengthening evidence, ensuring safety and regulation, integrating traditional medicine into health systems and expanding its wider cross-sectoral contribution.

India has played a significant role in this global movement. The WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre in Jamnagar, Gujarat, was established in 2022 with India as its lead investor. India committed an estimated USD 250 million towards its establishment, infrastructure and operations.

Cardiac awareness and health check-up camp held at Miran Sahib

Blazing Tales News Service

JAMMU, SEP: Head of the Department of Cardiology, Government Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) Jammu, Dr Sushil Kumar Sharma, conducted a day-long cardiac awareness-cum-health check-up camp in association with LA Krishna Foundation at Miran Sahib.

Interacting with local residents, Dr Sharma said cardiovascular diseases remain among the leading causes of illness and premature deaths worldwide, covering conditions such as coronary artery disease, stroke and heart failure. He said cardiovascular diseases can develop silently, with many people appearing healthy until the occurrence of a major cardiac event. Regular health evaluations can help identify important risk factors at an early stage, he added.

Dr Sharma stressed the importance of monitoring blood pressure, blood glucose, cholesterol levels and body weight, along with assessing lifestyle patterns and family history, to gain a better understanding of an individual's cardiovascular health.

He identified smoking, physical inactivity, obesity, diabetes, hypertension, unhealthy dietary habits and hereditary predisposition among the major cardiovascular risk factors requiring timely attention.

Focus on prevention

Dr Sharma also highlighted the importance of cardiovascular risk prediction and risk stratification in contemporary preventive cardiology.

Emphasising that prevention begins with everyday habits, he advised people to adopt a balanced and heart-friendly lifestyle. The Management Committee of LA Krishna Foundation, along with prominent persons from the area, expressed gratitude to Dr Sharma and his team for conducting the camp. Those present included Dev Raj Sharma, Yashpal Raina, Surinder Choudhary, Amarnath Raina, Varinder Verma, Lekh Raj Sharma, Jeet Sharma, Harjeet Singh, Devinder Singh, Rajkumar and Pawan Sharma.

Dr Adarsh Sharma, Dr Yugantar, Dr Adishwar Verma, Dr Divyanshi Sharma, Dr Vanshika Gupta and Dr Adhishree Bargotra were also present, along with paramedics and volunteers including Sudhir Bharti, Khushbinder Sandhu, Amnish Datta, Shubham Sharma, Maninder Singh, Paramveer Singh, Akshay Sharma, Anmol Singh, Vishal, Narinder Datta, Mukesh Sharma, Vikas Kumar and Nirvair Singh Bali.

Unvaccinated Pennsylvania woman dies from measles complications amid outbreak

HARRISBURG, SEP: A 40-year-old unvaccinated woman in Pennsylvania's Jefferson County died from complications associated with measles on Saturday, September 12, the county coroner's office said, as the state continues to report a growing outbreak.

The Jefferson County Coroner's Office said the woman died on Saturday and that no additional identifying information would be released to protect the privacy of the deceased and her family.

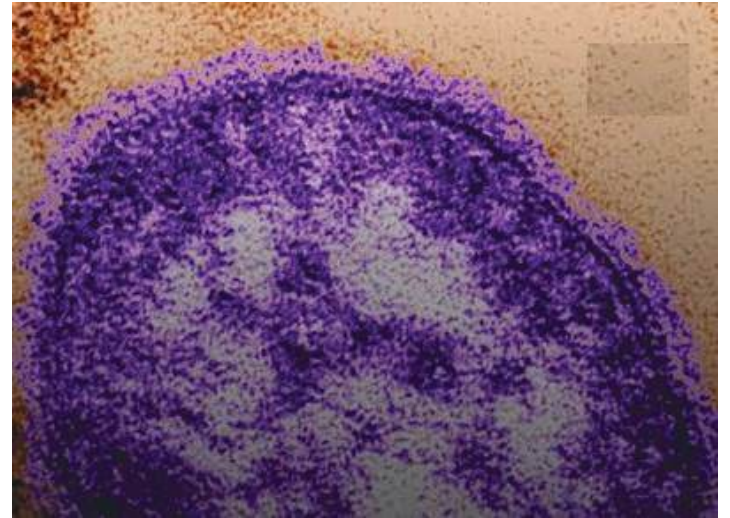
"This is a heartbreaking loss for the family and an unfortunate reminder that measles can be a serious and potentially life-threatening disease," Coroner Greg Furlong said.

Furlong confirmed that the woman was unvaccinated against measles.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health said it was investigating the death reported by the Jefferson County coroner.

676 measles cases reported

As of Friday, the Pennsylvania Department of Health had reported 676 measles cases across the state, including more than 100 new cases during the previous week. Of those infected, 124 had been hospitalised, while nearly all reported cases were among people who had not been vaccinated against the virus, according to state health department data.



The reported measles-associated deaths in Pennsylvania have become the subject of a public dispute, with Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. questioning the number of deaths previously reported by state officials.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had not listed any measles deaths in 2026 on its website, which was last updated on Friday. Pennsylvania health officials had previously reported two measles-associated deaths linked to the outbreak.

CDC says it was not notified
CDC Director Dr Erica Schwartz said the federal agency had not yet been notified about the latest death

reported in Jefferson County.

"CDC was not notified by Pennsylvania officials of this death," Schwartz said, adding that the agency had repeatedly offered assistance but Pennsylvania had not requested a CDC Epi-Aid to deploy epidemiologists and provide on-the-ground support for the outbreak.

In late August, Pennsylvania's top health official, Dr Debra Bogen, said her staff was holding regular meetings with professional staff at the CDC.

Her comments came after Kennedy accused the state health department of refusing to share information with the CDC following the announcement of the first two measles-

Government expands welfare and support services for senior citizens

NEW DELHI, SEP: The Government of India is expanding its welfare and support infrastructure for senior citizens, with a focus on shelter, healthcare, nutritious food, mobility assistance and dignified independent living for elderly persons across the country.

Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Sudhansh Pant said more than 2.88 lakh senior citizens have benefited from institutional support services, including shelter, nutritious food, healthcare, physiotherapy, recreation and other essential facilities.

The measures are aimed at addressing the day-to-day needs of elderly persons while improving their physical well-being and overall quality of life.

142 new Senior Citizen Homes sanctioned

A major focus of the government's intervention is the expansion of dedicated care facilities. Pant said 142 new Senior Citizen Homes have been sanctioned across different parts of the country.

The additional homes are expected to strengthen the availability of institutional care and provide elderly



persons with access to essential support services closer to their communities.

The government is also seeking to improve the ability of senior citizens, particularly those from economically weaker sections, to live independently.

According to the ministry, 228 camps were organised for more than 4.91 lakh beneficiaries, through which elderly persons were provided

assistance and access to support services.

Assistive devices for elderly persons

Around 23.93 lakh assistive living devices were distributed free of cost to eligible senior citizens belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL) categories and low-income groups.

The devices included wheelchairs, hearing aids, walking sticks and spectacles, helping beneficiaries over-

come mobility, hearing and vision-related difficulties.

The distribution of assistive devices is particularly significant for elderly persons with limited financial resources, as such equipment can improve their ability to perform everyday activities and remain connected with their families and communities.

The initiative is intended not only to provide physical assistance but also to promote greater participation and independence among senior citizens.

One-stop welfare information portal

The ministry has also taken steps to improve access to information about government schemes and welfare services.

Pant said the Senior Citizen's Welfare Portal, launched by the President of India, functions as a one-stop platform for information relating to the welfare of senior citizens.

The portal is intended to make information more accessible to elderly persons and their families, particularly those seeking details about available welfare measures, support services and institutional assistance.

The government's approach ex-

tends beyond financial or institutional assistance and seeks to address the broader requirements of an ageing population. Healthcare, physiotherapy, nutrition, recreation, mobility aids and reliable information are being brought together as part of a wider support framework.

The expansion of Senior Citizen Homes is expected to strengthen institutional care for elderly persons who require regular assistance or do not have adequate support systems at home. At the same time, the distribution of assistive devices seeks to enable senior citizens to remain independent for as long as possible.

Pant said the initiatives demonstrate the ministry's continuing commitment to ensuring accessible care, stronger welfare infrastructure and dignified living for senior citizens.

With more than 2.88 lakh elderly persons already benefiting from institutional support, 142 additional Senior Citizen Homes sanctioned and nearly 23.93 lakh assistive devices distributed, the measures represent a significant expansion of the government's support framework for India's ageing population.

Cychlorphine linked to 63 deaths in East Tennessee forensic centre caseload

KNOXVILLE, SEP: The Knox County Regional Forensic Center in East Tennessee has associated 63 deaths with cychlorphine, a synthetic opioid that federal drug policy officials flagged as an emerging national drug threat in April.

The centre's chief administrative officer, Chris Thomas, said cychlorphine was determined to be the cause of death in 58 of those cases.

The figures provide a sharper picture of the drug's spread than the initial federal warning. The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), in a drug threat notice issued on April 30, cited at least 55 deaths associated with cychlorphine nationwide.

The forensic centre's tally had risen to 63 through June 30, making cychlorphine the fourth most common drug associated with fatalities in its caseload during the year.

Regional picture

The Knox County Regional Forensic Center is not limited to a single county. It performs autopsies for 23 counties in East Tennessee and serves as the medical examiner for Knox, Anderson and Blount counties.

In a public notice issued earlier this year, the centre reported that cychlorphine had been detected in 41



deaths between July 2025 and February 2026 across 11 counties.

Thomas warned at the time that the dangers associated with street-level drugs had reached an unprecedented level.

Physician Shravani Durbhakula of Vanderbilt University School of Medicine described the East Tennessee cluster as a significant warning signal for a drug that had been largely unknown in the region a year earlier.

The 63-death figure represents cases in which cychlorphine was present in toxicology results, while

the 58 cases represent deaths in which the substance was determined to be the cause.

Emerging synthetic opioid

Cychlorphine, also referred to as N-propionitrile chlorphine, belongs to a group of synthetic opioids known as orphines and is structurally similar to compounds including brophine and chlorphine.

The substance has no approved medical use. Forensic officials said it was first identified overseas in 2024, with early reports tracing its origins to China before its spread through Europe and subsequently to the United States.

Women report higher rates of frequent fatigue, CDC study finds

WASHINGTON, SEP Women are more likely than men to experience frequent fatigue, with more than half reporting that they feel fatigued on some days and nearly one in five experiencing it most days or every day, according to a recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study.

The study, which surveyed nearly 27,000 adults aged 18 and older in 2024, found that frequent fatigue is widespread among Americans, with approximately one in six adults reporting that they felt tired most days or every day.

Clinical psychologist Jennifer Caspari said the difference between women and men could be linked to the greater number of responsibilities often faced by women, as well as hormonal fluctuations.

"People are incredibly busy," Caspari said, adding that many people feel stressed, spread thin and overwhelmed by the number of responsibilities they are trying to manage.

Younger adults also report more fatigue

The study found that adults aged 18 to 34 were more likely to report frequent fatigue than older age groups. Men and adults aged 65 and above were less likely to report the symptom.

Researchers distinguish general fatigue from ordinary sleepiness. Fatigue can involve physical or mental tiredness or exhaustion that does not improve with additional sleep or rest. Natalie A.E. Young, a sociologist and lead author of the report, said people experiencing frequent fatigue were also more likely to report other symptoms that can interfere with daily functioning, including cognitive difficulties, depression and anxiety.

The findings suggest that fatigue is not merely a common experience but can also be associated with meaningful limitations in people's everyday lives.

Regional differences

The study also identified differences across regions of the United States. Nearly 18 per cent of adults in both the South and Midwest reported experiencing frequent fatigue, compared with about 15 per cent in both the West and Northeast. Researchers said the findings highlight the widespread nature of fatigue among American adults and the potential impact of persistent tiredness on daily functioning and well-being.

Global warming set to cross 1.5°C in coming years, UNEP warns

NAIROBI, SEP: Global temperature rise is likely to cross the 1.5°C threshold within the next few years, increasing climate risks and impacts to dangerous levels, but temperatures could still eventually be brought down below the threshold, according to a new United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report.

The report, *Limiting Overshoot: Navigating Exceedance*, identifies an “overshoot, peak and decline” pathway as the best remaining option to minimise the magnitude and duration of warming above 1.5°C and increase the possibility of returning below the threshold as soon as possible.

“This summer’s scorching heat, raging wildfires and deadly floods are a warning of what lies ahead,” UN Secretary-General António Guterres said, calling for the overshoot above 1.5°C to be kept as small and short as possible.

Overshoot, peak and decline
The pathway would seek to limit the peak in global temperatures through immediate and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, including methane, on the way to net-zero emissions.

Temperatures could subsequently be brought down through long-term net-negative emissions, with carefully governed carbon dioxide removal (CDR) playing an important role. CDR involves removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storing it through measures such as afforestation and other approaches.

The report also stresses that ad-

aptation measures must advance alongside mitigation efforts to reduce societies’ vulnerability to current, expected and unexpected climate impacts.

However, it warns that there will be limits to adaptation and that some impacts could become irreversible, particularly if peak temperatures are

Risks intensify beyond 1.5°C

Under the most optimistic scenario, global temperatures could peak at around 1.8°C above pre-industrial levels, exceeding the 1.5°C goal established under the Paris Agreement. Most other scenarios project higher levels of peak warming.

ture and economies are also expected to face increasingly severe impacts.

The likelihood of triggering irreversible climate tipping points is also expected to rise with the magnitude and duration of warming. These include destabilisation of major ice sheets, degradation of the Amazon rainforest and disruption of the At-

including improved air quality and public health, lower energy costs and greater access to electricity.

Strong political will, multilateral cooperation, effective policies, inclusive governance and adequate finance are identified as important conditions for climate action.

The report also stresses that equity and justice must underpin climate responses, with countries bearing greater responsibility for climate change expected to act faster and with greater ambition.

Mitigation and adaptation, it says, should advance together. Measures capable of achieving both objectives, including nature-based cooling solutions, should be prioritised.

Carbon removal cannot replace emissions cuts

UNEP emphasises that net-zero emissions should be viewed as a milestone towards net-negative emissions rather than an endpoint.

Carbon dioxide removal will be needed in addition to sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, rather than being used as a substitute for them.

The report says CDR can contribute credibly to bringing temperatures back below 1.5°C only if peak warming remains well below 2°C and remaining emissions are reduced. Strong governance frameworks will also be necessary to ensure environmental integrity, equity and responsible deployment.



not minimised.

UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen said climate impacts were already becoming more severe, with extreme heatwaves causing loss of life and disruption.

She called for accelerated climate action through greenhouse gas reductions, stronger resilience and adaptation, and efforts to ensure that any exceedance of 1.5°C is as limited and brief as possible.

The report warns that risks will intensify with every additional fraction of a degree and every year spent at higher temperatures.

Expected consequences include more severe extreme weather events, ecosystem losses and the potential submergence of Small Island Developing States and low-lying coastal cities.

Human health, food security, water supplies, nature, cities, infrastruc-

lantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, a major system of ocean currents that helps regulate the climate.

Some impacts could occur abruptly, while others could accumulate gradually over time.

Conditions for climate action

The report calls for accelerated and collective global action, noting that a rapid transition away from fossil fuels towards renewable energy could deliver additional benefits,

Himalayas nearing tipping point as glacier melt threatens millions, report finds

HONG KONG, SEP: The Himalayas are approaching a climate tipping point as glaciers melt faster than they did a decade ago, threatening water security and millions of livelihoods as the region moves towards “peak water” by mid-century, according to a new study.

The findings come after the collapse of a Himalayan glacier along the Nepal-Tibet border in late August triggered cascading landslides and flash floods in valleys below. At least 1,300 people have been confirmed dead and more than 5,300 remain missing across Nepal and China’s Tibet region following the disaster.

As glaciers retreat, they are leaving behind unstable glacial lakes held back by loose rock and ice above valleys where millions of people live, raising the risk of potentially devastating floods.

Glacier monitoring remains limited. The study was produced by sustainability advisory firm Systemiq in partnership with the Integrated Mountain Initiative, the International

Centre for Integrated Mountain Development and India’s G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment.

It found that Himalayan glacier mass loss has accelerated in recent decades. However, only 21 glaciers



are currently monitored on the ground out of an estimated 40,000 glaciers across the Hindu Kush-Himalaya region, which spans eight countries from Afghanistan to Myanmar. The study also identified close to 200 glacial lakes in India as high-risk, with 56 classified as “very high risk”, leaving millions of people living downstream potentially exposed. Water security at risk

The region is approaching “peak water” — the point at which river flows stop increasing and begin declining as glacier melt changes.

Such a shift could have profound implications for water security across the region. The Himalayas underpin more than 20 per cent of India’s gross domestic product and form a critical part of the country’s economic infrastructure, supporting the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people. Despite accounting for around 18 per cent of India’s land area, the Himalayan region is estimated to account for roughly 35 per cent of the country’s natural disasters, highlighting its vulnerability to climate-related hazards. The findings underscore the need for stronger glacier monitoring, early-warning systems and disaster preparedness as accelerating ice loss increases risks for communities, infrastructure and water supplies across the Himalayan region.

Jammu improves in clean air ranking while Srinagar slips to 26th

Blazing Tales News Service

JAMMU, SEP: Jammu has improved its position in the Centre’s 2026 Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan, while Srinagar has slipped sharply in the latest ranking of cities assessed for their efforts to control air pollution.

Jammu ranked 20th among cities with populations between three lakh and 10 lakh, improving from 22nd position in 2025. Its score also increased to 176.5 in 2026 from 168.2 in 2025 and 102.8 in 2023.

Srinagar, meanwhile, ranked 26th among cities with populations above 10 lakh, compared with 21st position in 2025 and fourth in 2023. Its score declined to 162.6 in 2026 from 169.2 last year and 184.6 in 2023.

Assessment of clean-air measures

The Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan is conducted annually by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change under the National Clean Air Programme. It assesses cities on measures taken to control air pollution and implement clean-air action plans.

The assessment covers sources including road dust, vehicular and industrial emissions, construction and demolition waste, municipal solid waste and biomass burning. It also considers public awareness initiatives and improvements in PM10 concentrations.

Jammu also received recognition for three wards under the state-level awards. Greater Kailash Ward 68 was placed in Category-I, New Plot Ward 16 in Category-II and Bhagwati Nagar Ward 14 in Category-III.

Srinagar faces waste management concerns

The assessment comes despite significant urban infrastructure spending in Srinagar under the Smart City Mission, with projects worth around ₹3,530 crore approved for areas including sanitation, mobility, environment and energy.

Officials said several measures have been undertaken in Srinagar, including plantation drives, the introduction of electric buses and e-rickshaws, mechanical sprinkling of roads, construction of concrete roads and riverfront improvement.

J&K may see milder, drier winter under El Niño influence: MeT director

Blazing Tales News Service

SRINAGAR, SEP: Jammu and Kashmir is likely to experience a relatively mild and dry winter this year under the influence of El Niño, though one or two significant snowfall spells during the peak winter months cannot be ruled out, Director of the Meteorological Department Srinagar Dr Mukhtar Ahmad said.

Addressing social media reports claiming that winter may not occur in India this year, Ahmad termed such claims unscientific and said winter would occur as a natural seasonal phenomenon, although its intensity could vary.

“Winter will definitely come. Sometimes winters are severe and sometimes mild. What we have been seeing for the last few years is a relatively mild winter,” he said.

Ahmad said indications from the World Meteorological Organisation suggest that the latter part of 2026 and the beginning of 2027, particularly the peak winter period, could be somewhat warmer and drier be-

cause of the El Niño effect.

He, however, cautioned against making a definitive forecast so far in advance, noting that weather conditions are dynamic and can change significantly with even small changes



in atmospheric patterns.

“If there are one or two good spells during peak winter, especially if the moisture supply is good or a major Western Disturbance occurs, it can be helpful,” Ahmad said.

Western Disturbances remain weak

Ahmad said Jammu and Kashmir had experienced a similar pattern in recent years, with prolonged dry periods followed by one or two snowfall spells that were generally

weaker than expected.

He said frequent but feeble Western Disturbances were currently affecting the region, generally arriving every third or fourth day but producing little significant weather activity.

“These are mostly feeble Western Disturbances. In the mountainous areas of North Kashmir, we may see some light snow or cloudiness, but there has been no major weather activity,” he said.

According to Ahmad, a strong Western Disturbance, particularly during the beginning or peak of winter, would be important for the region.

Warmer conditions affecting snowfall

The MeT director linked the changing snowfall pattern in the Himalayan region to climate change and rising temperatures, saying warmer conditions were altering both the form and timing of precipitation.

Over the past four to five years, Kashmir has not consistently received snowfall during the peak winter period, resulting in shorter-lasting snow cover and longer dry spells, he said.

“Timely snowfall, especially in hilly states like Jammu and Kashmir and other Himalayan regions such as Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, is as important as rain-

fall during summer,” Ahmad said.

He explained that snowfall during peak winter has a longer-lasting impact because lower temperatures allow snow to remain on the ground and contribute to glacier recharge.

Snowfall occurring later in February or March can also be beneficial, but warmer temperatures can cause it to melt more rapidly.

“Due to rising temperatures, the snow melts quickly. So timely snowfall is very important for the Himalayan region,” he said.

Precipitation currently near normal

On the overall precipitation situation in Jammu and Kashmir, Ahmad said the seasonal scenario was currently near normal despite significant variations between individual months. He said July recorded 35 per cent excess rainfall, although the early monsoon period also caused considerable losses.

August, however, recorded around 25 per cent rainfall deficit. While some spells occurred during the month, the activity was not consistent or widespread

Scientists develop method to identify locations of major earthquake risk

RIVERSIDE, SEP: Scientists at the University of California, Riverside have developed a method to identify where some of the world's largest earthquakes are most likely to occur, potentially providing a new tool for disaster preparedness in major seismic regions.

Rather than predicting when an earthquake will strike, the approach identifies areas along major faults where tectonic stress has accumulated, helping scientists determine where a future rupture could occur.

In a recent test described in a paper published in *Geophysical Research Letters*, researchers found that their model identified the specific section of the Kamchatka subduction zone in eastern Russia where a massive earthquake later occurred.

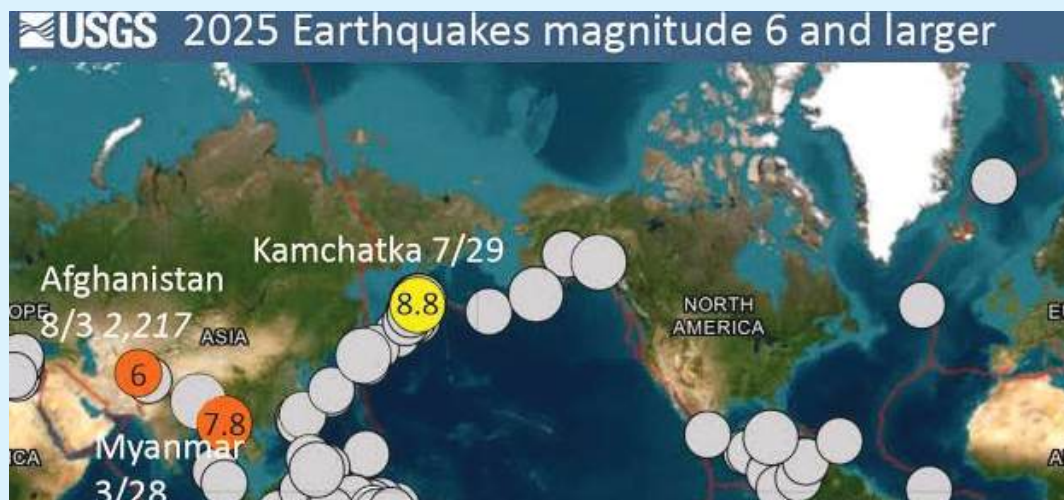
The study was led by UCR geophysicists Gareth Funning and Axel Periollat, who examine how Earth's surface gradually deforms as tectonic plates lock together before eventually rupturing.

“Earthquakes capture headlines when they happen, but for years beforehand the fault is quietly accumulating strain,” Funning said. “This strain can be measured.”

Mapping locked fault zones

The researchers focused on sub-

duction zones, where one tectonic plate moves beneath another. Such



regions are responsible for some of Earth's largest earthquakes, including events exceeding magnitude 8.5, and can generate devastating tsunamis.

Using GPS measurements of subtle ground movements, the team developed an algorithm to identify sections of faults that are locked and accumulating energy.

These locked areas, known as asperities, act as zones of friction that resist tectonic movement until sufficient stress builds up to trigger a major earthquake.

The researchers identified a locked section beneath Russia's Kamchatka

Peninsula before a major earthquake struck the area. Although the method

was not designed to predict the timing of the earthquake, the rupture occurred in the area where the model had indicated accumulated strain.

“We had an idea where the strain was accumulating based on a relatively limited data set,” Periollat said. “Seeing it work so well confirmed that this approach has real potential.”

Differences in earthquake behaviour The findings also showed that major earthquakes in the same region can behave differently.

the more recent event produced a considerably smaller tsunami. Researchers said this suggests that the shallowest part of the fault slipped less during the more recent rupture than during the earlier event.

The researchers stressed that their method cannot predict when an earthquake will occur or determine the size of a resulting tsunami. However, identifying areas where the greatest seismic hazard is concentrated could improve long-term planning and preparedness. Testing the method worldwide

Kamchatka experienced giant earthquakes in both 1952 and 2025, but

The team is now applying the approach to other major subduction zones in Japan, Mexico, New Zealand and the Pacific Northwest.

The researchers are also examining whether similar techniques could improve understanding of earthquake hazards along California faults. “In the Bay Area, the Hayward Fault has both creeping and locked sections, much like subduction zones,” Funning said.

“We’re investigating whether we can identify the parts most likely to generate future earthquakes.”

Expanding the method will require more detailed observations. While land-based GPS stations provide important information, measurements are much more limited offshore, where many of the world's most dangerous faults are located beneath the ocean.

Researchers in Japan have begun deploying acoustic instruments on the seafloor to measure slow ground deformation over long periods. Similar monitoring efforts are being proposed in Chile and the Pacific Northwest, while a recently launched satellite could eventually provide additional measurements in areas that currently lack sufficient GPS coverage.

IDPS Jammu bags top honours in inter-school English debate competition

Blazing Tales News Service

JAMMU, SEP International Delhi Public School (IDPS) Jammu bagged top honours while Jodhamal Public School and Model Academy secured second and third positions respectively in the Inter-School English Debate Competition hosted by Army Public School (APS) Jammu Cantt under the aegis of Jammu Sahodaya Schools Complex (JSSC).

The competition centred on the thought-provoking topic, "Is Media Informing the Public or Manipulating Perception?", encouraging young speakers to critically examine the role of media in shaping public opinion and influencing perceptions.

A total of 33 schools participated in the competition.

Priyanka Goswami attended the event as the Chief Guest, while Rajiv Sharma, Principal, J&K Police Public School and Vice-President, JSSC,



was the Guest of Honour.

The debate was adjudicated by Dr

Shivani Suri, Associate Professor of English, Government College for

Women (GCW), Udhampur, and Vikas Sharma, Journalist, Media

Professional, Educationist and Social Impact Advocate.

The competition witnessed an intense contest, with participants presenting compelling arguments and thought-provoking observations while examining different dimensions of the role of media.

The young speakers displayed confidence, clarity, logical reasoning and eloquence, keeping the audience and judges engaged throughout the exchange of ideas. The Consolation Prizes were secured by students of APS Damana, International Daily Rising School (IDRS) and RM Public School.

Adding cultural vibrancy to the occasion was a graceful dance performance, reflecting the enthusiasm, energy and spirit of the event.

The competition provided students with a meaningful platform to engage in constructive discourse, strengthen their communication skills and develop confidence as informed speakers.

Mandeep Kaur launches Swachhata Internship Programme for schools across Kashmir

Blazing Tales News Service

SRINAGAR, SEP: Commissioner, Housing & Urban Development Department, Mandeep Kaur, launched the Swachhata Internship Programme for schools across Kashmir Division, aimed at directly involving students in cleanliness, waste segregation and scientific waste management.

The programme was launched at Amar Singh College, Srinagar, in the presence of Ram Niwas Sharma, Commissioner Secretary, Education, who attended as the Guest of Honour, and Dr Devansh Yadav, Mission Director, Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0, J&K.

The initiative has been launched by the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) in collaboration with the Directorate of School Education Kashmir, with support from Swaha Resource Management Private Limited.

Students to become Swachhata Ambassadors

The programme will engage students in practical activities related

to source segregation, recycling, composting, resource recovery, sanitation and community participation.

Students will also be encouraged to undertake awareness activities in their schools and neighbourhoods and promote responsible waste-management practices among their families and communities.

Speaking on the occasion, Mandeep Kaur said cleanliness could not be left to municipal agencies alone and that citizens, particularly young students, must become active partners in the effort.

"Cleanliness cannot remain the responsibility of municipal agencies alone. It has to become a shared civic responsibility and schools have an important role in shaping that culture among the next generation," she said.

She emphasised the need to move beyond awareness programmes and focus on sustained behavioural change in the way people handle waste and maintain cleanliness in their surroundings.

The programme will also provide

students opportunities to develop communication, leadership and public-speaking skills while undertaking activities related to waste management and cleanliness.

The students will serve as Swachhata Ambassadors, carrying the message from their schools to their homes and local communities.

Fazlul Haseeb, Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation, senior SMC officers, heads of institutions, teachers, students from participating schools and other stakeholders attended the launch programme.

Waste-to-Art exhibition

A Waste-to-Art Exhibition was also organised on the occasion, showcasing sculptures and other artworks created from discarded materials by participants from different parts of the Valley.

The exhibition highlighted the possibilities of reusing waste materials and transforming discarded items into useful and creative products. It also promoted the message of reuse, recycling and resource recovery among students and visitors.



IEC campaign sensitises students on drug abuse at Bhaderwah



Blazing Tales News Service

BHADERWAH, SEP: An Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaign on drug abuse was organised here by the Social Welfare Department under the ongoing Nasha Mukta Abhiyan, with active participation from students.

The interactive awareness session witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, faculty members and

representatives of various line departments. Students actively engaged in discussions and shared their views on the importance of making healthy, informed and responsible choices.

Students urged to reject substance abuse

Speakers called upon students to stay away from intoxicating substances, adopt positive and healthy lifestyles and encourage their peers

to contribute to building a healthier, safer and drug-free society.

They highlighted the serious physical, psychological, social and academic consequences associated with drug addiction. Students were also urged to remain cautious of negative peer influence, make informed decisions and understand the long-term impact of substance abuse on their lives, education and future.

GCW Parade hosts grassroots intervention and community training under Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan



Blazing Tales News Service

JAMMU, SEP The NSS Unit of Government College for Women (GCW), Parade Ground, in collaboration with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer, organised a Grassroots Intervention and Community Training Programme on the Rehabilitation Module under the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan, J&K.

The three-day training programme aims to strengthen grassroots-level awareness, intervention and community-based approaches for the prevention of substance abuse and rehabilitation.

In accordance with the communication issued by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer, Jammu, three faculty members from Government Degree Colleges of Jammu dis-

trict participated in the training along with NSS and NCC students of GCW Parade Ground. A total of 70 participants attended the programme.

Focus on early intervention and rehabilitation District Health Officer Dr. Sophia formally introduced the programme and highlighted the importance of coordinated community-level intervention in addressing substance abuse.

Expert sessions were conducted by Dr. Balkes Razia, Occupational Therapist; Reefat Iqbal, Nurse, Addiction Treatment Facility (ATF), GMC Jammu; and Dr. Neelam Raini, Medical Officer, ATF, GMC Psychiatric Hospital.

The resource persons sensitised participants on identification of cases, early recognition of substance-use-related concerns, community counselling, referral mechanisms and rehabilitation-oriented interventions.

The training also emphasised the role of educational institutions, faculty members and student volunteers in creating awareness, identifying vulnerable individuals at the grassroots level and facilitating timely counselling and referral for appropriate support.

Dr. Naveen Anand, Principal, GCW Parade Ground, welcomed the resource persons, faculty members and student participants. He appreciated the initiative under the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan and stressed the need for sustained community engagement and awareness among young people.



Hindi Diwas Pakhwada inaugurated by JKAACL at K.L. Saigal Hall

Blazing Tales News Service

JAMMU, SEP: The Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages (JKAACL) inaugurated Hindi Diwas Pakhwada with a special literary and cultural programme at K.L. Saigal Hall, Jammu.

The programme commenced with Saraswati Vandana, composed by Ravi Sharma and presented by Mamta, Neelakshi Samiksh and Tahriya. This was followed by the ceremonial lighting of the traditional lamp by Chief Guest Prof. Raj Kumar along with Prof. Chanchal Dogra, Guest of Honour, Harvinder Kour, Secretary, JKAACL, Sonali Arun Gupta, Special Secretary, and Dr Chanchal Sharma, Editor, Hindi, JKAACL.

Welcoming the distinguished guests, writers, poets, students and participants, Harvinder Kour highlighted the importance of Hindi as a language of communication, literature and cultural expression.

She stressed the need to promote the use of Hindi in everyday life and encouraged people, particularly the younger generation, to speak and write the language with confidence while preserving its richness and cultural values.

Hindi and artificial intelligence

The academic session featured a paper presentation by noted scholar and writer Maharaj Krishan Bharat on the theme "Hindi: Paramparik Gyan Se Kritrim Budhimata Tak".

The presentation explored the journey of Hindi from traditional knowledge systems to its emerging role in the age of artificial intelligence and new technologies.

On the occasion, eminent Hindi writers were felicitated for their valuable contributions to Hindi literature. Those honoured included Prof Pran Nath Trisal, Prof Kiran Bakshi, Naresh Kumar Udas and Dr Aruna Sharma.

Poets and students participate

The literary segment witnessed enthusiastic participation from established poets as well as young students.

Poets including Sham Bihari Juneja, Manto Dutta, Rakesh Abrol, Amita Mehta, Heena Mahajan, Yogesh Sharma "Yogi", Sanjeev Bhasin, Sunil Sharma and Manju Sharma presented their poetry in Hindi.

Students also participated with enthusiasm. Ridhima Sharma, Suneha Sharma and Vaani Verma from PSPS Government College for Women, Gandhi Nagar, and Raggi Parihar and Aditi Sharma from Government College for Women, Parade, presented their Hindi poems, adding a youthful dimension to the celebrations.

GDC Vijaypur celebrates Hindi Diwas

BLAZING TALES NEWS SERVICE

SAMBA, SEP: The Department of Hindi, Government Degree College (GDC) Vijaypur, celebrated Hindi Diwas by organising a Debate Competition and Slogan Writing Competition to promote the importance, richness and wider use of the Hindi language among students.

The programme was held under the guidance of Principal Dr. Sanjeet Kaur and coordinated by Prof. Sonia Devi, Lecturer, Department of Hindi. The competitions provided students an opportunity to express their ideas and creativity while highlighting the significance of Hindi in education, communication and national life.

Principal Dr. Sanjeet Kaur appreciated the Department of Hindi for organising the activities and emphasised the importance of promoting Indian languages among students. Poster competition on HIV/AIDS awareness

Meanwhile, the college's Red Ribbon Club, in collaboration with the NSS Unit (KHIDMAT), organised a Poster Making Competition on "HIV/AIDS Awareness" to commemorate International Youth Day 2026 under the Intensified Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Campaign 2026. The competition aimed to harness the creative potential of youth to disseminate information on HIV/AIDS prevention, address stigma and discrimination associated with the disease, and promote voluntary testing and responsible behaviour among students.

The posters were evaluated by a judging committee comprising Dr. Pooja Gupta, Prof. Anu Bala and Dr. Reetika Sharma. Ganish Dhotra secured the first position, while Rupali Kotwal and Mohd Ahsan Khan of Semester-I secured the second and third positions, respectively.

J&K tourism looks beyond traditional circuits with new destinations and year-round strategy

Blazing Tales News Service

JAMMU, SEP: Jammu and Kashmir is entering a new phase in tourism development, with the administration seeking to move beyond the traditional concentration of visitors around a handful of destinations and build a more diversified, sustainable and year-round tourism economy.

The strategy comes at a crucial time for the Union Territory. Tourism remains one of J&K's major sources of employment and local economic activity, but the sector has also faced disruptions in recent years. The administration is now focusing on new destinations, religious circuits, adventure tourism, border tourism, eco-tourism and improved visitor infrastructure to widen the tourism footprint.

The government's 2026-27 approach places particular emphasis on Jammu Division, where Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo recently reviewed a comprehensive tourism roadmap aimed at transforming the region from primarily a transit point for pilgrims into a year-round destination. The roadmap covers religious, cultural, adventure and nature-based tourism and seeks to ensure that the economic benefits of tourism reach more communities.

Jammu seeks bigger share of tourism economy

For years, Jammu's tourism economy has been strongly associated with pilgrimage, particularly the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi shrine at Katra. While religious tourism continues to provide a major visitor base, the administration is increasingly looking to encourage pilgrims to extend their stay and explore other parts of the Jammu region.

Recent planning has identified destinations such as Bhaderwah, Sanasar and the Seven Lakes region for greater development and promotion. Officials have also been examining ways to make better use of existing assets, including the Tawi Riverfront and Jambu Zoo.

The approach is aimed not simply

at increasing visitor numbers but at increasing the average length of stay and encouraging tourists to spend more time and money in local communities.

Several projects underline this shift. A detailed project report worth

Rs 96.07-crore detailed project report has been submitted under Swadesh Darshan 2.0 for developing the destination, with proposed facilities including a zipline, lakefront recreation, architectural lighting, heritage tourism infrastructure and a hop-

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah announced earlier this year that tourist destinations that had remained closed following the April 2025 Pahalgam attack would be reopened, while nine new tourist destinations were also planned to further diver-

therefore also an attempt to create employment opportunities outside established tourism centres. Greater promotion of rural, cultural, ecological and adventure tourism could allow more communities to participate directly in the sector.

Religious tourism remains another powerful driver. Government data show that Jammu region received more than 1.62 crore tourist and pilgrim visits in 2025, despite a decline from 2024, while the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi shrine alone recorded more than 69 lakh pilgrims in 2025.

Towards a year-round tourism economy

The emerging tourism model for J&K is therefore increasingly centred on diversification rather than dependence on a few destinations or a single season.

Winter sports, trekking, rafting, pilgrimage, heritage tourism, border tourism, eco-tourism, wellness, film tourism and cultural events can together extend the tourism calendar and create more stable livelihoods.

The challenge will be to ensure that infrastructure development keeps pace with visitor growth without damaging the fragile ecology and cultural character that make Jammu and Kashmir attractive in the first place. If the current roadmap is implemented with a balance between infrastructure, environmental protection and community participation, J&K could gradually develop a broader tourism economy in which Jammu's emerging destinations, Kashmir's established attractions and the Union Territory's rural and cultural landscapes complement one another. The objective is no longer simply to bring more tourists to Jammu and Kashmir. It is to encourage them to stay longer, explore more destinations and contribute more meaningfully to local economies—while ensuring that tourism remains sustainable for the communities and landscapes that support it.



Rs 45.88 crore has been submitted under the PRASHAD scheme for development of the Purmandal-Utterbehni pilgrim circuit, including landscaping, bathing ghats, illumination, public amenities and waste-management facilities. A separate Rs 5-crore project has been approved for upgrading facilities at the Shivkhori shrine. Adventure and border tourism are also becoming important components of the strategy. The proposed Aithem Mega Adventure Hub and Food Village in Reasi is intended to combine adventure activities with accommodation and food facilities. At Suchetgarh, a Rs 19.52-crore project has received administrative approval to improve visitor infrastructure at the border tourism site.

Basohli and emerging destinations Kathua's Basohli-Ranjit Sagar Lake region is another major focus. A

on, hop-off bus service.

Such projects could help connect tourism with areas that have traditionally received a smaller share of the visitor economy.

The administration is also examining the development of rafting and other adventure activities. Work on the first phase of the Baradari river rafting destination in Reasi has reportedly reached around 45 per cent physical progress and is targeted for completion by November 2026.

Kashmir focuses on recovery and diversification

Kashmir remains the international face of J&K tourism, with destinations such as Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalgam and Sonamarg continuing to anchor the sector. However, the government has also been seeking to develop lesser-known destinations and reduce pressure on heavily visited locations.

sify the tourism sector. The government said infrastructure gaps at major destinations were being addressed as part of the recovery process.

The broader policy direction is towards sustainable and inclusive tourism. The government has proposed new tourism master plans, expansion of homestays in rural and offbeat areas, and development of alternative destinations to distribute visitor pressure more evenly across the Union Territory.

Tourism increasingly linked to local livelihoods

The significance of this strategy extends beyond tourism statistics. Hotels, homestays, transport operators, guides, restaurants, artisans, adventure-sports operators and small businesses all depend on visitor spending. The administration's emphasis on offbeat destinations is

Singapore Tourism Update 2026 As China Leads Visitor Growth While Shorter Trips Impact Recovery

A traveler arriving at Changi Airport this August likely noticed a shift in the terminal atmosphere: while the crowds remain, the duration of their stay is shrinking. For those planning multi-city Asian itineraries, the recent data suggests Singapore is increasingly being treated as a short-term transit hub rather than a primary destination, a trend that directly impacts how you should book your flights and hotels to avoid unnecessary costs. Compare Flight Deals

August 2026 Tourism Contraction and Visitor Trends

The Singapore Tourism Board (STB) has released data for August 2026 indicating a cooling period for the city-state's tourism sector. While the total volume of international arrivals remains high, there is a measurable decline in the "depth" of these visits. In August, Singapore recorded 1.61 million international visitors. While this number appears robust, it actually represents a marginal decrease of 0.3 percent compared to the same month in the previous year and a 1.2 percent drop from July 2026.

The more concerning metric for the local economy is the decline in

overnight stays. The number of visitors staying at least one night fell by 2.2 percent year-on-year, totaling 1.24 million people. This shift is mirrored in the average length of stay, which plummeted by 4.2 percent year-on-year to just 3.46 days. Book Vacation Rentals

For the first eight months of 2026, the cumulative data shows a downward trend. Singapore welcomed 11.43 million international visitors from January through August, a 1.7 percent decrease compared to the same window in 2025. Overnight visitors for this period reached 8.37 million—representing 73.2 percent of all arrivals—but this figure is down 3.2 percent year-on-year. Furthermore, the average stay for the first eight months of the year dropped 2.8 percent to 3.43 days.



Ladakh tourism surges as visitor footfall crosses full 2025 tally in eight months

Blazing Tales News Service

LEH, SEP: Ladakh's tourism sector is witnessing a strong upswing, with 4,05,085 tourists visiting the Union Territory between January 1 and August 31, 2026, surpassing the total tourist footfall of 3,35,872 recorded during the entire year of 2025.

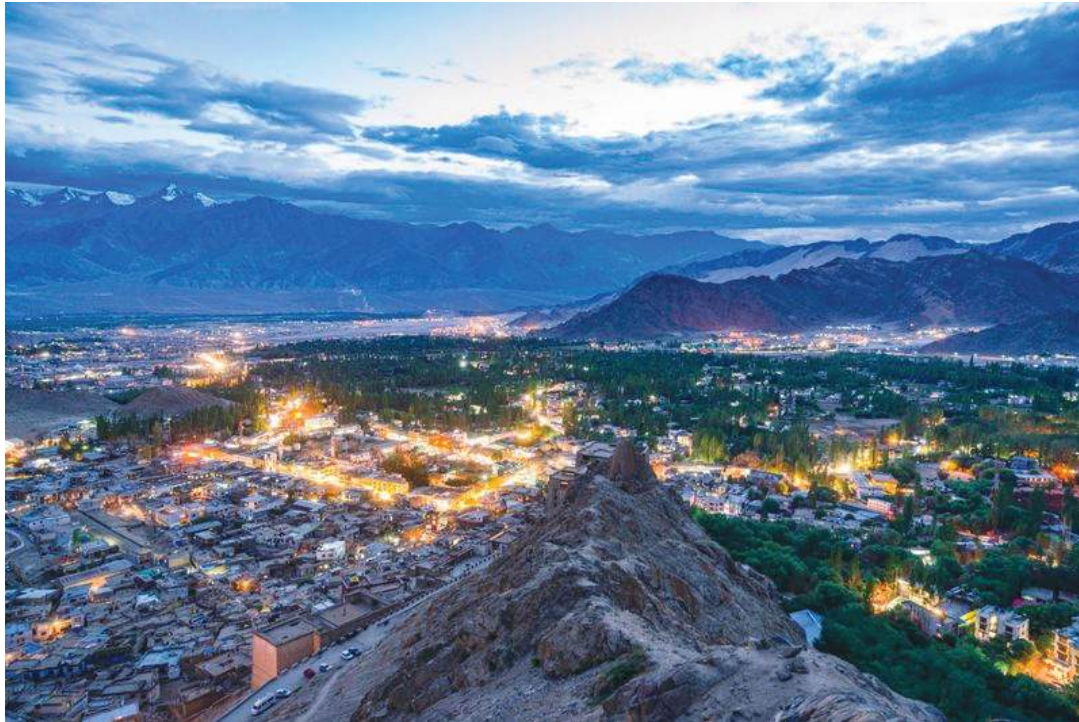
According to the Ladakh administration, tourist arrivals during the first eight months of 2026 were 20.61 per cent higher than the total recorded in 2025. Compared with the corresponding January-August period last year, arrivals increased by 50.37 per cent, rising from 2,69,390 in 2025 to 4,05,085 this year.

August alone recorded 74,753 tourist arrivals, compared with 45,201 in August 2025, marking a year-on-year increase of 65.38 per cent.

Domestic and foreign arrivals rise
The growth has been recorded across both domestic and foreign tourist segments. During the first eight months of 2026, Ladakh received 3,71,739 domestic tourists and 33,346 foreign visitors.

During the corresponding period in 2025, the figures stood at 2,44,308 domestic tourists and 25,082 foreign tourists.

Foreign tourist arrivals were par-



ticularly strong in August, with 10,075 international visitors recorded during the month—the highest monthly foreign tourist footfall so far this year. This was also higher than the 8,148 foreign tourists recorded in August 2025.

Focus on year-round tourism

Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena attributed the growth to sustained infrastructure development in Ladakh and the broader push to promote domestic tourism.

He said the administration's focus was not merely on increasing visitor numbers but on developing a sustainable, responsible and year-round tourism economy that creates livelihood

opportunities for local youth, entrepreneurs, homestays, artisans, transporters and communities.

The administration is also seeking to extend tourism beyond the traditional summer season through festivals, sporting events and cultural programmes. Such initiatives are expected to attract visitors during shoulder and off-season periods while offering tourists relatively lower air fares, hotel costs and less crowding.

Festivals add to tourism calendar
Several events in August contributed to the expansion of Ladakh's tourism calendar, including the Changthang Nomadic Festival, the first Black-Necked Crane Festival, the Suru Summer Festival and the Ladakh Book Festival. The first edition of the Black-Necked Crane Festival alone witnessed participation from more than 10,000 people from India and abroad. The festivals showcased Ladakh's distinctive culture, nomadic traditions, wildlife and natural heritage, adding new experiences for visitors while supporting the administration's effort to develop the region as a year-round tourism destination.

US updates travel advisories for nine destinations

WASHINGTON, SEP: The U.S. State Department has updated travel advisories for nine countries and territories during the first week of September, with Macau placed under a Level 3 advisory while several other destinations remain under Level 2 warnings.

The latest updates cover destinations in Asia, Africa and Latin America, with the advisories citing concerns ranging from consular limitations and local law enforcement to health risks, terrorism, crime and natural disasters.

Macau placed under Level 3 advisory

Macau, a Special Administrative Region of China, was the only destination to receive a newly updated Level 3 advisory. The category advises Americans to reconsider travel because of specific risks.

The State Department cited the limited ability to provide emergency consular services and the arbitrary enforcement of local laws as reasons for the warning. It also noted restrictions affecting U.S. diplomats in Macau.

Seven destinations remain at Level 2

Seven destinations were listed under Level 2 advisories, which encourage travellers to exercise increased caution.

São Tomé and Príncipe remains at Level 2 because of health risks, although the latest update removed the reference to possible civil unrest.

Peru also remains at Level 2, although several regions and cities within the country carry the highest Level 4 warning because of risks including crime, kidnapping and terrorism. The advisory notes that Cusco and the main tourist area



around Machu Picchu are outside the Level 4 zone.

Morocco continues to be listed at Level 2, with the State Department urging travellers to remain alert because of terrorism risks.

Tajikistan is also under a Level 2 advisory, with travellers warned about areas where unexploded land mines may be present. Certain parts of the country, including the border with Afghanistan and the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, carry a higher Level 3 warning.

Nepal received an updated Level 2 advisory following recent flash floods and landslides. The update removed

civil unrest as a risk factor but issued a "Do not travel" warning for the Nepal-China border area affected by the disasters.

China and Hong Kong also received updated Level 2 advisories. Americans travelling to mainland

China are warned about arbitrary enforcement of local laws, the use of exit bans without a fair and transparent legal process, and the risk of unjust arrest or detention. Similar concerns apply to Hong Kong.

Bhutan remains at Level 1

Bhutan was the only destination receiving an updated Level 1 advisory during the period. There was no change to its risk level or listed risk indicators.

The advisory continues to allow Americans to travel to Bhutan with normal precautions, while warning that weather-related events such as flash floods and landslides can occur.

India must turn tourism potential into arrivals, says Ravi Gosain

NEW DELHI, SEP: India must translate its vast tourism potential into measurable growth in visitor arrivals by focusing on experiences, connectivity, new destinations and longer stays, Ravi Gosain, President of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), has said.

Addressing delegates at the 41st IATO Annual Convention, Gosain said the country's tourism opportunities should no longer remain an unrealised promise. He called for greater emphasis on converting India's attractions into marketable experiences and strengthening connectivity between destinations to create integrated tourism circuits.

"We must convert our potential into arrivals, our attraction into experiences, and connectivity into circuits, and our discussions into action," Gosain said.

Focus on longer stays and higher-value tourism

Gosain said India's tourism strategy should move beyond simply increasing visitor numbers and instead encourage travellers to stay longer and spend more on meaningful experiences.

He stressed the need for continued investment in people, technology, tourism products and destinations beyond the country's established circuits. Such an approach, he said, would help broaden the benefits of tourism and create opportunities in emerging destinations.

The comments come as the travel industry seeks to position India as the "world's next tourism opportunity", with stakeholders looking for stronger growth in both domestic and international tourism.

The IATO convention has brought together representatives of the travel trade and tourism sector to discuss the industry's priorities, challenges and opportunities. The emphasis on converting potential into actual arrivals reflects a broader industry concern that India's diverse tourism resources need stronger packaging, promotion and connectivity to realise their full economic value.

Moving beyond familiar circuits

India offers a wide range of tourism products spanning heritage, culture, nature, adventure, spirituality, wellness and business travel. However, established destinations and circuits continue to account for a significant share of tourist demand.

Gosain's call to invest in new products and destinations highlights the importance of distributing tourism activity more widely. Developing lesser-known destinations and connecting them with established tourism hubs could encourage visitors to extend their itineraries rather than limiting trips to one or two well-known locations. Better connectivity can also help turn individual attractions into multi-destination circuits, giving tour operators more opportunities to design longer and more diverse itineraries.

J&K filmmakers shine at IFFJK 2026, bag three awards

Blazing Tales News Service

SRINAGAR, Sep, 2026: Filmmakers from Jammu and Kashmir made a strong mark at the First International Film Festival of Jammu & Kashmir (IFFJK) 2026, winning three of the nine awards presented at the inaugural festival.

The recognition marks a significant moment for the region's growing filmmaking community, with local filmmakers showcasing their work alongside acclaimed filmmakers, artists, technicians, industry professionals and cinema enthusiasts from across India and abroad.

Baba Tasaduq Hussain won the Best Cinematography Award for the documentary Naqsh-e-Daur (The Story of Ghulam Nabi Dhar), earning appreciation for its visual storytelling and cinematic treatment.

The Best Emerging Filmmaker Award was conferred on Askini: The Guiding Darkness, directed by Ajit Singh Bhasin, in recognition of its distinctive cinematic voice and promising creative approach.

Filmmaker Kapil Mattoo's Tasruddar – The Jinns of Kashmir won the Best Film from Jammu & Kashmir Select category, celebrating a work rooted in the region's



distinctive cultural and storytelling traditions.

Local films draw audience appreciation

Several films by J&K filmmakers received appreciation during the festival. Batt Koch (The Lost Lane), directed by Siddarth Koul and Ankit Wali, Tasruddar (Djinns of Kashmir) by Kapil Mattoo, and Naqsh-e-Daur (The Story of Ghulam Nabi

Dhar) by Baba Tassaduq Hussain were among the locally produced films screened at the festival.

Batt Koch, which was screened as the closing film, received appreciation from audiences and renowned filmmaker Ramesh Sippy. Love in Vietnam, a film by Jammu and Kashmir-based filmmaker Rahat Shah Kazmi, was also screened during

the festival and received appreciation.

The three awards, spanning cinematography, emerging filmmaking and the best film from Jammu and Kashmir, underline the diversity and depth of cinematic talent emerging from the region.

The inaugural IFFJK provided filmmakers from Jammu and Kashmir with an international platform

to present their work alongside films from different parts of India and the world. The recognition of local filmmakers is expected to create further opportunities for storytellers to connect with wider audiences, industry professionals and the global cinematic community.

The strong showing also reflects the evolving creative landscape of Jammu and Kashmir, where filmmakers are increasingly exploring local histories, folklore, landscapes, contemporary realities and cultural narratives through diverse cinematic forms.

The achievement is expected to encourage young filmmakers and emerging artists from the region to pursue their creative ambitions and tell stories rooted in the unique experiences, heritage and cultural identity of Jammu and Kashmir.

Organised by the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), the First International Film Festival of Jammu & Kashmir has emerged as a platform for celebrating global cinema while providing greater visibility to the creative voices of the Union Territory before national and international audiences.

Vishal Chaturvedi announces RamBola after Hanuman Ansh blockbuster



MUMBAI, SEP: Director Vishal Chaturvedi has announced his next project, RamBola, based on the life of poet-saint Goswami Tulsidas, following the blockbuster success of his devotional drama Hanuman Ansh.

Hanuman Ansh, based on spiritual guru Neem Karoli Baba, has enjoyed a remarkable run at the box office since its theatrical release on August 7. Made on a reported bud-

get of Rs 2 crore, the film has crossed the Rs 268 crore mark worldwide, earning more than 134 times its production cost.

Chaturvedi announced RamBola on Instagram, describing it as the "immortal story of Goswami Tulsidas". The film will be written and directed by Chaturvedi.

The project will be produced by Mahaveer Jain, Vishal Chaturvedi, Amit Upadhyay and Raghuvendra Singh, and will be presented by Mahaveer Jain Films.

The announcement comes amid the strong commercial performance of Hanuman Ansh, marking Chaturvedi's continued focus on stories centred on spiritual and devotional themes.

Nafisa Ali says cancer has progressed, begins targeted therapy

MUMBAI, SEP: Veteran actor Nafisa Ali Sodhi, 69, has shared an update on her cancer journey, revealing that her treatment protocol has changed after doctors found that the disease had progressed. The actor, who had announced her third remission only a few months ago, said a recent PET/CT scan showed new cancer deposits on the surface of her liver. She has now started targeted therapy as part of her revised treatment. Sharing a photograph from a hospital bed on social media, Nafisa appeared cheerful while holding her intravenous drip. She thanked her followers for continuing to support her through her prolonged battle with cancer. "My treatment protocol has changed and now I have been put on a Targeted Therapy fighting the good fight," she said, adding that she was grateful for the continued support and posi-

tive energy from her followers. Nafisa also explained the scan results, saying the PET/CT indicated that her ovarian and peritoneal cancer had progressed, with new deposits detected on the surface of the liver.

Long battle with cancer

Nafisa first revealed her diagnosis of stage 3 peritoneal and ovarian cancer in 2018. Since then, she has openly shared updates about her treatment and periods of remission. Her latest post drew messages of encouragement from fans, friends and members of the film industry, who wished her strength as she begins the new phase of treatment. In an interview in July 2026, Nafisa had spoken about the challenges of living with cancer and described it as one of the most difficult journeys of her life. She also said the experience had reinforced her desire to leave a message for her children, family and younger generations about making the world a better place.

CBI registers FIR for fresh probe into Disha Salian death

MUMBAI, SEP : The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered an FIR in connection with the 2020 death of celebrity manager Disha Salian, following a direction from the Bombay High Court for a thorough probe into the case.

According to advocate Nilesh Ojha, who represents Disha's father Satish Salian, the FIR names several individuals, including Shiv Sena-UBT leader Aaditya Thackeray, Rohan Roy, actors Dino Morea and Sooraj Pancholi, Rhea Chakraborty, former

Mumbai Police commissioner Param Bir Singh and other police and forensic officials.

Ojha said the FIR was registered after the CBI conducted a preliminary verification of Satish Salian's complaint and recorded his statement. He alleged that the case involves charges relating to gang rape, murder and an alleged cover-up, invoking Sections 376D, 302, 201, 217, 218 and 120B of the IPC.

The advocate further alleged that certain police records and forensic findings were manipu-

lated and that members of the Special Investigation Team were



also named in the complaint.

Earlier probe had ruled out foul play

Disha Salian, who had briefly worked with actor Sushant Singh Rajput, died after falling from the 12th floor of a building in Malad at around 2:25 am on June 9, 2020. The Malwani police had registered an accidental death report and concluded that Salian died by suicide, finding no evidence of foul play. A Special Investigation Team constituted by the Maharashtra government in December 2023 also reached the

conclusion that there was no foul play in her death.

Satish Salian subsequently approached the Bombay High Court, alleging that his daughter had been sexually assaulted and murdered and that her death was part of a conspiracy involving influential individuals.

The CBI's registration of the FIR now marks the beginning of a fresh investigation into the allegations. The allegations against the individuals named in the FIR remain subject to investigation and do not by themselves establish criminal liability.



Ramayana: Part 1 begins music campaign with Jai Jai Ram

MUMBAI, SEP: Ramayana: Part 1 has begun its music campaign with the release of Jai Jai Ram on the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi, offering audiences the first glimpse into the musical world of the much-awaited epic. Composed by A.R. Rahman, the devotional song features lyrics by Dr. Kumar Vishwas and vocals by Arijit Singh and Shreya Ghoshal. The song is accompanied by a new motion poster featuring Ranbir Kapoor as Lord Ram and Sai Pallavi as Sita. The makers unveiled the motion poster with the message “Celebrating the timeless bond of Siya Ram”, placing the relationship between Ram and Sita at the centre of the film’s first musical reveal. Rahman on the devotional composition A.R. Rahman said the challenge while creating Jai Jai Ram was to retain the feeling of a prayer while giving the composition the scale and emotional depth of a cinematic song.

He said the repeated invocation of Shri Ram’s name forms the heart of the song, with the musical arrangement intended to preserve the purity and intimacy of a prayer while allowing it to grow into a cinematic composition.

Rahman also praised Arijit Singh and Shreya Ghoshal for bringing their individual emotional expressions to Kumar Vishwas’s lyrics while retaining the devotional essence of the song.

More music from the film is expected to follow, with Rahman and renowned composer Hans Zimmer also set to come together for a special musical evening in London.

Qazi Touqeer praises Arijit Singh’s dedication on Bigg Boss 20



MUMBAI, SEP: Singer Qazi Touqeer has been winning praise for his performance on Bigg Boss 20, with his singing and candid remarks drawing attention from viewers. His close friend and fellow singer Arijit Singh has also expressed support for him, saying he would watch the reality show for the first time because Qazi is participating.

In a recent episode, Qazi spoke warmly about Arijit and praised his extraordinary dedication to music. Recalling their days together on the reality singing show Fame Gurukul, Qazi described Arijit as someone with an intense work ethic and a deep passion for the creative process.

“He is my life. His fighting spirit is crazy,” Qazi said, recalling how Arijit could spend six to eight hours continuously with his sitar without getting tired.

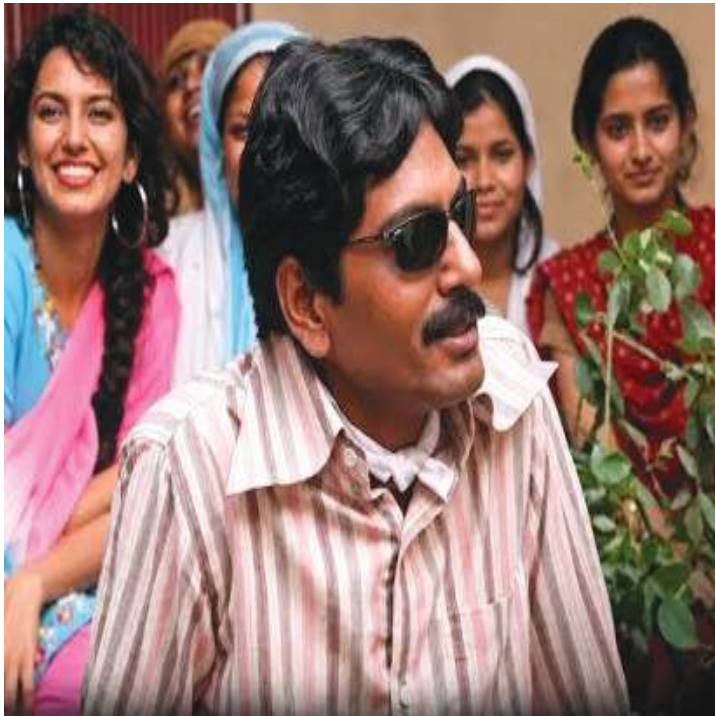
Qazi said Arijit becomes completely immersed in music once he begins playing and loses track of time. Comparing their passions, he said that while he is passionate about clothes, Arijit finds fulfilment in the process of creating and pursuing music.

Arijit supports Qazi

Arijit had earlier taken to X to express his support for Qazi. He said he would watch Bigg Boss for the first time because his “Rockstar Qazi” was part of the show.

Qazi and Arijit have remained friends since participating in Fame Gurukul. Their longstanding friendship and Qazi’s recent comments have highlighted the mutual admiration between the two singers.

Nawazuddin Siddiqui recalls turning down 200 scripts after Gangs of Wasseypur 2



MUMBAI, SEP: Actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui has recalled how his career changed after the success of Anurag Kashyap’s Gangs of Wasseypur 2, revealing that he received around 200 scripts and even blank cheques following the film’s

Nawazuddin, who played Faizal Khan in the 2012 crime drama, said the film’s critical success made him feel like a star. However, instead of rushing into his next project, he decided to wait for a role that appealed to him.

Nawazuddin waited for the right

role

Speaking in a recent interview with NDTV, Nawazuddin said he was inundated with offers after Gangs of Wasseypur 2. “After the release of Gangs of Wasseypur 2, I received at least 200 scripts. Blank cheques were lying on my table,” he recalled.

According to the actor, filmmakers would approach him with scripts and blank cheques, allowing him to decide the amount and his availability.

Despite the overwhelming number of offers, Nawazuddin said he did not select a single script because none of them appealed to him. He decided that he could afford to wait for the right opportunity rather than accept a project in haste.

The actor said he was already accustomed to waiting for work after years of struggle and was prepared to wait another two or three years if necessary. However, he added that he did not have to wait very long before suitable opportunities began coming his way.

Over the years, Nawazuddin has established himself as one of Hindi cinema’s acclaimed performers, earning recognition for his work across independent films as well as mainstream entertainers.

Celine Dion completes first full concert in six years after illness

NANTERRE, SEP : Celine Dion has completed her first full concert in more than six years, marking a major return to the stage after being diagnosed with stiff person syndrome, a rare and progressive neurological disorder that affected her ability to sing.

The 58-year-old Quebec superstar performed 25 songs over two hours and 15 minutes at the Plenitude Arena in Nanterre, west of Paris. The sold-out show was the first of a demanding five-week engagement that includes 16 performances, with 10 additional shows already scheduled for May 2027.

The emotional high point came during the encore, when Dion performed “All By Myself”, the song that has long been regarded as one of the defining challenges of her vocal repertoire. She hit and held the song’s high note before turning towards her musical director, drawing an explosive response from the audience.

After the performance, Dion reassured the crowd with three simple words: “Je vais bien.”

A long-awaited return

Dion had not performed a full concert since March 8, 2020. She was diagnosed with stiff person syndrome in 2022, after which she cancelled her world tour and largely withdrew from public performances while undergoing treatment.

Her return to the stage began with a four-minute performance at the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics in July 2024, when she sang from the Eiffel Tower. That appearance was widely seen as a significant comeback, but Saturday’s concert presented a much greater challenge as she had to sustain a complete show.

The latest performance is intended to demonstrate that Dion can return to regular live work despite the challenges posed by her illness. Her upcoming schedule will test her ability to perform repeatedly over an extended period.

Tata Group stocks rally after RBI rejects Tata Sons deregistration bid

MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER: Shares of several Tata Group companies surged on Tuesday after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) rejected Tata Sons' application to surrender its registration as a Core Investment Company, reviving expectations that the group's holding company may have to pursue a stock market listing.

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) emerged as the biggest gainer among Tata Group stocks and was also the top performer on the NIFTY50 index. The stock climbed as much as 5.5% to an intraday high of ₹2,322.

Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles rose around 5%, while Tata Power gained 1.45%. Indian Hotels Company and Tata Consumer Products advanced around 1.2% each, Voltas gained 0.95% and Tata Steel rose 0.3%.

Tata Chemicals was the standout performer, surging around 20%, while Trent gained 0.15%.

The buying interest followed reports that the RBI had rejected Tata Sons' request to deregister as a Core Investment Company, potentially paving the way for a mandatory listing of the holding company.

Tata Sons had sought to exit the

regulatory framework applicable to certain non-banking financial companies after repaying more than ₹21,000 crore of debt in 2024 and becoming debt-free.

The RBI's decision could now bring the Tata Group's apex holding company closer to a public listing, which would represent a significant change for one of India's largest business groups.

Tata Sons holds substantial interests in listed and unlisted companies spanning information technology, automobiles, steel, consumer products, aviation, hospitality and financial services. A listing would also subject the company to greater public-market scrutiny, including regular disclosures and closer examination of capital allocation and investment returns.

Tata Sons listing issue

The issue dates back to the RBI's scale-based regulatory framework for NBFCs introduced in October

its Core Investment Company registration. The RBI's rejection of that application has now revived expectations of a public listing.

The development also comes amid differences among major shareholders over the company's future. Tata Trusts, which holds more than 65% of Tata Sons, has opposed a listing, while the Shapoorji Pallonji Group, with roughly an 18% stake, has supported the idea as a means of unlocking shareholder

stake, which is valued at around ₹25,300 crore based on the reported valuation. Its market capitalisation was around ₹18,722 crore, making the value of its Tata Sons holding particularly significant relative to its own market value.

Other Tata companies holding stakes in Tata Sons include Tata Steel, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, Indian Hotels Company, Tata Power, Tata Consumer Products and Tata Investment Corporation.

Tata Steel and Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles each hold around 3.06%, while Indian Hotels has a 1.11% stake and Tata Power owns 1.65%. Tata Consumer Products and Tata Investment Corporation hold around 0.43% and 0.25%, respectively.

The prospect of a Tata Sons listing has therefore triggered renewed interest in these companies, as investors assess the potential for value unlocking and possible re-rating of their shares.

At around 9:38 am on Tuesday, the NIFTY TATA 25 CAP index was up 1.4%, significantly outperforming the NIFTY50, which had gained around 0.12%.



2021. Tata Sons was subsequently placed in the Upper Layer category in September 2022, a classification carrying a requirement to list on stock exchanges within three years.

Tata Sons had sought to avoid the listing requirement by surrendering

value.

Tata companies with stake in Tata Sons

Seven listed Tata Group companies collectively hold around 11.6% in Tata Sons, according to reports.

Tata Chemicals holds a 2.53%

Oracle layoffs deepen as tech giant pours billions into AI infrastructure

NEW DELHI, SEP Oracle employees in the latest round of job cuts were reportedly informed of their termination through early-morning emails, with some receiving messages around 6 am telling them that the day would be their last working day.

The latest layoffs come as the technology giant continues to spend billions of dollars on artificial intelligence and cloud infrastructure, highlighting the growing tension between heavy investment in AI and pressure to control costs.

Oracle has not disclosed the number of employees affected in the latest round. According to the report, employees were told that their positions were being eliminated as part of a "broader organisational change".

They were also informed that access to Oracle computers, email, voicemail and files would be deactivated and were asked to provide personal email addresses for receiving severance and other separation-related documents.

Oracle spending billions on AI

Oracle spent \$28.5 billion on capital expenditure in the first quarter of fiscal 2027, more than three times the \$8.5 billion spent during the corresponding period a year earlier.

The company has retained its full-year capital expenditure forecast of between \$90 billion and \$95 billion. At the same time, Oracle said it had signed more than \$30 billion in additional AI cloud contracts during the quar-



ter.

The scale of spending has put pressure on the company's finances, with Oracle reporting negative free cash flow of \$5.4 billion for the quarter.

Workforce already cut by 21,000

Oracle's workforce fell by around 21,000 employees, or 13%, during fiscal 2026. Its global headcount stood at approximately 141,000 at the end of May, compared with around 162,000 a year earlier.

workforce reductions.

Layoffs.fyi data cited in the report showed that 128,536 technology employees across 299 companies had been laid off globally by September 10. The figure has already surpassed the 122,606 layoffs recorded across 278 companies during the whole of 2025.

Goldman Sachs has estimated that 6% to 7% of US jobs could be at risk if AI adoption becomes widespread, with software development, customer service and administrative roles among those facing greater exposure.

The company spent about \$1.84 billion on severance payments and other restructuring costs during the year. Oracle has also cited AI adoption and deployment among the factors contributing to workforce reductions.

Its estimated restructuring costs for fiscal 2026 were recently increased by another \$700 million to around \$2.8 billion.

Wider technology job cuts

Oracle's workforce reductions are part of a broader trend across the technology sector.

More than 6,000 technology jobs were reportedly eliminated during the first 10 days of September, with companies including Uber, PayPal, Apple, Zomato and Oracle linked to

UPI payments up to Rs 2,000 to remain free of bank charges

NEW DELHI, SEP: The government has clarified that banks and payment system providers cannot impose charges on Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions of up to Rs 2,000.

According to a gazette notification issued by the Finance Ministry, no direct or indirect charge can be imposed on a person making or receiving payments through UPI within the specified limit.

The notification also covers payments of up to Rs2,000 made through RuPay-powered debit cards. Banks and system providers have been barred from levying charges on such transactions.

The Finance Ministry notified the changes under the Payment and Settle-



ment Systems Act to provide greater clarity on charges applicable to electronic modes of payment. The notification specifically categorises UPI transactions of up to Rs2,000 and RuPay-powered debit card transactions as "electronic modes of payment".

The clarification comes amid concerns following a recent amendment to the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, over the possibility of charges being introduced for UPI transactions.

The government had last month clarified that consumers would not be charged for making payments through UPI. It also said any future merchant discount rate (MDR) would apply only to select merchant transactions above a specified threshold. All person-to-person (P2P) UPI transactions will continue to remain free, while there will be no blanket MDR on merchants, according to the Finance Ministry. The government has further indicated that any applicable charges would be significantly lower than the MDR currently associated with debit and credit card transactions.

The latest notification is aimed at ensuring clarity over the charging framework while protecting users from direct or indirect fees on specified UPI and RuPay transactions.

India's overall trade deficit narrows to \$9.41 billion in August

NEW DELHI, SEP: India's overall trade deficit narrowed to \$9.41 billion in August 2026 from \$11.62 billion in the same month last year, as exports grew at a faster pace than imports, according to official trade data released on Tuesday.

Overall exports, including merchandise and services, rose 25.41% year-on-year to an estimated \$82.68 billion in August, compared with \$65.93 billion in August 2025. Imports increased to \$92.09 billion from \$77.55 billion during the same period.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said the country's export growth momentum had accelerated further in August.

Merchandise exports rose 26.12%

Merchandise exports increased 26.12% in dollar terms to \$43.81 billion in August, compared with \$34.74 billion a year earlier. In rupee terms, merchandise exports rose 37.59% to \$4.18 lakh crore from \$3.04 lakh crore.

Merchandise imports increased to \$70.67 billion from \$61.96 billion during the same period. The merchandise trade deficit consequently stood at \$26.86 billion, slightly lower than \$27.20 billion recorded in August 2025.

Agrawal said the decline in both the overall and merchandise trade deficits was a positive development.

Energy products, including petroleum, crude oil and coal, coke and briquettes, remained among the major contributors to the trade deficit during the first five months of the current fiscal year. Electronic goods also remained a significant driver of import growth.

Services exports remain strong. Services exports were estimated at \$38.87 billion in August, registering 24.61% year-on-year growth from \$31.19 billion a year earlier.



Services imports rose to \$21.42 billion from \$15.59 billion during the same period.

Overall exports in rupee terms were estimated to have grown 36.81% year-on-year to ₹7.89 lakh crore in August, compared with ₹5.77 lakh crore in August 2025.

Gold imports declined sharply to \$2.3 billion in August from \$5.4 billion a year earlier, marking a 57.7% fall.

Engineering, petroleum and chemicals support exports

Agrawal said exports were being supported by a diverse mix of commodities and key trading partners, with engineering goods, petroleum products, chemicals and textiles among the strong performers.

Electronic goods exports increased around 30% during the first five months of the fiscal year, while engineering goods exports grew by more than 20%.

Exports of organic and inorganic chemicals rose 14%, while marine product exports increased by more than 14%.

India also recorded strong export growth to several markets. Exports to China rose 39%, while shipments to Singapore increased by more than

97%, South Africa by 58% and Malaysia by more than 75%.

Exports to BRICS countries grew 13.3% to \$34.5 billion during the first five months of the fiscal year, Agrawal said.

He added that Indian exporters were witnessing strong demand from the US, European Union, BRICS countries and other emerging markets.

April-August exports rose 17.85%

During April-August of the current fiscal year, India's merchandise exports increased 17.85% to \$215.91 billion, while merchandise imports rose 18.21% to \$363 billion.

Agrawal said the growth in exports was not merely value-driven but also reflected higher shipment volumes.

Of the 168 principal commodities tracked by the commerce ministry, 68 recorded growth in both volume and value, indicating that the increase in exports was accompanied by higher manufacturing and shipment volumes.

The latest figures indicate continued resilience in India's external trade, with strong merchandise and services exports helping contain the overall trade deficit despite higher imports.

Asian shares decline as AI stocks fall amid calls to slow development

TOKYO, SEP: Asian shares declined as AI-related stocks came under pressure following calls from leading artificial intelligence companies for a slower pace of development in the interest of safety.

South Korea's Kospi fell 3.3% to 6,684.37, while Japan's Nikkei 225 declined 0.8% to 63,492.99.

SoftBank Group, a major investor in OpenAI, plunged 10.7% after OpenAI CEO Sam Altman backed Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei's calls for the AI industry to slow development to address safety concerns.

Altman also said in an interview with Fortune that OpenAI would not pursue an initial public offering this year as the company continues to focus on safety.

The decline extended across several technology and semiconductor stocks. South Korea's SK Hynix fell 6.4%, while Samsung Electronics declined 4.1%. Japan's Tokyo Elec-

tron dropped 1% and Kioxia Holdings fell 6.4%.

Taiwan's Taiex declined 0.7%, with Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, a leading AI-chip manufacturer, falling 1.2%.

AI safety concerns weigh on markets

Analysts said investors were assessing the potential impact of tighter regulation and a slower pace of AI development.

"SoftBank's share price slide probably reflects the possibility that AI development may be slowed by regulators to try to avoid the worst case outcomes that Anthropic and OpenAI have discussed," said Dan Baker of investment research firm Morningstar. He added that further examples of AI models losing control could also contribute to a slowdown in development.

OpenAI and Anthropic are private

companies that are expected to pursue public listings in the coming months, according to the report.

Meanwhile, not all Asian markets moved lower. Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 0.4% to 24,904.46, while Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gained 0.1% to 8,749.90. The Shanghai Composite edged down less than 0.1% to 3,885.33.

Oil prices surge amid Middle East tensions

Oil prices gained more than 2% as concerns over global supplies intensified amid continuing tensions involving the US, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia shut down a major oil pipeline used to bypass the Strait of Hormuz after the facility was attacked, raising concerns over the security of global oil supplies.

Brent crude, the international benchmark, rose 2.8% to \$107.55 a barrel, while US benchmark crude gained 2.9% to \$102.90.

India escalates probe into Apple's software warranty terms

NEW DELHI, SEP: India's consumer regulator has escalated its investigation into Apple's software warranty terms following complaints that the company's iOS 18 update caused problems with iPhone functionality and left consumers facing costly repair bills.

Documents reviewed by Reuters show that the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has referred the matter to its investigation wing for a "detailed investigation", increasing scrutiny of Apple's warranty practices in one of its fastest-growing markets.

The investigation centres on complaints that the iOS 18 rollout, released in late 2024, was followed by issues including screen-display and microphone malfunctions on some iPhones. Consumers allegedly had to bear repair costs because Apple's limited warranty generally covers hardware and does not provide a warranty for its software.

The regulator had received a large number of complaints about the reported problems and notified Apple last year. On July 29, 2026, the CCPA formally escalated the case for a detailed investigation, according to one of the documents.

The regulator has described the matter as involving alleged violations of consumer rights, raising the possibility of further action against the technology giant.

Apple is contesting the allegations. In an August response to the regulator, the company argued that providing no warranty for software is consistent with global industry practice and maintained that it had found no systemic problems with iOS 18.

Apple also said the software update had undergone stringent testing and that it had not identified any safety concerns or specific issues with iOS 18 in India.

Apple expands iCloud+ in India with Apple TV and Apple Arcade

NEW DELHI, SEP : Apple has expanded its iCloud+ subscription offering in India by adding access to Apple TV and Apple Arcade at no additional cost, giving subscribers cloud storage, entertainment and gaming services under a single subscription.

The expanded offering will be available to iCloud+ subscribers in India from this month. Users can continue to back up, store and share personal content across Apple devices through iCloud while also accessing Apple's streaming content and gaming catalogue.

The subscription can also be shared with up to five family members through Apple's Family Sharing feature.

"We're excited to bring Apple TV and Apple Arcade to iCloud+ users in over 100 countries in one convenient subscription," said Eddy Cue, Apple's senior vice president of Services and Health.

According to Apple, the expanded iCloud+ package is designed to combine cloud storage with access to entertainment and gaming services, providing users with additional value without requiring separate subscriptions for Apple TV and



Apple Arcade.

Apple TV access included Under the expanded offering, iCloud+ subscribers will gain access to Apple TV, including original drama and comedy series, feature films, documentaries and

children's and family programming.

The catalogue includes popular titles such as The Studio, Ted Lasso, Severance and Pluribus. It also includes films such as Academy Award Best Picture winner CODA and F1, which Apple de-

scribes as its highest-grossing sports feature.

Apple said its original films, documentaries and series have collectively received more than 900 awards from over 3,800 nominations.

Apple TV is available through

the Apple TV app on a range of devices, including iPhone, iPad, Mac, Apple TV 4K, compatible smart televisions and gaming consoles. The service is also accessible through the web.

More than 200 games through Apple Arcade

iCloud+ subscribers in India will also receive access to Apple Arcade, Apple's gaming subscription service featuring a catalogue of more than 200 games.

The collection includes titles such as Football Manager 26 Touch, NBA 2K26 Arcade Edition, Madden NFL 27 Arcade Edition, Hello Kitty Island Adventure, Sneaky Sasquatch, Angry Birds Reloaded and Cooking Mama: Cuisine!.

The Arcade catalogue also includes games such as Block Blast+, Subway Surfers+ and Ultimate 8 Ball Pool+.

Apple Arcade games are offered without advertisements or in-app purchases and can be played offline. The service is available across iPhone, iPad, Mac and Apple TV 4K, making it particularly relevant to families and users seeking uninterrupted gaming.

— Agencies

Fujifilm launches palm-sized instax Pal 2 camera



TOKYO, SEP: Fujifilm has announced the launch of the instax Pal 2, a compact digital camera designed to provide a dedicated photography experience in a palm-sized form factor.

The new camera will go on sale in Japan from October 9, 2026, with pricing to be announced. A dedicated camera case is scheduled to launch in late November.

The instax Pal 2 succeeds the original instax Pal, launched in October 2023. Like its predecessor, the new model removes the printing function to maintain a compact size, while allowing users to create instax prints through compatible smartphone printers and hybrid instant cameras.

Fujifilm has redesigned the Pal 2 with a more camera-like operating experience. It features a top-mounted monitor for reviewing images, along with a dedicated viewfinder, control dial and lever. The camera has a semi-matte finish and textured body designed to improve grip and portability.

Improved image quality and creative options

The Pal 2 features a 1/3.06-inch image sensor and records images at up to 10 megapixels, double the five-megapixel resolution of the previous model.

Its internal storage has also been expanded, allowing up to 100 images to be stored on the camera compared with 50 on the original model. Storage can be expanded using a separately sold microSD card.

The camera offers four shooting formats: mini, SQUARE, WIDE and No Frame, giving users greater flexibility in composition. Images can subsequently be printed using compatible instax Link smartphone printers or hybrid cameras from the instax Evo and instax LiPlay series.

— Agencies

Samsung Galaxy S26 FE launched in India at Rs 79,999

NEW DELHI, SEP: Samsung has launched the Galaxy S26 FE in India, adding a new Fan Edition smartphone to its Galaxy S26 lineup with an Exynos 2500 processor, a 4,900mAh battery and a 6.7-inch Dynamic AMOLED 2X display.

The smartphone is available in a single configuration with 8GB RAM and 256GB storage, priced at ₹79,999. It comes in Pistachio, Blueberry and Graphite colour options.

The Galaxy S26 FE runs One UI 9 based on Android 17 and is promised seven years of software and security updates.

Launch offers

Samsung is offering several purchase incentives with the Galaxy S26 FE.

Customers can receive an upgrade bonus of up to Rs8,000 when exchanging an existing smartphone. Select NBFC partners are also offering up to 30 months of no-cost EMI, with an additional upgrade bonus of up to Rs3,000 under applicable offers.

Alternatively, buyers can claim Rs 7,000 cashback using eligible major bank cards or choose a 12-month no-cost bank EMI.

Customers purchasing the handset through Samsung's e-store can also opt for an 18-month bank EMI option.

Display and processor

The Galaxy S26 FE features a 6.7-inch FHD+ Dynamic AMOLED



2X display with a 120Hz refresh rate and peak brightness of up to 1,900 nits.

The smartphone is powered by Samsung's Exynos 2500 chipset, manufactured using a 3nm process. It is paired with 8GB of RAM and 256GB of internal storage.

The device supports dual SIM

functionality with two nano-SIM slots.

Triple rear camera system

For photography, the Galaxy S26 FE has a triple rear camera setup.

The primary camera is a 50-megapixel wide sensor with optical image stabilisation (OIS). — Agencies

Valve says RAM shortage has not changed Steam Deck 2 plans

SEATTLE, SEP: Valve says the ongoing shortage of RAM and rising hardware component costs have not changed its plans for a next-generation Steam Deck, although market conditions could influence when the new handheld gaming PC is launched.



The company has been working towards a successor to the Steam Deck for several years, but has repeatedly indicated that it wants the next device to deliver a clear generational improvement rather than a modest performance upgrade.

Valve software developers Pierre-Loup Griffais and Jeff Leinbaugh recently discussed the company's approach and were asked whether the

ongoing RAM shortage had affected plans for the next Steam Deck. "Not really," Griffais said, explaining that Valve continues to focus on

achieving a clearly defined improvement in performance for a future Steam Deck.

He said the company was assessing current market conditions to determine how and when it could deliver such a product, while maintaining broadly the same goals for the user experience and the device it wants to build.

Price remains a key consideration. Valve's challenge is not simply finding hardware capable of delivering substantially better performance.

The company also needs to achieve a price-to-performance balance that makes a new Steam Deck commercially viable.

Since the original Steam Deck was launched, several manufacturers have introduced more powerful handheld gaming PCs. However, many of those devices come with considerably higher prices.

That has made component costs particularly important for Valve. The global RAM shortage has contributed to higher prices across the technology sector, affecting products ranging from graphics cards to gaming consoles and handheld gaming devices.

Despite those pressures, Valve says the underlying objectives for Steam Deck 2 remain unchanged.

The company's comments suggest that while the target for the next-generation device has not shifted, the timing of its launch could depend on how component prices and available technology develop.

Valve cautious about an expensive successor

Valve has demonstrated with some of its newer hardware products that it is willing to launch devices at higher prices when component costs require it. However, the Steam Deck presents a different challenge because affordability has been central to its appeal. — Agencies

OpenAI acquires smartphone camera technology firm Glass Imaging

NEW DELHI, SEP: OpenAI has acquired smartphone camera technology company Glass Imaging in a deal valued at more than \$300 million, as the artificial intelligence company expands its ambitions beyond AI software and into consumer hardware.

The acquisition, reported by The Wall Street Journal, gives OpenAI access to expertise in computational photography and camera technology that could potentially support future hardware products.

Founded in 2019 and based in Los Altos, California, Glass Imaging had raised around \$30 million from investors before the acquisition. The company was founded by Ziv Attar and Tom Bishop, former Apple engineers who were involved in developing technology behind Apple's Portrait Mode.

Glass Imaging has developed camera technology that uses artificial intelligence and neural networks to improve smartphone photography. Its system is designed to learn the characteristics of individual camera systems and enhance image quality during the image-capture process.

This approach differs from conventional AI-powered photo editing, which typically processes images after they have been captured. Glass Imaging's technology instead seeks to optimise the photograph at the time it is taken, potentially improving details and overall image quality directly through the camera system.

The company's technology has also been used by Chinese smartphone manufacturer Honor, highlighting its experience in developing computational photography solutions for commercial mobile devices.

OpenAI has not publicly disclosed how it intends to use Glass Imaging's technology or whether the company's products will be incorporated into a specific upcoming device.

The acquisition comes as OpenAI increasingly explores opportunities in consumer hardware. The company has previously been linked to plans involving smartphones, earbuds and other AI-powered companion devices.

OpenAI also acquired hardware startup io, founded by former Apple design chief Jony Ive, in a deal valued at \$6.5 billion in 2025. That acquisition strengthened speculation that OpenAI could eventually introduce its own range of consumer hardware.

Glass Imaging's expertise could prove particularly relevant if OpenAI develops devices with advanced camera capabilities. Combining specialised camera hardware knowledge with AI models could allow the company to develop new approaches to photography, imaging and visual interaction.

The acquisition also reflects a broader shift in OpenAI's strategy as it seeks to expand its presence beyond its core AI models and ChatGPT platform.

— Agencies

OPPO Find X10 Pro Max launch set for September 22

BEIJING, SEP: OPPO has announced September 22 as the launch date for its new Find X10 smartphone series in China, with the flagship Find X10 Pro Max expected to draw particular attention for its reported three 200-megapixel rear cameras.

The company will unveil three smartphones — the Find X10 Pro Max, Find X10 and more affordable Find X10 E — at the event. OPPO is also expected to introduce the Watch S2 smartwatch and Enco X4 wireless earbuds alongside the smartphones.

The Find X10 series has been the subject of speculation for several weeks, particularly because of reports that the Pro Max could become the world's first smartphone featuring three 200MP cameras on the rear. Recent leaked renders have also offered an early look at the distinctive camera arrangement.

OPPO has already opened pre-orders for all three smartphones in China, although it has not yet disclosed their prices. The company's listings have revealed the available RAM and storage configurations and colour options ahead of the official launch.

The Find X10 Pro Max and stan-

dard Find X10 are listed with four configurations: 12GB RAM with 256GB storage, 12GB/512GB, 16GB/512GB and 16GB/1TB.

The Find X10 E will have fewer options, with 12GB RAM and

256GB storage as well as 16GB RAM with 512GB storage.

In terms of colours, the standard Find X10 is expected to be offered in Ice Blue and a rose or pink-gold finish. The Pro Max is listed in

Moon White and Warm Orange, while the Find X10 E is expected in Ice Blue. OPPO has also indicated a Light Titanium colour option across the three models.

The Find X10 Pro Max is likely

to be the main attraction of the series because of its camera system and redesigned rear panel. Its camera arrangement represents a departure from the design used on the Find X9 series, returning to a more conventional raised camera plateau.

Images released ahead of the launch show the Pro Max with three prominent camera sensors positioned separately from the flash module. The Find X10 E, meanwhile, appears to have a more compact rear camera arrangement, with its sensors and LED flash positioned closer together.

OPPO has said it will reveal additional details about the three smartphones on September 22.

The company has not yet confirmed whether the Find X10 series will be launched in markets outside China. A wider international release, particularly for the Find X10 Pro Max, remains uncertain.

With its reported combination of three 200MP cameras, high RAM and storage configurations and a new design, the Find X10 Pro Max is shaping up as the most ambitious model in OPPO's upcoming flagship lineup. Pricing, complete specifications and global availability are expected to become clearer at the September 22 launch. — Agencies



India's educated youth need jobs, not just degrees

NEW DELHI, SEP: India's employment challenge is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. The country may be among the world's fastest-growing major economies, but economic growth alone is not providing enough meaningful employment opportunities for its rapidly expanding and increasingly educated youth population.

The frustration was visible on the streets of New Delhi when thousands of young people gathered at Jantar Mantar, demanding accountability from the government and the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. While leaked question papers in medical entrance examinations provided the immediate trigger, the anger reflected a much deeper concern: an education system that often promises opportunity but does not necessarily lead to employment.

India's problem is not simply unemployment. It is the growing mismatch between education, skills and available jobs.

For years, young Indians have been encouraged to pursue degrees as the primary route to a better future. Yet a university qualification increasingly appears to be only the beginning of another struggle — finding employment that matches the qualification. A NITI Aayog report, *Reimagining Skilling for Viksit Bharat@2047*, highlights the seriousness of this mismatch. According to the report cited in the supplied material, only 8.25 per cent of graduates are employed in roles aligned with their qualifications. The remaining 91.75 per cent either acquire additional skills or work in

positions below their qualification level.

That is a troubling statistic for a country seeking to become a developed economy.

The problem begins much earlier, in classrooms where theoretical knowledge often takes precedence over practical exposure. The NITI Aayog report says 80 per cent of higher education students identify inadequate practical experience and industry exposure as a major problem.

A degree without relevant skills and workplace exposure can therefore become little more than a certificate.

The employment figures are equally concerning. The report cited puts graduate unemployment at 13 per cent, substantially above the national unemployment rate of 3.2 per cent. Among women graduates, the rate is reported at 20.4 per cent.

These numbers should force policymakers and educational institutions to reconsider what higher education is expected to achieve.

The answer, however, cannot simply be to add more skill-development courses. Skills are important, but skills alone cannot create employment. If the economy does not generate enough productive, reasonably secure jobs, even a highly skilled workforce will continue to face intense competition for limited opportunities.

India therefore needs a two-sided strategy: make education more relevant to the workplace while simultaneously expanding the supply of quality employment.

There is another structural weak-

ness. A NITI Aayog paper cited in the supplied material estimates that only 23 per cent of India's workforce are regular wage or salaried employees, while 19 per cent are casual workers and about 58 per cent are self-employed or micro-entrepreneurs.

Self-employment can certainly be a strength of an economy. But it becomes problematic when it represents necessity rather than choice — when people enter low-productivity activities because suitable salaried employment is unavailable.

The credibility of unemployment measurements also deserves attention. A 2025 Reuters poll cited in the source material found that a majority of independent economists surveyed believed official unemployment figures did not fully capture the extent of joblessness and underemployment. Questions have also been raised about definitions that count people as employed even when they work for very limited periods.

The debate over statistics should not distract from the larger reality.

India's young population is its greatest potential economic advantage. But that demographic dividend can become a demographic burden if education keeps producing expectations that the economy cannot fulfil. Young Indians do not need more certificates merely for the sake of certificates. They need relevant education, practical experience, career guidance, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship opportunities and, above all, an economy capable of creating productive jobs. — Agencies

Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue 2027 launched to engage youth nationwide

NEW DELHI, SEP: The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, through Mera Yuva Bharat (MY Bharat), has launched the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue (VBYLD) 2027, a nationwide youth engagement initiative aimed at encouraging young citizens to contribute ideas and perspectives towards the vision of a Viksit Bharat.

Addressing a press conference in Goa, MY Bharat Goa Director G. S. Raghav and Assistant Director Samyek Meshram urged young people across the state to participate in the Viksit Bharat Quiz, which marks the first stage of the initiative.

The online quiz is open from August 17 to September 30, 2026, through the MY Bharat portal. Participants who qualify will advance to subsequent stages, where they will have opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge, leadership abilities, innovative thinking and ideas for India's development.

The Viksit Bharat Essay Challenge, the second stage, will be conducted from October 5 to 19, 2026. Shortlisted participants will be required to submit a 500-word essay on the designated Viksit Bharat theme.

The third stage, the District Championship, is scheduled from November 10 to 16, 2026. The top 50 essays from each district will be shortlisted for an in-person presentation.

The fourth stage will involve selected participants presenting their ideas before a jury at the State/UT level. This will be followed by the national-level round scheduled from November 17 to December 7, 2026.

The culmination of the initiative will be the National VBYLD 2027, scheduled to be held in New Delhi from January 10 to 12, 2027. Selected young participants will get an opportunity to present their ideas at the national platform, while regional finalists will have an opportunity to present before the Prime Minister.

Raghav called upon young people across Goa to actively participate in the Viksit Bharat Quiz through the official MY Bharat platform and become part of the nationwide initiative.

The programme seeks to encourage young citizens to move beyond being beneficiaries of development and become active contributors and partners in India's journey towards Viksit Bharat.

The initiative provides a structured platform for young people to put forward their ideas on the country's development while testing their knowledge, creativity, leadership capabilities and ability to present solutions to national challenges. — Agencies

Ladakh Higher Education Secretary visits GDC Zaskar

Blazing Tales News Service

ZANSKAR, SEP: Secretary, Higher Education, Union Territory of Ladakh, Bhanu Prabha on Tuesday visited Government Degree College (GDC) Zaskar and interacted with students, teaching faculty and staff to review the academic and administrative functioning of the institution.

During the visit, Prabha sought feedback on the academic environment, facilities, ongoing initiatives and issues being faced by the college community. Students, faculty members and staff shared their concerns and suggestions with the Secretary.

Principal GDC Zaskar Dr Amjad Ali Abbasi made a detailed presentation highlighting the college's academic achievements, progress, innovative initiatives and key challenges.

He briefed the Secretary on initiatives aimed at expanding opportunities for students in skill development, vocational education, experiential learning, entrepreneurship and adventure activities, besides other student-centric programmes.

The presentation also highlighted initiatives designed according to the distinctive geographical and socio-economic conditions of Zaskar. These included the Zaskar Mar initiative, mushroom cultivation in collaboration with the HVT Foundation and promotion of adventure tourism.

The Principal also apprised the Secretary of various challenges requiring administrative intervention.

Bhanu Prabha appreciated the achievements and developmental initiatives of GDC Zaskar and acknowledged the efforts of the Principal, faculty and students towards strengthening the institution and promoting quality higher education in the region.

During the visit, the Secretary inspected the college campus and reviewed academic and administrative facilities. She also took stock of ongoing construction and infrastructure development works and assessed their progress.

She reviewed the facilities being developed for students and the college community, underscoring the importance of strengthening infrastructure alongside academic development.

CEO Doda conducts surprise inspections of schools

Blazing Tales News Service

DODA SEP: Chief Education Officer (CEO) Doda Bhushan Kumar Pathak conducted surprise inspections of Government Higher Secondary School Jatheli and Government Higher Secondary School

to maintain regularity in their studies. He urged the students to make optimum use of the facilities, learning resources and opportunities available in their respective schools.

The CEO also inspected the cleanliness and upkeep of the school premises and emphasised the need to maintain proper hygiene, discipline

room activities remain focused on students' academic development and that their progress is regularly assessed. Pathak also interacted with students to understand their academic requirements and encouraged them



Mohalla Zone Gundna to assess their academic and administrative functioning and review the facilities available to students.

During the inspections, the CEO interacted with teaching staff and students and reviewed staff atten-

and safety standards. He stressed that a clean, safe and disciplined school environment is essential for the well-being of both students and staff and for creating conducive conditions for effective learning.

Samba DLTFC approves 24 self-employment projects under JKREGP

Blazing Tales News Service

SAMBA, SEP: The District Level Task Force Committee (DLTFC) under the Jammu and Kashmir Rural Employment Generation Programme (JKREGP) on Tuesday approved 24 self-employment projects aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and creating sustainable livelihood opportunities for local youth. A meeting of the committee was convened at the DC Office Complex, Samba, under the overall supervision of Deputy Commissioner Ayushi Sudan and was chaired by Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Champa Devi. At the outset, District Officer, Jammu and Kashmir Khadi and Village Industries Board (KVIB), Vinod Kumar briefed the committee on the targets under JKREGP and the applications received for financial assistance.

The meeting was attended by the Lead District Manager, State Bank



of India, Cluster Heads and Regional Head of J&K Bank and J&K Grameen Bank, besides other concerned officers.

The committee interacted directly with the applicants and conducted a detailed appraisal of their proposed projects. The proposals were assessed on parameters including technical feasibility, financial viability and their potential for sustainable operations in the local market.

A total of 32 applications were scrutinised during the meeting. Of these, 24 cases were approved for financial assistance, while eight applicants remained absent.

Speaking during the meeting, ADDC Champa Devi stressed the importance of timely financial assistance for the successful implementation of government-sponsored self-employment schemes.

She directed representatives of the

participating financial institutions to address procedural bottlenecks and adhere strictly to the prescribed timelines for sanctioning and disbursing loans to the approved beneficiaries. The ADDC also emphasised the need for close coordination between implementing agencies and banks to ensure that eligible beneficiaries receive financial support without unnecessary delays. She said timely assistance would en-

able the beneficiaries to establish their proposed enterprises at the earliest and contribute to strengthening entrepreneurship and employment opportunities at the local level. The committee's approval of the 24 projects is expected to provide financial support to aspiring entrepreneurs in Samba and encourage more young people to explore self-employment as a sustainable livelihood option.

India's education crisis is becoming an economic crisis

NEW DELHI, SEP: India's demographic dividend has long been described as one of the country's greatest advantages in the 21st century. Millions of young people entering the workforce every year are expected to drive consumption, innovation, productivity and economic growth.

But a demographic dividend can deliver results only when young people receive quality education, acquire relevant skills and find productive employment.

India's growing education crisis raises serious questions about whether that promise is being fulfilled.

The protests triggered by the alleged leak of the NEET-UG 2026 examination paper have brought the issue into sharp focus. Thousands of young people gathered at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, demanding accountability and changes to the examination system. While examination irregularities may have provided the immediate trigger, the anger reflects a wider anxiety among students and families who invest years of effort and substantial amounts of money in the pursuit of education and professional careers.

For millions of Indian students, competitive examinations are not simply tests of knowledge. They represent the gateway to a better future.

When examinations are cancelled, papers are leaked, results are delayed or evaluation processes are questioned, the consequences extend well beyond the examination hall. Students lose valuable time, families face additional financial pressure and confidence in public institutions suffers.

More importantly, the economy also pays a price.

India is attempting to benefit from a large young population at a time when the country is also facing a serious mismatch between education



Education Crisis 2026: Protests Signal a Looming Economic Disaster for India's Youth

and employment. Young people may spend years obtaining degrees and preparing for competitive examinations, only to discover that their qualifications do not translate easily into appropriate employment.

This represents a significant loss of human capital.

According to figures cited in the source material, India has nearly 367 million people in the 15-29 age group, while youth unemployment remains substantially higher than overall unemployment. Graduate unemployment is particularly concerning, with young people frequently struggling to find positions corresponding to their education and skills.

Every year spent waiting for an examination, admission, qualification or government recruitment opportu-

nity is potentially a year of productive work lost.

The consequences accumulate. Delayed entry into employment can mean lower lifetime earnings, reduced tax contributions and slower accumulation of professional experience. At the national level, the opportunity cost can become enormous.

The coaching economy
India's examination-driven education system has also created a vast coaching industry. The coaching sector, particularly in competitive-examination hubs such as Kota, has become a major parallel economy.

For families, however, coaching is often not an optional expendi-

ture. It is increasingly perceived as necessary to compete for a limited number of seats and opportunities.

This creates another contradiction. Families spend heavily on coaching while students devote enormous amounts of time to examination preparation. The result can be an education culture dominated by competition, memorisation and examination performance rather than practical learning, creativity and employable skills.

The problem is particularly visible in examinations such as NEET, where millions of students compete for a comparatively limited number of medical seats.

Coaching institutions provide employment and educational services, but the extraordinary dependence on them also exposes weaknesses in the for-

mal education system. When students feel that classroom education alone is insufficient to succeed in major examinations, the credibility of the broader education system inevitably comes under scrutiny.

The economic cost

The education crisis cannot be separated from India's employment challenge.

Industries need skilled workers, healthcare needs doctors and other professionals, technology companies require specialised talent, and manufacturing requires technically trained workers. Yet a large number of young people remain trapped in a cycle of degrees, examinations, coaching and repeated attempts at securing limited opportunities.

— Agencies

NAPS Mela organised at ITI Samba to promote apprenticeship opportunities

Blazing Tales News Service
SAMBHA, SEP: The Industrial Training Institute (ITI) Samba, in

ness about NAPS. He called for maximum registration of youth and industrial establishments on the

ity to young people, while also helping industries develop a skilled workforce.



collaboration with the District Administration Samba, organised a District Level National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) Mela at Government ITI, Samba.

The mela witnessed active participation from more than 140 students and ITI trainees, along with representatives of seven reputed industrial establishments.

The Principal, ITI Samba, attended the event as the Chief Guest and stressed the need for greater aware-

NAPS portal within the stipulated period to help bridge the gap between industry and education.

An awareness session was conducted by Romesh Singh, Vocational Instructor, ITI Samba, who delivered a detailed PowerPoint presentation explaining the key features, objectives, financial benefits and registration process under NAPS.

He highlighted how the scheme provides stipend support, practical training and enhanced employabil-

A major highlight of the mela was on-the-spot registration of candidates and establishments, along with the processing of new apprenticeship contracts through the NAPS portal.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks. The Principal, ITI Samba, assured that more job-oriented and skill-development programmes would be organised in the future to provide young people with greater employment and apprenticeship opportunities.

8.7 crore Indian youth not studying, working receiving training: NITI Aayog report

Blazing Tales News Service
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER: An estimated 8.7 crore Indian youth aged 15 to 29 are not studying, working or receiving training, according to a recent NITI Aayog report, highlighting the need for affordable and subsidised skilling programmes to promote self-employment and align training with

The Aayog defined NEET youth as those aged 15 to 29 who are not engaged in education, employment or training, including unemployed youth.

Need for affordable skilling

The report said NEET youth face constraints arising from the absence of income and the financial burden associated with their previous edu-

cation. It noted that students, particularly those from low-income households, often cannot afford additional paid skilling alongside college expenses and private tuition.

The report said India's ambition of achieving Viksit Bharat by 2047 depends on enabling citizens to learn, earn and advance continuously, making skilling a central component of the country's development strategy. Since 2014-15, more than 7.67 crore individuals have been trained under various skilling initiatives, the report added.

Limited exposure to practical learning and industry-aligned training continues to constrain the employability of formally educated youth, the report said.

The Aayog also highlighted a gap between formal education and employment, noting that only 8.25 per cent of graduates are employed in roles aligned with their qualifications.

The report highlighted the need for mid-career reskilling, self-employment opportunities and training aligned with local demand and emerging sectors.

The report noted that many students from low-income families seek formal employment or other sources of income after graduation to support their families. Some may take low-paying jobs for financial stability, while others struggle to transition into employment and eventually become NEET.

Low alignment between education and jobs

NITI Aayog also highlighted a gap between formal education and employment, noting that only 8.25 per cent of graduates are employed in roles aligned with their qualifications.

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local demand and emerging sectors. The report, titled Reimagining Skilling for Viksit Bharat@2047, based its estimate on data from the 78th round of the National Sample Survey conducted in 2021.

NITI Aayog categorised India's workforce and learners into five broad segments — schooling, tertiary education, formal and informal work, youth not in education, employment or training (NEET), and women.

For workers and NEET youth, the report highlighted the need for mid-career reskilling, self-employment opportunities and training aligned with local demand and emerging sectors.

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ADC Kulgam chairs review meeting on NAPS

Blazing Tales News Service

KULGAM, SEP: A meeting to review the implementation of the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) was held in Kulgam under the chairmanship of Additional Deputy Commissioner Kulgam Vikar Ahmad Giri.

The meeting focused on expanding apprenticeship opportunities for local youth, registering eligible establishments, mobilising candidates and increasing the participation of government departments, educational institutions and local industries under NAPS.

The ADC directed all concerned departments to identify suitable apprenticeship opportunities and encourage eligible establishments to register on the apprenticeship portal. He also stressed the need for effective coordination among stakeholders to ensure timely and effective implementation of the scheme.

Officers were further directed to undertake awareness and mobilisation activities and submit regular progress reports on establishment registrations and apprentice engagements.

The meeting emphasised the importance of NAPS in enhancing the skills, employability and livelihood opportunities of local youth.

The meeting was attended by CEO Kulgam Fayaz Ahmad Mir, Lead District Manager Iftikhar Ahmad Padder, SE R&B Javid Ahmad, Executive Engineers from R&B, Jal Shakti, Irrigation and KPDCL, Principal Government Polytechnic, AD Handicrafts & Handloom, Superintendent ITI Kulgam, District Officer KVIB and DPM NRLM.

Divisional Commissioner Kashmir pushes departments to expand NAPS opportunities

Blazing Tales News Service

SRINAGAR, SEP: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg has directed government departments, public sector undertakings (PSUs), MSMEs and contracting agencies to accelerate implementation of the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) and significantly expand apprenticeship opportunities for youth across the Kashmir Valley.

Chairing a review meeting, Garg said clear department-wise targets had already been fixed under the scheme and stressed that there was no room for delays in achieving them.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioners, Director Skill Development Dr Owais Ahmad, and officials from the Airport Authority of India, NHPC, BEACON, KPDCL, Industries and Commerce Department, Excise Department and other agencies.

Officials were informed that NAPS aims to strengthen industry-linked skill development through apprenticeship training across 261 designated trades in 12 strategic sectors, creating pathways for employment and workforce development.

Garg urged all eligible departments, corporations, PSUs, MSMEs and contractors to register on the NAPS portal and engage apprentices in accordance with prescribed norms.

He also directed executing agencies to ensure project-wise registration to broaden participation under the scheme.

Focus on youth registration

Omar Abdullah lays foundation stone for Kashmir Government Polytechnic works

Blazing Tales News Service

SRINAGAR, SEP: Chief Minis-

Kishtwar, Ramban, Kulgam and Kupwara.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief

“We cannot give government jobs to everyone. If we have to prepare our children for the future, we have

with emerging market requirements and employment opportunities in sectors including tourism, agriculture, horticulture, manufacturing, construction, healthcare and technology.

The Chief Minister called for regular reviews of courses and training programmes in ITIs and polytechnics so that outdated skills and equipment can be replaced with training and facilities relevant to contemporary industry requirements.

He said the level of attention given to universities should also be extended to the skill-development network of ITIs and polytechnics, particularly in terms of infrastructure, training quality and modern equipment.

Focus on local employment

Highlighting the employment potential emerging from major projects in J&K, Omar Abdullah said the skill-development ecosystem must be designed around the requirements of upcoming investments and industries.

He said the government would work over the next three years to

strengthen the network of skill-development institutions and improve their infrastructure and quality.

The Chief Minister also stressed the need to create greater employment opportunities for local youth in industries and projects coming to J&K. He said companies should be encouraged to employ trained local youth before looking outside the region for skilled manpower.

J&K's objective, he said, should not merely be to send labour outside the region but to prepare skilled professionals capable of securing better-paying employment and competing in international markets.

Students with overseas placements felicitated

Omar Abdullah also felicitated students who secured overseas placements, highlighting the government's commitment to strengthening technical education and creating meaningful employment opportunities for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir.

Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, MLA Lal Chowk Sheikh Ahsan etc.



ter Omar Abdullah laid the foundation stone for developmental works at Kashmir Government Polytechnic, Srinagar, and e-inaugurated infrastructure upgrades worth ₹4.20 crore across Government Polytechnics in

Minister called for greater focus on skill development and vocational education, stressing that preparing young people for the future job market must go hand in hand with formal education.

to give them the skills to compete in the job market, whether in Jammu and Kashmir, elsewhere in the country or abroad,” Omar Abdullah said.

He emphasised that skill-development programmes must be aligned

Atal Dooloo reviews implementation of PM-SETU scheme in J&K

Blazing Tales News Service

JAMMU, SEP: Chief Secretary Atal Dooloo chaired the first UT-level Steering Committee meeting to review and steer the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs (PM-SETU) scheme in Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting focused on making skill education more responsive to industry requirements and emerging employment opportunities in the Union Territory.

The meeting was attended by the Additional Chief Secretary, Finance; Commissioner Secretary, Education; Secretary, Skill Development Department; Managing Director, J&K Skill Development Mission; Director, Skill Development Department; Labour Commissioner; representatives of industrial bodies and other concerned officers.

Dooloo described PM-SETU as a strong model for improving skill education and stressed that the upgradation of Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) should go beyond physical infrastructure.

He emphasised the need to create

an industry-aligned ecosystem capable of equipping J&K's youth with skills that can translate into quality

ways for trained youth.

He called for closer collaboration between the government, industry

partment, Kumar Rajeev Ranjan, gave a detailed presentation on the scheme, outlining its proposed institutional architecture, funding pat-

Under the proposed model, 10 Government ITIs will be upgraded into modern, industry-oriented skill institutions.

These institutions will be organised into two hub-and-spoke clusters, with one Hub ITI in each administrative division serving as a central technology and resource centre for four Spoke ITIs.

The upgraded Hub ITIs will provide access to advanced technologies, modern training infrastructure, incubation facilities and capacity-building support for trainers. The scheme has set an institutional placement target of 75 per cent.

Industry-led model to guide training

A major feature of PM-SETU is its industry-led implementation framework, under which Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) will facilitate greater industry participation in institutional governance, course selection, technology adoption, training and placement.

The model is intended to ensure that training remains demand-driven rather than supply-driven, with courses periodically aligned with market trends and actual manpower requirements.



and well-paid employment.

The Chief Secretary further stressed that industry partners selected for the initiative should contribute not only financially but also bring technology, domain expertise, modern training practices, exposure to industrial processes and credible employment path-

and training institutions in designing courses and training programmes so that the skills imparted through ITIs remain aligned with actual industry requirements.

Rs 482 crore investment proposed over five years

Secretary, Skill Development De-

tern, upgradation plan and implementation roadmap for J&K.

He informed the committee that PM-SETU envisages an indicative investment of around ₹482 crore over five years in J&K, with ₹241 crore earmarked for each hub-and-spoke cluster.



Rs 337 lakh boost for Mankote heritage sites

Blazing Tales News Service

MANKOTE, SEP: In a major push to promote heritage and religious tourism in the Pir Panjal region, Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs Javed Ahmed Rana announced development initiatives for key heritage and religious sites in Mankote.

Addressing a gathering in the area, Rana said Rs 173 lakh has been earmarked for the development of the historic Ramkund Temple, a prominent heritage and religious site.

Similarly, 78 lakh has been provided for the development of Lower Devta, while 86 lakh has been earmarked for Chotey Shah. Together, the three projects represent an investment of Rs337 lakh.

"These places hold immense religious, cultural and heritage significance and attract a large number of pilgrims and visitors," the minister said.



He said systematic development of the sites would help preserve the region's cultural heritage while promoting religious and heritage tourism in Mankote and adjoining areas. Improved infrastructure and better facilities for pilgrims and visitors, he added, would strengthen the tourism potential of the region and create opportunities for local employ-

ment and economic activity.

Rana said the government was committed to promoting tourism by developing religious, cultural and heritage destinations across the region.

He added that the development of Ramkund Temple, Lower Devta and Chotey Shah would help bring the sites onto the tour-

ism map and encourage more visitors to explore the area's heritage and natural beauty. During his address, the minister also apprised the public of various development projects, works and schemes currently being implemented in the area. He highlighted new schemes and projects approved or proposed for execu-

tion during the 2026-27 financial year, saying sustained efforts were being made to ensure comprehensive and balanced development of the region. Rana said particular emphasis was being placed on strengthening basic infrastructure, improving public amenities and creating new opportunities for the local population.

Traffic Police Rural Jammu's two-week special drive concludes with 8,675 violators booked

Blazing Tales News Service

JAMMU, SEP: Traffic Police Rural Jammu has concluded a two-week Awareness-cum-Enforcement Drive targeting traffic violations involving two-wheelers across Kathua, Samba, Rajouri and Poonch, with 8,675 challans issued during the campaign.

The intensive drive was conducted from September 1 to September 14, 2026, in view of the significant involvement of two-wheelers in road accidents across the four districts.

According to an analysis of road accident data conducted by Traffic Police Rural Jammu for the period from January 1 to July 31, 2026, a total of 699 road accidents were reported in the four districts. These accidents resulted in 88 deaths and injuries to 1,001 people.

The analysis found that two-wheelers were involved in 309 accidents, accounting for 44 per cent of all reported accidents during the period.

Two-wheelers were also involved in 39 fatal accidents, representing 44 per cent of all fatal crashes. A total of 384 people were injured in accidents involving two-wheelers, while 144 cases involved single-vehicle accidents involving two-wheelers.

On national highways, 102 accidents, or 41 per cent, involved two-wheelers, while on other roads, 210 accidents, or 47 per cent, were linked to two-wheelers.

The data also showed that 27 per

cent of accident victims were below 26 years of age. Of the 699 accidents recorded during the period,

districts.

During the drive, 267 awareness programmes were organised at educational institutions, tuition centres,

one each at a government degree college in the four districts. The programmes included symposiums and PowerPoint presentations aimed

violations dominate enforcement action

Alongside the awareness activities, Traffic Police carried out strict enforcement against traffic violators.

Of the 8,675 challans issued, 5,767 riders were booked for riding without helmets, while 1,152 pillion riders were penalised for not wearing helmets.

Another 1,106 violations involved triple riding.

The enforcement drive also resulted in action against 188 riders for using mobile phones while driving, 260 for dangerous driving and 146 for driving without a valid licence.

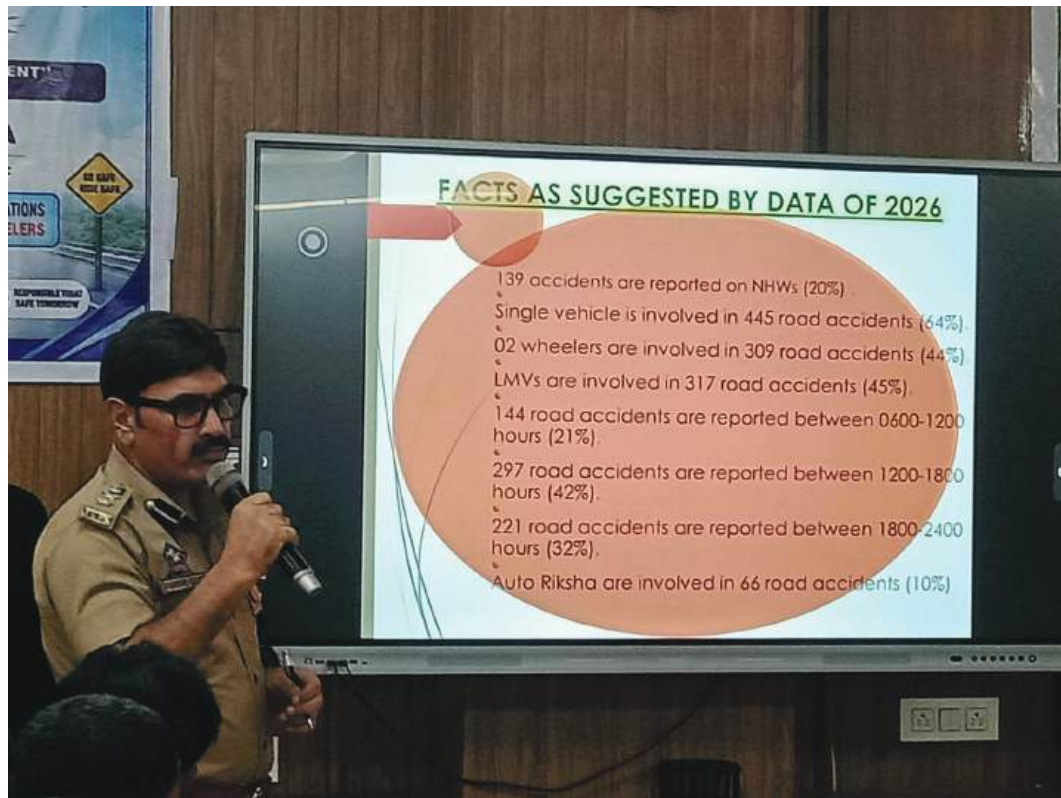
Three minors were found illegally driving two-wheelers, resulting in the seizure of their vehicles. In addition, 50 riders were booked for illegal vehicle modifications.

Overall, 187 vehicles were seized for various traffic violations during the special drive.

'No-Challan, Only Counseling' initiative

As part of its road-safety outreach, Traffic Police Rural Jammu also conducted on-road counselling sessions in Rajouri and Poonch, where dedicated canopies were set up to interact directly with road users.

The initiative followed the "No-Challan, Only Counseling" approach. Two-wheeler riders and other road users were invited to sit under the canopies and were counselled on helmet use, traffic discipline, safe driving practices and the consequences of risky road behaviour.



445, or 64 per cent, involved single vehicles.

267 awareness programmes conducted

To address the concern, Traffic Police Rural Jammu conducted a comprehensive awareness and enforcement campaign across all four

bus stands, playgrounds, libraries and other public places. The programmes focused particularly on educating young people about road safety rules and provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act.

Four mega road-safety awareness programmes were personally conducted by SSP Traffic Rural Jammu,

at creating awareness among students.

Traffic personnel also held interaction sessions with

road users, made regular public announcements through public-address systems and distributed pamphlets containing accident statistics and road-safety guidelines. Helmet



CADD Jammu team visits Himachal Pradesh, Punjab to study modern irrigation practices

Blazing Tales News Service

JAMMU, SEP: A two-member team of officers from the Command Area Development Department (CADD), Jammu, undertook an exposure visit to Himachal Pradesh and Punjab to study modern and efficient irrigation practices and explore their possible replication in the command areas of Jammu province.

The team comprised Project Officer Soil and Water Management Ram Gopal Sharma and ASCO Sarore Dr Aadil Rashid.

During their visit to Himachal Pradesh, the officers inspected the Nadaun Medium Irrigation Project of the state's Jal Shakti Department. The project lifts water from the Beas River and conveys it to otherwise dry areas for irrigation.

The project has enabled irrigation across approximately 3,000 hectares through a Pressurized Pipe Irrigation Conveyance (PPIC) system, providing assured irrigation to agricultural fields that previously depended on limited and uncertain water sources.

The project demonstrated the potential of lifting water from perennial rivers and transporting it efficiently to dry command areas.



The team also visited the HP Shiva Project, implemented by the Horticulture Department, where micro-ir-

rigation systems integrated with SCADA and IoT technologies have

been established to improve the efficient use of available water.

The system demonstrates the ben-

efits of controlled irrigation at the field level, with potential to improve water-use efficiency and agricultural productivity.

The project focuses on high-value subtropical fruit crops instead of traditional low-value crops. It aims to increase farmers' incomes by promoting high-value fruit production, utilising barren land and combining assured irrigation with seed-to-market support.

At Talwara in Punjab, the team visited the Kandi Community Micro Irrigation Project, where solar photovoltaic energy is used to pump canal water through a pressurised pipe irrigation conveyance system.

The water is then supplied to the command area through micro-irrigation systems, including both sprinkler and drip irrigation.

The visit provided the CADD Jammu team with insights into integrating conventional canal water sources with modern pressurised conveyance systems, renewable-energy-based pumping and field-level micro-irrigation.

The exposure visit is expected to help the department assess suitable modern irrigation technologies and practices for adoption in the command areas of Jammu province.

Wildlife Department discusses measures to restrict single-use plastic in protected areas

Blazing Tales News Service

JAMMU, SEP: Regional Wildlife Warden Jammu Sandeep Kumar on Monday convened a meeting to discuss measures to minimise and restrict the use of single-use plastic in

mortality, pollute water sources and degrade natural habitats.

He directed Wildlife Wardens to sensitise visitors, tourists, trekkers and local communities about avoiding single-use plastic while entering protected areas and wildlife habitats.

He further directed Wildlife Wardens to urge visitors to follow "Leave No Trace" principles while visiting protected areas, wetlands, wildlife habitats and nature trails.

The meeting also emphasised promoting responsible tourism, encour-



protected areas and promote environmentally responsible alternatives for the protection of wildlife, forests, wetlands and natural ecosystems.

The Regional Wildlife Warden emphasised that plastic waste poses a serious threat to wildlife and the environment. Plastic discarded in forests, wetlands, water bodies and protected areas can be ingested by wild animals, cause injuries and

They were also asked to encourage visitors to carry reusable water bottles and bags and ensure proper collection and disposal of waste.

"Protection of wildlife cannot be achieved without protecting their habitats. Every individual can contribute by reducing plastic use and keeping our natural areas clean and free from plastic waste," Sandeep Kumar said.

aging community participation and creating awareness among the younger generation about the harmful effects of plastic pollution.

The department reiterated its commitment to maintaining clean, healthy and plastic-free wildlife habitats and urged all stakeholders to work together to safeguard Jammu's rich biodiversity for present and future generations.

J&K POLICE KATHUA AND ORNAMENTS WORTH Rs. 2,00,000/- RECOVERED

KATHUA, SEPT: J&K Police Kathua under the overall supervision of SSP Kathua Ms. Mohita Sharma-IPS has achieved major success by solving a theft case registered at Police Station Billawar. Stolen gold ornaments viz. One Gold Locket, One Gold Chain and One Gold Ring total worth approximately Rs. 2,00,000/- were recovered and 01 accused involved in the crime was arrested. "On 08.09.2026, a complaint was received from complainant namely Rajesh Kumar S/o Madan Lal R/o Dharamkot, Tehsil Billawar, District Kathua regarding theft of gold ornaments from his house at Dharamkot. On this, Case FIR No. 189/2026 U/S 331(4)/305 BNS was registered at PS Billawar and investigation was taken up. "During the investigation, a police team of PS Billawar led by SHO PS Billawar under the supervision of SP Operations Upper Kathua & SDPO Billawar with the help of technical assistance and human intelligence, identified and arrested the accused namely Yash Paul S/o Sansar Chand R/o Sujampur, District Pathankot, Punjab. "During further investigation, On the disclosure of accused, the police team recovered stolen gold ornaments i.e. One Gold Locket, One Gold Chain and One Gold Ring worth approximately Rs. 2,00,000/-. Further investigation is underway. "District Police Kathua reiterates its commitment to ensuring safety and security of the public and remains steadfast in taking stringent action against criminals and anti-social elements.



CLUJ VC bats for multi-disciplinary research, skills and future-ready students

VIKAS SHARMA

STATING that the launch of multi-disciplinary research and student-friendly initiatives across all constituent colleges, where students have direct contact with faculty members, are among the University's major priorities, Prof. K. S. Chandrasekar, Vice-Chancellor, Cluster University of Jammu (CLUJ), stressed the need to enhance students' skills and competencies to make them future job-ready.

In an exclusive and insightful conversation with Blazing Tales Editor and Senior Journalist Vikas Sharma, Prof. Chandrasekar spoke in detail about the steps being taken under his leadership and the future initiatives envisioned to make Cluster University of Jammu a role model in academic excellence, innovation and skill enhancement. He also shared his vision for strengthening quality education and preparing students for the emerging opportunities and challenges of a rapidly changing world.

Multi-disciplinary Research

"My sole aim is to transform Cluster University of Jammu into the best multi-disciplinary research centre and, with the kind of initiatives we are taking in all five constituent colleges, I am pretty much sure that one day we shall achieve this objective," CLUJ Vice-Chancellor Prof. (Dr.) K. S. Chandrasekar told Blazing Tales Editor.

"All the five constituent colleges of CLUJ are like jewels which are operating independently. Ever since I have taken over as the Head of this wonderful university, my only aim is to make all the colleges the best ones for our students, who will not only study there but also become future-ready to face all challenges that come across their way to set up their careers in respective fields," Dr. K. S. Chandrasekar said.

"In fact, the biggest advantage we have right now



Blazing Tales Editor and senior journalist Vikas Sharma in conversation with the Vice Chancellor, Cluster University of Jammu (CLUJ), Prof. K. S. Chandrasekar

is that the students are interacting with the faculty at regular intervals, not just regarding their queries but also regarding their careers as well, which I think is a positive sign. We are also focusing on streamlining the overall system, especially the examinations and the declaration of results on time, to avoid any delay in the admission process," the CLUJ Vice-Chancellor maintained.

New Programmes Launched

"In the session 2026-27, we have launched Integrated M.Sc. Programmes, Semiconductor Skilling Programme in collaboration with Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras, besides the inauguration of the Department of Vedic Studies," Prof. (Dr.) K. S. Chandrasekar told. He added that the CLUJ Kulgeet album was also released.

"Another major initiative which the varsity has taken is the launching of 'Design Your Degree' (DYD) Programme, which is a flexible, four-year undergraduate course model aligned with policies like NEP 2020. It lets students mix subjects from different fields, build custom study paths, and focus on practical work instead of following rigid, traditional syllabi."

"In the new 2027-28 session, we are planning to

launch programmes in languages comprising Urdu, Punjabi, Dogri and Sanskrit," the CLUJ Vice-Chancellor stated.

Enrollment Increased

"The launch of new integrated programmes has resulted in an increase in enrollment, with many students opting for these programmes, which I think is a big success. Launching new programmes as per students' interests and the future job market definitely helps J&K youth become employable with the kind of skills required," Prof. (Dr.) K. S. Chandrasekar said.

"The BBA-BCA Programme, which earlier did not have the approval of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), has now got approval. The syllabus has been changed as per AICTE. Approval of such programmes is proof that CLUJ is leaving no stone unturned to make it a centre of excellence in skill enhancement," he added.

First Convocation Ceremony

"Preparations are also in full swing to conduct the first-ever Convocation ceremony of CLUJ, thereby marking a historic milestone in the University's academic journey since its establishment," the Vice-Chancellor told.

"To initiate the planning process, a meeting of the newly constituted Pre-Preparatory Committee was held recently in my office. The meeting focused on developing a compre-

hensive action plan and strategic roadmap to ensure the successful organisation of the University's maiden convocation. The committee comprises senior university administrators, Deans, Principals of Constituent Colleges and academic leaders entrusted with coordinating various aspects of the prestigious event," he added.

CLUJ Full-Fledged Campus

"To construct a full-fledged campus, a piece of land measuring 490-495 kanals in Samba district has been allotted to CLUJ by the J&K Government. Though the work is yet to start on the construction of the campus, we are hopeful that it will start soon to have our own establishment," Prof. (Dr.) K. S. Chandrasekar said.

"Once we have our full-fledged campus ready, we shall set up a School of Engineering and Technology wherein courses like B.Tech in Semiconductor, Artificial Intelligence Machine Learning (AIML) and B.Tech in Electronic Vehicle (EV) Technology will be launched," the CLUJ Vice-Chancellor disclosed.

When asked about the exact timeframe to start construction of the

campus, the CLUJ Vice-Chancellor said, "Right now, it is difficult to tell about starting the construction of the CLUJ campus as there are some modalities/complexities which we are trying to sort out at the earliest."

With the launch of new programmes, increased enrollment, student-friendly initiatives, plans for multi-disciplinary research, preparations for the University's first-ever Convocation ceremony and the proposed full-fledged campus, the CLUJ Vice-Chancellor said the University is moving ahead with initiatives aimed at strengthening academics, research and skill enhancement while preparing students to meet future challenges.

Profile: Prof. (Dr.) K. S. Chandrasekar

Dr K.S. Chandrasekar, Vice-Chancellor of CLUJ, is an accomplished academician and management professional with more than 28 years of experience in teaching, research and consulting, including over 13 years as a Full Professor. He has held several key academic and administrative positions at the University of Kerala, including Acting Vice-Chancellor, Registrar, Dean of the Faculty of Management Studies, Campus Director and Head of the Institute of Management in Kerala.

A Ph.D. in Management from Alagappa University and an MBA with Distinction, Dr Chandrasekar has guided 60-plus doctoral scholars and contributed extensively to research, publications and higher education. His academic credentials include books, research papers, patents and editorial assignments with national and international journals. He has also played an important role in securing major research funding and strengthening institutional quality initiatives, including NAAC accreditation.

His wide-ranging experience in academic leadership, research, management education and institutional administration brings a rich perspective to his role as CLUJ Vice-Chancellor.