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NEWS BRIEF

No Credible Witness of Crescent Sighting Across Kashmir: Grand Mufti

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MAR 22: Amid wide scale confusion over the commencement of Ramadan, Grand Mufti J&K, Mufti Nasir-ul-Islam on Wednesday said he stands by his decision as the crescent wasn't sighted from any territory in Jammu and Kashmir. Islam told GNS that the office Turn.....No Credible.....Pg 02

NGO Terror Funding Case

NIA Arrests Program Coordinator Of J&K Coalition Of Civil Societies

HT News Network

NEW DELHI, MAR 22: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday arrested second person in NGO terror funding case registered in October 2020 for propagating Turn.....NIA Arrests Program.....Pg 02

Army introduces Millets food in daily meal for all ranks

HT News Network

JAMMU, MAR 22: Aiming a healthy and protein rich diet for troops, Army authorities have introduced Millets (Bajra, Jawar and Ragi) in daily meals of the soldiers deployed along Northern borders including Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh. As per defence spokesperson, initial army procures 25 percent of Turn.....Army introduces.....Pg 02

Devotees throngs to temples on first day of Navratri

HT News Network

JAMMU, MAR 22: The nine-day long Hindu festival of Navratri began with much fervour on Wednesday. As per news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the Chaitra Navratri festival is dedicated to Goddess Durga and her nine avatars and today marks the first day of the festivity (Kalash or Ghatsthapna). The festival is celebrated with much fervour all across the Turn.....Devotees throngs.....Pg 02

Peace Is Being Established In J&K After Abrogation Of Art 370: Amit Shah

HT News Network

NEW DELHI, MAR 22: Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Wednesday said that peace is being established in Jammu and Kashmir and the Union Territory is once again returning to the old civilization and traditions after the abrogation of Article 370.

The Home Minister was speaking after inaugurating Maa Sharda Devi Temple in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district through video conferencing.

The Centre abrogated Article 370 and 35(A) from the erstwhile state on August 5, 2019. Jammu and Kashmir was bifurcated into two Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh on the same day. Shah mentioned that Prime Minister



Narendra Modi-led Central government centers for the revival of the culture is renovating many temples and faith Turn.....Peace Is Being.....Pg 02

Army reviews training scenario, situation at LoC

HT News Network

JAMMU, MAR 22: General Officer Commanding (GOC), the White Knight Corps (16 Corps), Lieutenant general Sandeep Jain on Wednesday reviewed the integrated operational training infrastructure and operational preparedness along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu district.

As per news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Lt General Sandeep Jain visited Rakhmuthi, Akhnoor to review the integrated operational training infrastructure. Turn.....Army reviews.....Pg 02

National Institute of Virology being set-up in J&K

'Being shifted from Chandigarh after dispute over land'

Nasir Azam

SRINAGAR, MAR 22: The Government of India plans to set-up the regional National Institute of Virology in Jammu & Kashmir.

As part of strengthening pandemic research, the regional National Institute of Virology (NIV) for north zone was to be established in Chandigarh, but would be set-up in Jammu due to land dispute there.

"This project is to be shifted to Jammu, due to land dispute at Chandigarh," reads the report of the

department-related parliamentary standing committee on Health & Family Welfare, a copy of which is in possession of news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO). The report was tabled in the Parliament on March 15, 2023.

According to the report, the location for Jammu NIV is being finalized. "Jammu UT authority has identified one area, which was declared unsuitable by a committee. Now Jammu UT has proposed three more sites. ICMR experts team is scheduled to

Turn.....National Institute.....Pg 02

J&K Realizing Its True Potential In Sports: LG

HT News Network

JAMMU, MAR 22: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha felicitated and interacted with players participating in 84th National & Inter State Table Tennis Championship at Gymnasium Hall, University of Jammu, today.

The Lt Governor expressed immense pride in the accomplishments of sportspersons at national and international arena.

We truly admire the outstanding skills, courage, sacrifice and dedication of our sportspersons and committed to put the needs of the players first, added the Lt Governor.

"Big change always starts with a small step, this is what we learn from the sports. The energy of



players, glory earned on the field is giving new impetus to development and our Sportspersons are playing a major role in social transformation & social integration", said the Lt Governor.

The Lt Governor shared the milestones achieved in transforming the sporting ecosystem in Jammu Kashmir. Turn.....J&K Realizing Its.....Pg 02

Mainly dry weather forecast today, rain on March 24-25 in J&K

Night Temp Drops Below Normal At Most Places

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MAR 22: Mainly dry weather has been forecast in Jammu and Kashmir in next 24 hours while rain and thunderstorm with snowfall over higher reaches at scattered places has been predicted on March 24-25.

"Mainly clear and dry weather is expected today. A brief spell of thunder with rain may occur at isolated places towards late afternoon and evening, although chances are less," a meteorological department official here told GNS.

On March 23, he said, mainly clear to cloudy weather towards evening and night was expected.

Rain and thunderstorm with snowfall over higher reaches at scattered places was possible on March 24-25 and mainly dry thereafter till March 28.

The Met department has forecast increase in day temperature and the official said that "warmer" days were expected.

Regarding temperature, he said, Srinagar recorded a low of 4.0°C against 5.6°C on the previous night and it was 1.0°C below normal for the summer capital.

Qazigund, he said, recorded a low of 2.2°C against 5.4°C on the previous night and it was 1.5°C below normal for the gateway town of Kashmir.

Pahalgam, he said, recorded a low of minus 0.9°C against minus 0.1°C on the previous night and it was 1.3°C below normal for the famous tourist resort. Turn.....Mainly dry weather.....Pg 02

PM Modi To Hold High-Level Review Meeting On Covid Situation



Agencies

NEW DELHI, MAR 22: Amid a spike in influenza and COVID-19 cases in the country in the past two weeks, Prime Minister Narendra

Modi on Wednesday chaired a high-level meeting and directed officials to enhance genome sequencing while also emphasizing on Covid-appropriate behaviour. India has recorded 1,134

new coronavirus cases, while the active cases increased to 7,026, according to Union Health Ministry data updated on Wednesday. The death toll climbed to 5,30,813 Turn.....PM Modi To Hold.....Pg 02

Kashmir witnesses 150 earthquakes in 5 years

Experts call for preventive measures to minimize damages

Raouf Dar

SRINAGAR, MAR 22: The devastation caused by earthquakes in Turkey and Syria is a "wake up call" for Jammu and Kashmir as the Northern Himalayas is prone to natural disasters with experts calling for various preventive measures to minimize the damages.

On Tuesday, people across several north Indian states including Kashmir experienced a strong tremor as an earthquake of 6.6 magnitudes on the Richter Scale hit Fayzabad in Afghanistan.

Most parts of Jammu and Kashmir come under Seismic Zone IV and V and are vulnerable to earthquakes. Experts give varied rea-



sons for earthquakes in J&K including various faults run through this part of Himalayas and exploding of gases.

According to official figures of the Indian Meteorological Department over 30 earthquakes occur on an average annually in Jammu and Kashmir. Last five years,

around 150 earthquakes hit J&K mostly in a magnitude of 3-5.

Besides, landslides, flash floods, avalanches, land subsidence, is a regular phenomenon in Kashmir Himalayas.

One of J&K's top Geologists retired Professor of Jammu Turn.....Kashmir witnesses.....Pg 02

Chock-o-block-like situation of traffic to persist beyond May in Srinagar



HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MAR 22: Srinagar city particularly the city centre will continue to witness traffic

jams for at least two months, owing to the work going on under Smart City Project.

It will at least take over 2 Turn.....Chock-o-block.....Pg 02

Ahead of Ramadan, shoppers throng markets

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MAR 22: People across the city thronged the markets on the eve of Ramadan to make purchases for the fasting month. As dates are the most sought-after product they are occupying top place in the shopping list. Dry fruits and fruits are also in demand

"We always stock up our shops with new varieties of dates and fruits. It is a good business month for us as well. Customers make bulk purchases..." said Nazir Ahmad, a dry fruit vendor from Amira Kadal.

Though the religious practice of breaking the day-long fast with dates is Turn.....Ahead of Ramadan.....Pg 02



Himalayan region including J&K vulnerable to earthquakes: Experts

Say need to build culture of disaster preparedness to minimise human, infra damage

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MAR 22: Stating that Jammu & Kashmir among many areas are highly vulnerable to earthquakes, the experts here on Wednesday said that instead of panicking, there is a need to come up with earthquake resistant human infrastructure that leads to the loss of lives and damage to the properties.

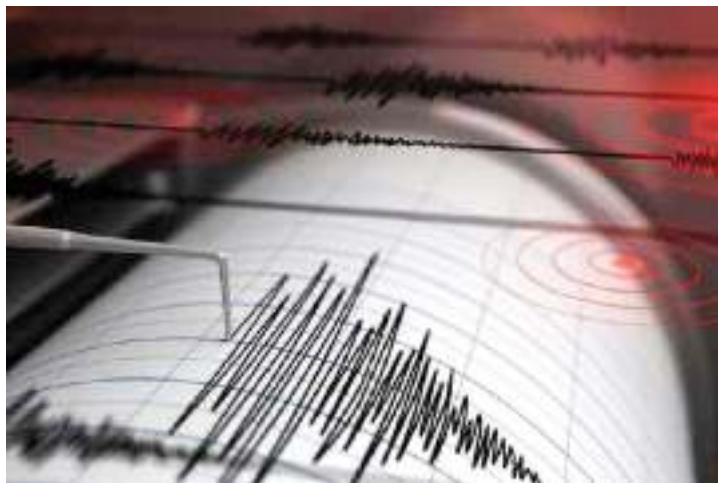
Pertinently, an earthquake measuring 6.6 on the Richter scale occurred on late Tuesday night in Jammu and Kashmir, triggering panic among the people.

Talking to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), a prominent Seismologist, Prof. Ghulam Jeelani (Department of Earth Sciences, University of Kash-

mir), said that nobody can prevent earthquakes anywhere across the globe as it is a natural phenomenon, which would continue to take place.

"J&K being one among the regions that are highly vulnerable to the earthquakes would witness jolts again and again. Whenever the stress accumulates, the energy gets generated and thus gets released in the shape of earthquakes," he said.

He added that no one can stop the occurrence of earthquakes, but there is a need to come up with the human infrastructure, which is earthquake resistant. "It is a fact that no one loses life due to earthquakes, but it is the human infrastructure that leads to the loss of lives as well as the property damage. Once people opt for



taking all preventive measures while constructing their buildings, such incidents will also stop," he said.

However, he said that there is a need to follow dos and don'ts in spirit during earthquakes to ensure safety.

As per the reports, around 60 earthquakes will hit J&K and Ladakh in 2022. The National Center for Seismology (NCS) data shows that J&K parts have felt tremors 9 times in March, 2023 so far.

Prof Shakil Romshoo, an earth scientist, told KNO that the entire Himalayan region, including Jammu and Kashmir has been historically vulnerable to earthquakes.

He said that the region has witnessed several mega earthquakes in the past. "Therefore, the government, civil societal and individuals should work hard to build a culture of disaster preparedness in the society in order to minimise human and infrastructure damage in the eventually of a high magnitude earthquake," he said.

WORLD WATER DAY:

This Sopore village is without drinking water facility from several years

■ Waris Fayaz

SOPORE, MAR 22: As the universe celebrates World Water Day every year on March 22, which serves to accelerate the change to solve the water and sanitation crisis. However, Sopore's Hygam village has been facing the water crisis for the last several years, with the officials at Jal Shakhti stating that the matter would be resolved soon.

Talking to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the residents of Rather Mohalla, Hygam, said that they have been facing acute shortage of drinking water supply for the past several years, however the concerned department is least bothered about their genuine demand.



They said, that 'Har Ghar Nal Sy Jal' claim of government has fallen flat as they have been suffering due to the scarcity of drinking water supply for at least two years. "We are being forced to fetch water and drink contaminated water which is unhygienic and health hazardous for us," they added.

"We are facing an acute shortage of drinking water supply. The authorities have turned a deaf ear towards our repeated pleas. They are making no effort to ease our difficulties," Ghulam Qadir, a local resident said.

Instead of wasting the public money on unnecessary projects, the administration should focus on providing safe drinking water to people, especially in this area who have been forced to drink the filthy water from well, Qadir said.

The locals alleged, that the department has never upgraded the already laid water supply pipes, which as per them is the reason of water scarcity in the area. They also alleged, that the pipes are lying at Panjipur village which are of no use there, instead of keeping them there, the department should make use of them to this particular area to end the crisis.

Meanwhile, an official at Jal Shakhti (PHE) Department, Sopore when contacted told KNO that the locality is facing issues because the pipes are yet to be upgraded. However, the official said that the issue would be resolved soon as they have kept it under the consideration project.

14 years on, Vital bridge on Jhelum in Awantipora awaits completion

Waiting for approval of change in proposal: Official

■ Jahangeer Ganaie

AWANTIPORA, MAR 22: Strange it may sound but a bitter reality it is that a vital bridge on river Jhelum at Reshipora in Awantipora area of South Kashmir's Pulwama district is awaiting completion even after 14 years since the foundation stone was laid there.

Locals told news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), that the foundation of the bridge was laid in 2008 during the PDP-Congress regime, however, since then 14 years have passed but 60 percent hasn't been completed yet. Altaf Ahmad a local auqaf member of Reshipora village said that in absence of a bridge, they have to go for around 10 kilometres to reach Highway which otherwise is just half kilometre away from them provided the bridge will be completed.

He said that if this bridge is completed, this will connect Tral area with Shahoora area in Pulwama and shorten their distance by kilometres.



Another local said he donated his land for the construction of the bridge but since then over a decade has passed but nothing has been done on ground.

He added that in order to reach school or college, their children have to cross the river Jhelum through boat which could prove dangerous anytime.

Locals said that they have knocked the doors of every authority in this regard but on ground nothing happened. They said that there is transport service in the area due to local people suffering and it can be started only when the bridge is completed.

They added that now officials are claiming that there is a change in proposal and why it wasn't done since the last 14 years and now since 2019 work has been completely put on halt.

Locals once again requested higher ups to look into the matter and resume work on this bridge so that locals can heave a sigh of relief. An official said that there is a change in proposal of the bridge as it will now be a truss bridge instead of plate bridge.

He said that file is lying before higher officials and once it will be approved, work will be started again on it.

Amid strong tremors, doctors perform surgery at unsafe SDH Bijbehara

Had we left patient unattended during earthquake, we would have lost both mother, baby: Doctors

■ Jahangeer Ganaie

BIJBEHARA, MAR 22: At a time when most of the people were seen running for safety during an earthquake that shook Jammu and Kashmir and parts of north India Tuesday, doctors at sub district hospital Bijbehara in south Kashmir's Anantnag district were seen performing surgery on a pregnant woman.

A video of the hospital theatre, where doctors were seen performing surgery during strong tremors, also went viral on social media with netizens praising the team of doctors and paramedical staff.

In the video, the theatre monitor could be seen shaking and lights were also disrupted, however, doctors continue to perform surgery despite

strong tremors.

Notably, the surgery was being done in an old building of the hospital that was declared unsafe by the Road and Building department after 2014 floods.

Dr Shabeena Shah, a gynaecologist at SDH Bijbehara, who was performing the surgery told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the woman was the third patient on Tuesday evening whose surgery was being conducted.

She said that it is necessary to show maturity during a panic situation which they did and everything went smoothly.

"Earlier, we too feared for our safety because we too are human beings, but then we realized that patience should be our priority under all circumstances. We remained focussed and successfully completed the surgery," she said.

Dr Naseer who was also

part of the team performing surgery told KNO said that despite being unwell, when everything started shaking we as a human being had fear as well but it was a matter of two lives at that time.

"We know the patient was a bit critical and if we would have left the theatre for our own safety, we would have lost both mother and baby," he said. "We just kept calm and continued to console the patient so as to keep her out of pressure and tension and performed lower (uterine) segment Caesarean section (LSCS) successfully and both mother and baby are well."

Meanwhile, as the video went viral on social media platforms, netizens could be seen praising the doctors for their commendable job.

"Must be awarded and rewarded for showing calmness and composure and safeguarding life of newborn and the patient", a Twitter user wrote.



Family dispute in Sopore's Tarzoo village leaves Jio Consumers cut off from rest of the internet world

■ Waris Fayaz

SOPORE, MAR 22: With poor jio network services at Tarzoo village of Sopore in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, subscribers are alleging it to be a reason for immense hardships, with the jio officials claiming a dispute between two families a reason for disruption of services. The subscribers told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), that there is a poor network of JIO from months together. JIO service is irking the customers, we have been suffering because of the insensitive and fleeing attitude of this telecom service

providing company, they said.

"With JIO telecom providers claiming to launch 5G services across the region, however, the village - barely 3 kms from Sopore township is facing immense problems, as we are currently using 1G services", alleges a local resident, Bilal Ahmed.

He said that from last month, the area is witnessing a cut off from the rest of the internet world, with the authorities concerned failing to take any appropriate steps to redress the issue.

"JIO has been a cause of irritation for them as most times it doesn't function properly, Due to poor services, many JIO

subscribers have switched over to other service-providers for better calling/ internet services," said Hakeem Junaid, a commercial photographer". He said that, due to the low internet, he is unable to do his professional duties. "I have to remain stationed in Sopore town only for better connectivity", he added.

The subscribers, however, later appealed to the JIO higher ups and the district administration to look into the matter and redress their grievance at earliest, so that they may not face any issues anymore.

"If there is any dispute between the

families over some issue, why would they suffer? Why can't the telecom provider find an alternative till the issues are resolved", they added.

An official at Jio telecommunication services told KNO that they have two sites in the Tarzoo area, one at Tarzoo and another at Amberpora. However, the site at Amberpora is not functional because of the stay - as there is an internal dispute between the two families. "Due to overload on the Tarzoo site, network congestion happens", Official added.

The issue would be resolved once the stay on the site is lifted, he further added.

DHSK felicitates doctors, other staff for continuing surgery during earthquake at SDH Bijbehara

Salute staff for their courage, no place for non-performing officials in LG government: Director Health

■ Jahangeer Ganaie

SRINAGAR, MAR 22: Director Health Services Kashmir on Wednesday felicitated the doctors and other staff who performed the surgery without getting deterred during earthquake.

Director Health Services Kashmir Dr Mushtaq Ahmad Rather visited SDH Bijbehara to

felicitate and encourage the staff.

While talking to news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) Dr Mushtaq Ahmad Rather said that he personally visited SDH Bijbehara along other officers to salute and appreciate the staff as this is a proud moment for all of us.

"Today our doctors and other staff showed that without caring for their own life, their

priority remains patient and saving two previous lives," he said. "They were counselling her. The credit goes to officers of the district including CMO and BMO for making efforts to keep everything available at the hospital."

The doctor said that there is no space for non-performing officials in the LG government and only those will remain here



who will perform their duties very well.

He said that influenza cases are being detected every year due to seasonal changes, however, cases are on rise in Kashmir.

He said that there is no need to panic, however, preventive measures are necessary. "Whoever will be symptomatic, he/she must take hot water and

whosoever will have severe symptoms, must contact doctors," he said.

He said that people must wear masks, avoid gathering and take proper care of hygiene as well.

He said that the department is performing well and after Budgam, Pulwama and Anantnag are now Tuberculosis free and we are hopeful that J&K will be TB free by 2025.

NIT Srinagar, CUK host first 'G20 - University Connect' Program

The greatest challenges can be resolved by acting together: Prof. Sehgal

Srinagar, Mar 22: The National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar in collaboration with Central University of Kashmir (CUK) Wednesday hosted the first 'G20 University Connect' program, aimed to engage young minds and share their innovations. The event was organized by the Department of Politics and Governance and School of Business Studies, CUK in collaboration with the Department of HSSM, NIT Srinagar. Under the G20 presidency, the theme of the program was 'Advertise Your Innovation Contest' and students from both CUK and NIT Srinagar were given opportunities to explain their innovative ideas within the stipulated time. Dr. Tahir Ahmad Wani and Dr. Asif (CUK) were the jury members for the event. While the event proceedings were hosted by Dr. Mir Insha from CUK Kashmir. Dr. Mohd. Rafiq Teli and Dr. Nufazil Altaf were the coordinators of the event. In his message, Director NIT Srinagar Prof. (Dr.) Rakesh Sehgal said the University connect program is aimed to spread India's G20 presidency and encourage students to go for innovations. "Such programs aim to connect our students and explore their innovative ideas and perspectives on G-20-related topics. The greatest challenges can be resolved by acting together," he said. Prof. Sehgal expressed his gratitude to VC CUK, Prof. Farooq Ahmad, and all the faculty



members who visited the campus for the said program. Doors of NIT Srinagar are open for hosting such vibrant activities on the campus, he said. Registrar NIT Srinagar, Prof. Syed Kaiser Bukhari said the theme for the G20 - "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (One Earth, One Family, One Future) is aimed to promote a universal sense of oneness and address the challenges that mankind faces today. "We should not only host such programs on the campus but also train students to become brand ambassadors of G20 Presidency

program, so that they can disseminate more and more information among the people," he said. Prof. Bukhari said NIT Srinagar takes pride in hosting such events and is committed to bridging the gap between society and technology. On behalf of Vice Chancellor CUK, Prof. Farooq Ahmad Shah and Registrar, Prof. M Afzal Zargar, Dr. Khalid Wasim shared their message and stated that it is time for both institutions to work together and collaborate in the implementation of NEP2020 in letter and spirit. "G20 has many aspects and there

are a lot of themes that have been covered already by some educational Institutions. This program is aimed to engage the young generation to resolve global issues led by technological advances in research and development in India," he said. Dr. Khalid said these events are aimed at the inclusive growth of our students which is the larger theme of the G20. He also urged students to visit their campus and participate in various academic and cultural programs. In his message, HOD HSSM, Prof. Neyaz Ahmad Sheikh appreciated the organizers for hosting such training programs on campus. Such sessions are the need of the hour and we should continue to collaborate on such things in future also, he said. In his welcome address, Assistant Prof. Dr. Tahir Ahmad Wani (HSSM Department) welcomed the dignitaries from CUK and stated that such events are the need of the hour. Team 'Wheel AI' led by Basr Qari from NIT Srinagar bagged the first position, second position was also bagged by NIT Srinagar led by Shahid Bhat, and 3rd position was shared by student teams from CUK and NIT Srinagar. Later appreciation certificates were distributed among the position holders. Dr. Mohd. Rafiq Teli presented a formal vote of thanks to all the dignitaries from both NIT Srinagar and CUK for making the event successful.

Inaugral ceremony of Sharda Yatra Temple Teetwal District Administration kupwara facilitates live streaming of event



TEETWAL(KUPWARA), MARCH 22 : On the occasion of inaugural ceremony of Sharda Yatra Temple at Teetwal, situated on the banks of River Kishanganga, District Administration Kupwara arranged live streaming of the event to facilitate the devotees view live address of Home Minister, Shri Amit Shah, Lieutenant Governor, Shri Manoj Sinha and Member Parliament, Shri Tajesvi Suriya. BJP State President, Ravinder Raina was present at the event. The Brigade Commander 104 Infantry Brigade, Tangdar, N K Dhas; Deputy Commissioner, Kupwara, Dr. Doifode Sagar Dattatray; SSP Kupwara Yougal Manhas; ADC Kupwara, Ghulam Nabi Bhat; SDM Karnah, Dr. Gulzar Ahmad Rather, officers and functionaries from District Administration Kupwara/ Tehsil administration Karnah were present at the occasion, besides other dignitaries and a large number of devotees. On the occasion the Convenor, Save Sharda Committee Kashmir, Ravinder Pandita and other members of the committee including Surinder Mirza appreciated the efforts of Deputy Commissioner Kupwara Dr. Doifode Sagar Dattatray in making the event successful.

Block Diwas is a platform to connect with to people to address their issues : DC Pulwama

PULWAMA, MARCH 22: Baseer Ul Haq Choudhary, District Development Commissioner (DDC) Pulwama Wednesday said that Public outreach program is a trajectory to reinforce connection with people. He made these remarks while speaking to a gathering of people assembled at Govt Model Higher Secondary School Gulzarpora, Awantipora as part of Youm Block Diwas. The programme witnessed overwhelming response of people from Gulzarpora, Tokuna and other villages who apprised the DC about their issue and grievances for early redressal. DDC Pulwama spent the whole day in Tehsil Awantipora and redressed hundreds of grievances on the spot. The visiting delegations of public and the PRIs demanded construction an overhead water tank and a filtration plant in the village, upgradation of PHC to CHC, Nayabat for the area, upgradation of Govt Middle school to Govt girls High school, replacement of wornout HT/LT lines from habitation to main road, development/ macadamization of interior roads, establishment of veterinary centre in the village, establishment of agri/ hort store and KVK Depot, establishment of timber depot, SRTC bus service from Gulzarpora to Pulwama, among many others. The DDC gave patient hearing to the grievances raised and assured quality disposal of genuine issues in a time bound manner. He also gave on spot directions for redressal of many issues of urgent nature. The DDC further added that District Administration is ensuring to provide all facilities to the people at their doorsteps and in this regard



necessary instructions are already given to line departments. He was accompanied by the Additional Deputy Commissioner Awantipora Zaffar Ahmad; PRIs, Ex-En R&B, Ex-En KPDCI, Ex-En Irrigation, Tehsildar Awantipora, BDO Awantipora and all other District officers. On the occasion, DDC said that such Public Outreach Programmes are a regular feature now and appealed to people to become active participants so that the issues of daily importance are redressed in the minimum possible time. He highlighted the objectives of the various governmental programmes informing the public that these schemes, campaigns are aimed at reaching out to the people for redressal of their grievances and addressing developmental issues. The DDC directed the concerned Officers to exert for completion of ongoing projects, Roads, & bridges. He urged upon officers to complete the works within the shortest possible time.

DC Bandipora holds Interaction with media persons Emphasis on need to give wider coverage to the Anti Drug Campaign, Self Employment Schemes

BANDIPORA, MARCH 22: Deputy Commissioner Bandipora Dr Owais Ahmad on Wednesday held an interaction with media persons of the district at Forest Training School Chitternar. SSP Bandipora Lakshya Sharma, Additional District Development Commissioner Ali Afsar Khan, Joint Director Planning Imtiyaz Ahmad, Nodal Officer Coordination M A Hakak, DFO Mudassir Mahmood and District Information Officer Jahangeer Akhoun were also present on the occasion. On the occasion, the representatives of various print and electronic media organizations interacted with the DC and discussed several issues of public interest. They also briefed the DC about the difficulties they face while covering events at ground level and put forth the demand for the establishment of a press club at district headquarter Bandipora. The DC assured the media persons that their genuine demands, including the establishment of a press club, will be considered on priority. Dr Owais directed the District Information Officer Jahangir Akhoun and Nodal Officer Coordination M Ashraf Hakaak to identify a



space for the establishment of a media facilitation centre at an earliest. Speaking on the occasion, the DC emphasized the importance of media in the overall development of the district and also in highlighting the initiatives of the Government aimed at curbing the menace of drug abuse and said the role of media is indispensable in holding administration accountable for effective governance. He also urged the media persons to play a proactive role in disseminating the information on government schemes meant to give livelihood/self-employment opportunities to the youth.

At the outset, DC said that the media is the important and fourth pillar of Democracy, helping the district administration to perform more accurately and efficiently. He said the media works as an interface between government and public. The DC urged the media fraternity to follow journalism ethics in letter and spirit while performing in the field and ensure quality journalism is displayed by each one of them. He assured media persons full support from the District Administration in highlighting the genuine public issues for their prompt redressal.

DDC Kupwara inaugurates Road at Teetwal,

Teetwal(Kupwara), MARCH 22: District Development Commissioner (DDC) Kupwara, Dr. Doifode Sagar Dattatray in presence of SSP Kupwara, Yougal Manhas today inaugurated approach road to Sharda Yatra temple Teetwal. Road is providing connectivity to Sharda Yatra temple and local habitation. Meanwhile, various deputations including deputation of Teetwal and Pingla called upon the DDC and projected their demands, including a DDC listened the deputations patiently and gave on spot directions to SDM Karnah for redressal of their grievances in a time bound manner.

Illegal extraction and transportation of minerals Police seizes 02 tractors, arrests 02 drivers in Baramulla

Baramulla March 22: Acting tough against the persons involved in illegal extraction and transportation of minerals, police have seized 02 tractors and arrested 02 drivers in Baramulla. A Police party of PS Pattan under the supervision of SDO Pattan, seized 2 tractors and arrested their drivers identified as Tanveer Ahmad Bhat son of Mohd Akbar Bhat & Manzoor Ahmad Wani son of Ali Mohd Wani, both residents of Wanigan Bala at Dargam Nallah Palhallan, for their involvement in illegal extraction & transportation of minerals. Accordingly, a case under relevant sections of law has been registered at PS Pattan and investigation has been initiated. Persons found indulging in illegal mining activities shall be dealt with as per law. Community members are requested to share information regarding the crimes in their neighbourhood with their concerned police units.

Tata Motors Announces Price Increase for Commercial Vehicles

Srinagar, Mar 22, : Tata Motors, will be implementing a price increase of up to 5% on its commercial vehicles starting from April 1st, 2023. The decision to increase prices is a result of the company's efforts to comply with the more stringent BS6 phase II emission norms. As Tata Motors transitions its entire vehicle portfolio to meet these standards, customers and fleet owners can expect a range of cleaner, greener, and technologically superior offerings that deliver higher benefits and lower total cost of ownership. The price increase will be applied across the entire range of commercial vehicles, with the exact amount varying according to the individual model and variant. [KNT]

CUK holds prog on 'world water day', painting competition

Ganderbal, Mar 22: Department of Chemistry, School of Physical & Chemical Sciences, Central University of Kashmir (CUK) organized a one-day programme on "World Water Day" under the G-20 University Connect at Nuner campus on Wednesday. Vice Chancellor, Prof. Farooq Ahmad Shah, Registrar, Prof. M Afzal Zargar, Dean School of Physical & Chemical Sciences, Prof. Wali Mohammad Shah, Dean School of Life Sciences, Prof. Mohammad Yousof, Head Department of Chemistry, Dr. Abid Hamid Dar, Former Head, Department of Chemistry, NIT Srinagar, Prof. Kowsar Majid, Head Department of Botany, Prof. Azra N. Kamili, faculty members and students were present. Speaking on the occasion, Vice Chancellor, Prof. Farooq Ahmad Shah, emphasised on the conservation and preservation of water. He said we need to create awareness among people regarding the significance of water to our planet. Registrar, Prof. M. Afzal Zargar, highlighted various schemes of the government of India which address the conservation and preservation of water resources. He further asked the students to launch awareness campaigns for stopping the contamination of the water.

office of the Principal Hillcrest School Kreeri Baramulla List of Managing body

S.No	NAME	RESIDENCE	OCCUPATION	DESIGNATION	QUAL	PHONE	AADHAR NO.	Photographs
1	ER. KHURSHED AHMAD BUDDO S/O: HAJI GUL MOHD BUDDO	HUMHAMA SRINAGAR	RTD. CHIEF ENGINEER	CHAIRMAN	BE	9419182299	90843551773	
2	MASRAT JABEEN W/O: KHUR-SHEED AHMAD BUDDO	HUMHAMA SRINAGAR	RTD. ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER	MEMBER	MA	889966396	947177569687	
3	AFROZA KHAN W/O: NAZIR AHMAD GANIE	GOUSIA COLONY KREERI	PVT EMPLOYEE	SECRETARY	MA, BED	9541489337	400314001361	
4	SUHAIL TRUMBOO S/O: BASHIR AHMAD TRUMBOO	KREERI	BUSINESSMAN	MEMBER	MBA	7006844405	273554460927	
5	BILAL AHMAD BHAT S/O: SONAULLAH BHAT	KAREWA KREERI	PVT EMPLOYEE	MEMBER	MA, BED	9797140417	390760963198	
6	SYED NAZIR HUSSAIN GOWHAR	KREERI	RTD PRINCIPAL	MEMBER	MA,	808295943	69953703441	
7	AARIFA RASHID D/O: ABDUL RASHID BAN DAY	KREERI	PVT TEACHER	MEMBER	MA	9906744628	487148994945	

DCDRC Baramulla organises Introductory Cum Awareness Meeting at Uri

BARAMULLA, MARCH 22: In order to create awareness among general public with regard to their rights and responsibilities as a consumer, District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission Baramulla in collaboration with Food Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department Baramulla today organised an introductory cum awareness meeting at Dak Banglow Uri. The camp was presided over by the President Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission Baramulla, Peerzada Qousar Hussain and attend by the Assistant Director Food Baramulla Tariq Ahmad, Member of the Commission Miss Nyla Yaseen, Tehsil Supply Officers of Uri and other Officials of the department. The President while speaking on the occasion said that the interest of the general consumers stands our first and foremost priority and emphasised that the objective of this meeting is to Create awareness among the officials in particular and the Public in general regarding their rights and responsibilities as a consumer. While highlighting the importance of consumer rights, President DCDRC said the empowerment of the consumers has been accorded the highest priority by the government by enacting the Consumer Protection Act 2019, to protect against the marketing of products that are hazardous to life and property. He also underlined that since consumer awareness is essential to help the Consumers to exercise their rights, the Govt, in this regard, has been conducting a wide multimedia awareness campaign titled Jago Grahak Jago through which Consumers can learn about the fraudulent practices and how to tackle them. AD Food during the introductory meeting pointed out some major issues and problems faced by the consumers, while reiterating the rights as responsibilities of the consumers, emphasised that in case any of the consumer feels dissatisfaction about the purchase of any of the products or notices any unfair trade practices, they should approach the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission Baramulla for redressal of these grievances, as not to have accept substandard quality of products. Other speakers also deliberated on the subject and said that the consumer needs to be informed about the quality, quantity, standard, purity and price of goods, so as to safeguard his interests against the unfair trade.

World Water Day-2023: DC Kishtwar flags-off the awareness rally at GHSS Boys Kishtwar

KISHTWAR, MARCH 22: As part of World Water Day Celebration 2023, Deputy Commissioner of Kishtwar Dr Devansh Yadav flagged off an awareness rally at Government Model Higher Secondary School for Boys here today.

Dr Yadav spoke about the importance of celebrating World Water Day and encouraged students, teachers and others to participate enthusiastically in raising awareness about water conservation. He urged students to play an important role in disseminating information about preserving, conserving and restoring water.

Dr Yadav appealed to people in both urban and rural areas to play a constructive role in water conservation and preservation by avoiding wastage. He mentioned the centrally sponsored Jal Jeevan Mission, which aims to provide potable drinking water to every rural household. He also appreciated the staff members of the education department who ensured student participation in the



awareness rally despite it being a holiday. Officers and lecturers gave speeches on World Water Day and its significance. PHE officials demonstrated how to use a water testing kit to check the suitability and quality of drinking water.

The event was attended by Chief Education Officer, Sudarshan Sharma and from Jal Shakti Department, Executive Engineer, Sunil Sharma, AE, Dewan Chand;

IEC Coordinator, Senior Lecturer DIET, Riaz Ahmed Butt besides others. Government officials and students of GHSS Boys Kishtwar, GHSS Girls, Higher Secondary School Islamia Faridia and teachers of Zone Kishtwar were also present. About 200 students from government and private institutions took part in the rally.

The rally passed through prominent locations in the

main town where participants raised awareness about water conservation and various government schemes to provide pure drinking water to households under Jal Jeevan Mission. Similar awareness rallies, debates, symposiums, drawing competitions and poem recitations were held in schools across Kishtwar district to commemorate World Water Day.

JKTPO participated in INDIA FASHION TEX 2023, New Delhi "J&K Pavilion" was major attraction in the event"

JAMMU, MARCH 22: Jammu and Kashmir Trade Promotion Organization (JKTPO) under the aegis of Department of Industries and Commerce participated in INDIA FASHION TEX 2023, New Delhi. The three-day exhibition cum Reverse Buyers Sellers Meet attended by more than 200 international buyers from various countries like US, European Union, Scandinavia, UK, Australia, Japan, Middle East, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and other domestic buying/sourcing agents. On the directions of Principal Secretary, Industries and Commerce, Prashant Goyal and under the overall supervision of Managing Director JKTPO, Khalid Jahangir, J&K Pavilion was set up by JKTPO with 30 exhibitors. The event was organized by the Wool and Woollens Export Promotion Council (WWEPC) in association with Power Loom Develop-



ment & Export Promotion Council (PDEXCIL) under the aegis of the Ministry of Textiles and Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The event showcased extensive range of woollen merchandise including Yarn & fabrics apparel, clothing knitwear, hosiery goods, pashmina shawls or stoles, Scarves, mufflers, blankets, carpets, blazers and home textiles crafted by Indian weavers and ar-

tisans. The exhibitors from J&K showcased unique and world-famous Handloom products including GI tagged products like Kani Shawls, Stoles, Pashmina shawls, chain stitch, silk carpets etc of Jammu and Kashmir. The meet provided opportunities to network and create business leads with potential clients, understand actual requirements, quality, new

fashion trends in international markets so that they can compete and excel at global level.

The event witnessed Business meetings with overseas buyers/Sourcing agents/buying houses, Launch of new products, and exclusive Fashion Show. J&K's products especially Pashmina and Kani shawls were major attractions in the fashion show. During the event an drive for onboarding an Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) for the participating exhibitors from J&K was also organised by JKTPO and ONDC.

ONDC's Seller Partner My-store assisted for onspot on boarding of exhibitors/sellers on their platform through which they can sell their product on ONDC Network. The exhibitors from J&K showcased unique and world-famous Handloom products including GI tagged products like Kani Shawls, Stoles.

World Water Day observed in Shahzadpur Samba

SAMBA, MARCH 22: World Water Day was celebrated with enthusiasm at Shahzadpur village in Gho-Brahma Panchayat today. The event was attended by ADDC Samba, Rajinder Singh besides Executive Engineer of Jal Shakti Department Samba. ADDC Rajinder Singh spoke about

World Water Day and encouraged villagers to take full advantage of the scheme. The programme began with a lecture on World Water Day and the importance of fresh water and sustainable management of resources by lecturers from the higher education department. A Nukkad Natak and

awareness programme for Jal Jeevan Mission was also organised by an Implementation Support Agency. A Paani Samiti was formed at the event and female members were provided with field testing kits to check water quality parameters in their village. AEE Jal Shakti Vijaypur.

Dr Zabeer Ahmed takes over as Director CSIR- IIM Jammu

Jammu, March 22, 2023 Dr Zabeer Ahmed, Chief Scientist at CSIR-IIM Jammu, a local hailing from Poonch District of Jammu & Kashmir took over as Director of CSIR - Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine Jammu, a National Institute of Council of Scientific & Industrial Research, Ministry of Science and Technology, GOI with its branch laboratory at Srinagar. Pertinently, the search-cum-selection

committee met in January this year and based on its recommendations, Dr Ahmed has been appointed as Director of the CSIR-IIM Jammu for tenure of six years. Dr. Zabeer Ahmed after his initial schooling from district Poonch, did his UG (1993) and PG (Zoology) in 1995 from Jammu University and Ph.D. (Zoology) in 2010 from Kashmir University. His areas of specializations include pre-clinical drug

development, diabetes & obesity research, rheumatoid arthritis and inflammatory disorders. Dr. Zabeer started his career in 1997 at CSIR-IIM and has held different positions till his elevation as Director. He was promoted as Chief Scientist in 2021. He is the recipient of prestigious Knowledge Partnership Award of CSIR and visited National Center for Natural Product Research (NCNPR), School.

Shat Chandi Yagya sounds Navratra bugle at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine

Katra, March 22: Amidst the Vedic hymns, religious chants and performance of other religious ceremonies, Shat Chandi Maha Yagya organised by Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board at the Holy Cave Shrine of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Ji started today on the auspicious occasion of beginning of Chaitra Navratras. The nine-day long 'Chaitra Navratra', which is being performed at the Holy Cave Shrine for peace, prosperity and health of humanity, will conclude with Purna Ahuti on Mahanavami. Anshul Garg, Chief Executive Officer, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board; K. K. Sharma, Member, SMVDSB; Sudhir Bali, SDM Bhawan; other officers and staff of the Shrine Board, besides a large number of pilgrims were present on the occasion. The Yagya ceremony is being telecasted live on MH1 Shradha from 11.30 AM to 12.30 PM daily during Navratras.



flowers, as well as huge reception doors and pandals have been installed in the Bhawan Area. Likewise, the illumination of the Bhawan area with attractive and colourful lights has also been done. The breathtaking and festive decorations are a special visual delight for pilgrims who trek about 12 km from Katra to Bhawan.

The Shrine Board has also made elaborate arrangements for facilitating a large number of pilgrims who are expected to pay their obeisance at the Sanctum Sanctorum during Navratras. These arrangements include round the clock water and power supply all along the tracks leading to

the Shrine, sanitation, medicare and availability of special "fast related" food at the Board's Bhawan. Besides, all the routes leading to the Holy Cave Shrine are fully maintained for smooth movement of pilgrims.

Before the commencement of Navratra, Chairman SMVDSB (Lt. Governor JK-UT), dedicated a five-storey Durga Bhawan on March 18 carrying multiple facilities for ease and comfort of the pilgrims.

To facilitate the smooth pilgrimage of Divyang pilgrims, Shri Mata vaishno devi Shrine Board is also providing free pony and battery car service during Navratras.

Rana joins Navratra prayers at Kol Kandoli, Baral Mata; prays for peace

NAGROTA MARCH 22- Senior BJP leader Mr Devender Singh Rana today joined hundreds of devotees and offered prayers on the auspicious occasion of the first Navratra at Kol Kandoli Temple, the first spiritual destination on the ancient heritage Mata Vaishno Deviji route, and prayed for peace, progress, prosperity, and tranquility in the country.

Mr Rana performed Pujas in spiritual ambience amid recitation of Mantras and Bhaits of The Mata Rani.

Interacting with the devotees, Mr Rana exhorted the people to join the ensuing Yatra on the Pracheen Marg, beginning March 26, from Kot Kandoli to Oli Temple. The heritage route, passes through Jagdamba Mata Kheer Bhawani Temple - Jagti, Durga Mata Temple - Pangali, Shiv Temple - Thandapani - Drabi, Shiv Shakti Temple, Raja Mandaleek Temple - and Raja Nowalgarh Temple - Marh, Drabi, Kali Mata Temple - Gundla Talab, Ram Darbar, Shiv Temple - Bamyal and Oli Temple - Chhapanoo-Bamyal before reaching the sanctum sanctorum of the Bhawan of Mata Rani on Trikuta Hills.

He expressed gratitude to the Lieutenant Governor Mr Manoj Sinha for instructing the concerned departments and agencies for making necessary arrangements to facilitate this Yatra. Greeting the people of the country from the foothills of the Bhawan of the Mata Rani on the Navratras, Mr Devender Rana prayed India to emerge as Vishva Guru as per the vision of Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi.

He hoped that the people will observe the Navratras with religious fervour and traditional gaiety. He also hoped this auspicious occasion to spread peace



prayers for Mata to overcome all our difficulties", he said and hoped that Navratras will see Jammu and Kashmir ushering in a new era of peace, progress and development.

Mr Rana exhorted the people of Jammu to maintain their proud hospitality towards the pilgrims thronging from various parts of the country. He hoped that the blessings of Goddess Durga will see us through all the challenges confronted to humanity.

Later, Mr Rana participated in Chari Yatra of Baral Mata at Baral Mata Temple in Panchayat Sagon. He also visited the ancient Raghunath Temple in the area and paid obeisance. Prominent among those who also joined the prayers included Som Nath Khajuria, Sarpanch Lala Kishore Sharma, Pt. Rameshwar Dutt Sharma, Baba Chanchal Singh, Harish Sharma, Sarpanch Bodh Raj, Sarpanch Anil Barsala, Sarpanch Raman Wazir, Sarpanch Kanta Devi, Kulbhushan Singh, Prof Bass Dev Sharma, Subash Singh Advocate, Numbardar Purnan Singh, Aju, Sukha Pandit, Vandana Sharma, Suman Sharma, Capt Bansil Lal, Natti, Sanjay Sharma, Amiti Sharma, Anita Slathia, Seema Jamwal, Jagdish Khajuria, Bhushan Singh.

and amity and inspire people to rededicate themselves to the service of humanity and the country. He invoked blessings of Maa Durga and prayed for universal brotherhood besides well-being of the people.

"Navratras are the auspicious days when we all should submit before Mata Rani, the divine mother, and seek Her blessings for all. He said the people of Jammu are blessed to be under the footsteps of Mata Vaishno Devi that has all along showered Her divine blessings upon millions of devotees from times immemorial. "We must devote ourselves to the special

Aryans Students pay tribute to the Shaheed Bhagat Singh

Srinagar, March 22nd To pay tribute to Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru, students of Aryans Group of Colleges, Rajpura, Near Chandigarh participated in various activities at Campus. The students wore yellow turbans as a tribute and honour to the freedom fighter. Dr. JK Saini, Director, Aryans College of Engineering mentioned that the death anniversary of three heroes of our nation namely Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Thapar and Shivaram Rajguru on 23 March 1931 is recognized as a Martyrs' Day. On the occasion students also sang patriotic songs, recited Poetry & also participated in Slogan writing, the incident said and said investigation into the matter is ongoing.

Jal Shakti Deptt. celebrates World Water Day at Poonch.

M S Nazki

Poonch On the occasion of World Water Day a grand function was organised at Lok Nirman Bhawan Poonch. Superintending Engineer Hydraulic Circle Poonch Er. Rajinder K. Sharma was the chief guest of the programme where Tahira Tabassum sarpanch Panchayat/ Chairperson Pani Samitis Buzliab B was was guest of honour. Er. Riaz Ahmed Executive Engineer PHE and Er. Vaneet Vaid Executive Engineer I&FC Division Poonch were among the special invitees. Society for schedule and backwards organised the program in collaboration with Jal Shakti Deptt. Poonch. Superintending Engineer addressed the huge gathering where in large number of members of Pani Samities asha workers, Aanganwari workers, panches,



sarpanch and general public besides the field workers of the JAL Shakti Department participated. Superintending Engineer informed the gathering that World Water Day is celebrated on 22nd of March every year throughout the world and like wise our country India also later Superintending Engineer Hydraulic Circle Poonch Er. Rajinder K. Sharma Presented the Award of Appreciation to guest of honour Sarpanch Buzliab B Tahira Tabassum for best Social Worker

DC Kishtwar holds public grievance redressal camp in block Mughal Maidan

KISHTWAR, MARCH 22: To address the concerns of local residents, Deputy Commissioner, Dr Devansh Yadav visited panchayat Tagood of block Mughal Maidan and held a public grievance redressal camp today. At the camp, local residents and representatives raised issues related to infrastructure, health and education, as well as land compensation.

Dr Yadav inaugurated a passenger shed at Ramelela Ground Tagood, which was constructed by the Rural Development Department. He listened to the concerns of the residents and resolved many of them on the spot. He also forwarded necessary directions to relevant departments for prompt resolution of remaining grievances. In response to a request to upgrade High School Tagood into a higher secondary school, Dr Yadav said that he would take up the matter with relevant



authorities. Regarding pending land compensation, he informed landowners that their documents had been submitted and compensation would be disbursed soon. Dr Yadav also mentioned that the bottleneck on Tagood road had been cleared and work would be tendered out by April 2023. During his visit to Tagood panchayat, Dr Devansh Yadav also

dedicated a 1KW solar power backup to the local panchayat building and a Khidmat Center by the Agriculture Department. He announced that electricity and water supply at NTPHC Tagood would be addressed under District Capex 2023-24. Dr Yadav urged panchayat members to identify a local youth who would be provided with

a Community Leadership Executive course at IIM Jammu. This initiative is part of a collaboration between the District Administration Kishtwar and other stakeholders under Mission Youth Initiative for Youth Club Members across District Kishtwar. The training programme aims to equip young people with the skills needed to effectively implement and monitor community-level development schemes.

Later, Dr Yadav and other officials inspected the ongoing construction of High School Tagood and gave directions to expedite the work and ensure its completion within the stipulated time without compromising on quality. Dr Devansh Yadav was accompanied by ACD Kishtwar Atul Dutt Sharma, BDO Mughal Maidan, Saima Ramzan and CAO Kishtwar, Amjad Hussain Malik besides other officers and field functionaries.

EDITORIAL

DEGRADATION OF
KASHMIR WETLANDS:
Matter of
Environmental
Concern

Every spring, the Kashmir valley witnesses a magnificent natural phenomenon - the arrival of migratory birds in large flocks. These feathered visitors travel thousands of miles from their wintering grounds in Africa, Europe, and Central Asia to the Himalayan region of India to breed and feed in the lush green valleys of Kashmir. The sight of these birds is a treat for both birdwatchers and nature lovers. However, this year's flocking of migratory birds has raised some concerns among environmentalists and bird conservationists.

Kashmir is home to several wetlands, including Dal Lake, Wular Lake, and Hokersar Wetland Reserve. These wetlands provide an ideal breeding ground for migratory birds like geese, ducks, and cranes. However, over the years, these wetlands have been subjected to environmental degradation, pollution, and encroachment. This has resulted in a decline in the number of migratory birds visiting Kashmir.

But this year, the number of migratory birds flocking to Kashmir has been much higher than previous years. While this may seem like good news, it has raised some concerns among experts. The sudden increase in the number of birds could be due to a lack of suitable habitats in their wintering grounds or changes in weather patterns. The birds may be arriving earlier than usual or staying longer, disrupting their natural migratory patterns. This can have adverse effects on the bird population and the ecosystem as a whole.

Moreover, the increased number of visitors to the wetlands can put additional pressure on the fragile ecosystem. Birdwatchers and tourists who flock to these wetlands to catch a glimpse of the migratory birds can cause disturbance to the birds' breeding and feeding activities. This can lead to a decline in their numbers and affect the overall health of the ecosystem.

To address these concerns, the government and environmental agencies need to take urgent measures to protect the wetlands and the migratory birds. The first step would be to enforce stricter regulations to prevent encroachment and pollution of the wetlands. This could include setting up a buffer zone around the wetlands to restrict human activities and regulate waste disposal. The government could also incentivize the local population to adopt sustainable practices and promote eco-tourism that is respectful of the environment.

Secondly, birdwatchers and tourists need to be educated about the importance of preserving the wetlands and respecting the birds' natural habitats. They should be made aware of the do's and don'ts when visiting these areas and encouraged to follow responsible tourism practices. This could include maintaining a safe distance from the birds, avoiding loud noises, and not littering.

Lastly, there needs to be a concerted effort to monitor the migratory bird populations and their behavior. Scientists and researchers should conduct regular surveys to track the number of birds and their breeding patterns. This will help identify any changes in their migratory behavior and allow for timely intervention to prevent any adverse impacts on the ecosystem.

In conclusion, the flocking of migratory birds to Kashmir is a beautiful sight to behold, but it is also a reminder of our responsibility to protect our environment and the biodiversity it supports. The sudden increase in the number of birds should not be seen as a cause for celebration but rather as a call to action to protect these delicate ecosystems. With careful planning, management, and cooperation, we can ensure that the wetlands of Kashmir continue to be a safe haven for migratory birds and a source of joy and wonder for generations to come.

Functioning Of Parliament Is
Under Threat From Ruling
Party Itself

Prime Minister's Hurt Ego Is At The Root Of BJP Demand For Rahul's Apology



ARUN SRIVASTAVA

Home minister Amit Shah's setting the condition at the India Today conclave on March 17 that Rahul Gandhi must apologise for his UK remarks before he can be allowed to defend them in Parliament, is just like confessing the crime which the person has not committed at all. After maintaining a passive silence for more than a week, Shah coming out with this condition, certainly makes it abundantly clear that Narendra Modi is determined to confront the Congress and other opposition parties.

Modi claims to respect democracy and parliamentary practices. If one subscribes to his claim, what deters him from not directing his MPs and colleagues to refrain from creating chaos in the parliament. This is first time in the history of Independent India that the ruling party has been stalling the functioning of the parliament. People are not naive to make out the implication. It is a known fact, according to practice and procedure of parliament, that only a government which is on wrong path and has lost moral power resorts to such gimmicks. Modi must not live in fool's paradise that people of the country endorse BJP members actions.

On Thursday Rahul Gandhi met Speaker Om Birla and sought an opportunity to explain his remarks in Parliament. It is really incongruous to make out why he was not permitted. This simply added strength to his assertion that democracy was not functioning. Later Rahul said outside the house; "So, if Indian democracy was functioning, I would be able to say my piece in Parliament". At the conclave Shah said that the Parliament standoff can be resolved if the Opposition comes forward to hold talks with the government. But in the same breath he put the onus on Rahul for resolving the stalemate.

One would certainly like to know what prevented him from taking the initiative and convey to the Speaker, government's willingness to listen to his clarification. One thing is absolutely clear besides making his remarks as election issue, Modi has made it a



personal issue and his hurt ego will be assuaged only after Rahul apologises. This is certainly not feasible. With Rahul not to apologise and Modi troupe not willing to move two step backward, the stalemate would continue. Being the leader of the house it is the moral responsibility of Modi to initiate the process to break the impasse. He must realise that his personal ego is not above the nation's interest. This will simply impair Modi's image. People will come to nurse the believe that in order to conceal his failure Modi was resorting to such nature of tactics and even not allowing the parliament to function.

Shah statement at the conclave has been quite ambiguous "(Whether) we are adamant or not (is not the question since) you are not the Speaker. What I'm saying is, let the two parties (government and Opposition) sit before the Speaker, let them (Opposition) move two steps forward and we also move two steps forward and the standoff can be resolved". If he is really interested that people must not form wrong images and impression about Modi and his government, he must break the ice instead of let it remain the ego problem.

The hardening of the stance by Modi reminisces the famous word of caution from JP to Indira Gandhi just ahead of intensifying the Bihar Movement; "Vinas Kale Viprit Buddhi". Indira's protégé Devkant Barooah had coined the phrase "Indira is India and India is Indira". Taking a cue from her Modi has also been projecting as the synonym of India. We have heard this on many occasion. But Shah saying; "It's unfortunate that the Congress party is indulging in anti-national activities. After being repeatedly rejected by the nation, Rahul Gandhi has now become a per-

manent part of this anti-national toolkit," makes it explicit that Modi is working in the footsteps of Indira.

With nothing to offer to the Indians in terms of economic development and growth, BJP has only one agenda; "nationalism under threat". How long Modi and Shah would exploit the emotion and psyche of the people by using this phrase? This is certainly not an idiom which could be used in posterity. This is simply a political phrase. As the people forgot "Indira is India, India is Indira" within a couple of years of floating of the slogan, the people will also forget "nationalism under threat". In fact it is already losing its credence was clearly evident in recent assembly election which BJP lost, notwithstanding Shah's claim that Rahul has been losing elections.

Even a court of law listens to the accused before awarding with the verdict. But in Rahul's case it is really intriguing why Modi and Shah are adamant that he should apologise first before coming out with his version on the floor of the house. This reminds of one political phrase "Khatanabahi, jo kahe Kesari wahi sahi" (do need for document, whatever Sitaram Kesari says is correct). In Rahul's case they intend to say it is their word that is law and nothing is above it and Rahul has to accept it.

In case Rahul musters courage to defy this de jure verdict, he must be ready for internment not only from Lok Sabha but also from the country, one the ground of being anti national. The BJP's troll group is already on the task. While some one is filing breach of privilege the other is for annulment of his Lok Sabha membership. This nonetheless points to the sycophancy acquiring the character of institution in the BJP. They

have come to realise that this is the passport to enjoy power and continue to hog limelight.

The remark of the union law minister Kiren Rijiju; "Rahul will have to apologise in Parliament and it is our duty to seek his apology," provides an indication to the fact that the ministers have no other duty but to seek apology and for this they can go to any extent. A speculation is making round the political circle that the BJP may like to have the house dissolved and seek a fresh mandate. The primary agenda would be seeking a mandate against Rahul and his action. Rijiju said anti India forces and a "gang" had conspired to defame India in foreign land and they were speaking the same language. "The gang members speak the language used by Rahul Gandhi".

In their pursuit they are not even willing to abide by the parliamentary practices. Leader of opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge had cited the time-honoured tradition of the Rajya Sabha that prohibits allegations against a member of the other House. He had also cited a precedent from June 19, 1967, when V.V. Giri said: "I would like to add that it would be a good rule to observe that members of one House should not use the freedom of speech on the floor of the House to make allegations or charges against members of the other House...". It is learnt that Rajya Sabha chairman has asked the Rajya Sabha leader, BJP's Piyush Goyal, to have a look at his statement wherein he had accused Rahul, but on his part did not relent.

Trinamool MP Mahua Moitra has hit out at Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla, accusing him of not allowing opposition members to speak in the House. She tweeted "Last 3 days saw speaker @ombirlakota allow ONLY BJP ministers to speak on mike & then adjourn parliament with not a single opposition member being allowed to speak. Democracy is under attack. And the speaker leads from the front. And I am willing to go to jail for this tweet". She was correct in saying that the BJP top guns are using the Speaker and the Rajya Sabha vice-chairman to throttle opposition in Parliament. The functioning of Parliament is under threat from the ruling government itself, not by opposition.

IPA Service

Telangana Will See Fierce Battle
Between BRS And BJP In Assembly Polls

CM K Chandrasekhar Rao Should Focus Now Only On State Forgetting National Role



SUSHIL KUTTY

What is happening in Telangana? After Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's daughter K Kavitha declined to entertain the Enforcement Directorate's invitation to drop by for another round of questioning in the Delhi Excise Policy case, there's not much been heard of, and from the Bharat Rashtira Samithi. The Congress has hijacked the political narrative from not only the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, but also from the rest of the opposition parties.

Simply put, this whole thing about "Rahul Gandhi on foreign soil" has diverted attention from opposition unity, and the upcoming six assembly elections including the one in Telangana due in December 2023, ahead of the 2024 general elections. KCR had told media in 2022 that the BRS will out-perform its last assembly elections score of 88 and take the party's tally in the 118-member Telangana assembly to 95.

But what is KCR thinking now, after the "Rahul Gandhi show on foreign soil" and the political fallout of Rahul refusing to bow to the BJP diktat and "apologise", asking "apologise for what"? Nobody is sure about the BRS's take on "Rahul Gandhi on foreign soil". For KCR, both the BJP and the Congress are adversaries, and he cannot be seen to be taking sides. That said, it is a risk not to be heard of, and from, for

too long.

Especially, when other opposition parties hold meetings and promise to take on the Bharatiya Janata Party with combined force in 2024. Unfortunately, the Bharat Rashtira Samithi seems to have no role to play in this noble endeavour. For some reason, the BRS leader KCR comes out as a tall loner. It is a hard fact that is not easy to digest. JD(U) stalwart Nitish Kumar tried to be friendly, but was left tugging at his Telangana counterpart's shirttails.

Truth be disclosed, even the ED action against KCR's daughter K Kavitha did not ruffle too many opposition parties' feathers. The AAP, which is in the same boat after Manish Sisodia's arrest and incarceration, was more lost in its own thoughts, and travails. People quite easily forget that AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal's short-term amnesia is an unforgettable part of his persona and politics!

It is also lore that KCR is one among several opposition leaders with national ambitions. There's Kejriwal, and there's Mamata Banerjee. And, if KCR turned the TRS into BRS, it was also because he was harbouring national ambitions and, therefore, required a national platform to launch himself from.

KCR had in October 2022 made it clear that he would not call for snap assembly polls. The Bharat Rashtira Samithi said on March 17, 2023 that the decision stands. KCR reiterated this at the party's national executive meeting, "No early polls... BRS will go into elections as per schedule. Padayatra would be held across the state. Leaders must start interacting with public..."

For all we know, however, early polls could still be

called by KCR. It is no secret that KCR is wary of the BJP's "election machinery", and the kind of "dirty politics" that the BJP could descend to in a do-or-die election battle. KCR and the BRS, therefore, are not taking things lightly though the Modi government is bent on throwing spanners at the BRS with the central investigative agencies randomly targeting BRS lawmakers to lure them away.

KCR couldn't be far from the truth when he accused the BJP of using its ruling-party prowess to compel BRS lawmakers to shift allegiance with threats of CBI/ED raids, not even sparing "my daughter Kavitha", who was to be questioned again. Kavitha says the Modi government is using the ED for making a "back door" to power in Telangana.

As things stand, the BRS cannot be beaten in Telangana, neither by the Congress nor by the Bharatiya Janata Party. But the fight will be "fierce". A BRS victory will help advance KCR's prime ministerial ambitions. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said the BJP will notch upwards of 400 Lok Sabha seats in 2024. A BRS sweep of Telangana in the assembly elections could thwart Narendra Modi's plans.

But because the sole purpose of every BJP leader is to ensure Prime Minister Narendra Modi remains Prime Minister, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP Chief JP Nadda are stuck to their Telangana brief: Prepping for the day of the Telangana assembly elections which will along with the other assembly elections set the stage for the 2024 general elections.

IPA Service



Who Saw The Golden Flames Of Chinar In Kashmir Valley?

■ **Mool Raj**

When God created this planet he embellished it with myriad colours so that human beings can see, feel and embrace them in different seasons. In addition to cool and warm colours usually, it is the green and white that represent seasons in Kashmir. The changing season brings new colours and in autumn it is orange, yellow, brown and red shades that dominate the scene.

How beautifully Albert Camus described the loveliness of the autumn season in a single line when he said 'Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower'. Contrary to this thought, many say all beauty ends at the beginning of this season. They believe this season snatches life from green plants and trees to look everything dull.

I don't know what autumn looks like in other places of the world but in Kashmir, it is dazzling owing to a presence of a good number of chinar trees. The glory of this tree is something unique. In its praise, a famous couplet by Allama Iqbal is very popular.

**Jis khaak ke zameer main ho
 aatish-e-chinar
 Mumkin nahi ki sard ho wo
 khaak-e-arjumand**

The dust that carries in its conscience the fire of chinar. It is impossible for the celestial dust to cool down

It is quite amazing to see the dance of autumn leaves that appear vibrant while falling from tall trees. Just like some people are happy to get drenched in the rain during monsoons similarly a few like to dance with the falling of leaves in the autumn season. Indra Gandhi the third PM of India often used to come to Kashmir in the autumn season to see the picturesque fall of chinar leaves.

Platanus orientalis, The plane tree called Chinar in Urdu and Boen in Kashmiri. The long-lived deciduous tree is said to have originated in the Balkan area of the Mediterranean region. It grows well in temperate latitudes and is widely spread throughout Eurasia. This tree outside Kashmir is revered by Greek and Persian culture. Whether chinar has an indigenous origin or was introduced by foreigners in Kashmir is still debated in the academic circle. Once cultivated this tree flourished in the supportive environment of Kashmir.

The mystic saints Sheikh Nuruddin (RA) and Lal Ded have mentioned the name of this tree in their sacred works. The chinar tree planted by Sufi saint Syed Qasim Shah Hamdani in 1374 AD at Budgam was believed by MS Wadoo



author of the book "The Trees of Our Heritage" to be the oldest in J&K. But the ongoing census and geotagging of chinar trees show some chinar trees to be 1000 years old in central Kashmir.

It should be noted that we get enough references about the presence of chinar trees in the valley during the sultanate period of Kashmir. But we also know that the Mughals promoted chinar on a large scale. They planted a majestic chinar tree in the gardens of Kashmir and gave it the status of a royal tree which remained intact to this day.

The world-famous Mughal gardens

are known for their majestic chinar trees. The three well-known gardens Nishat, Shalimar and Naseem Bagh in the heartland of Kashmir are full of grand chinars. Over 1200 chinar trees were planted alone in Naseem Bagh by the Mughals. Outside the city, Mughals planted chinars in the gardens of Verinag, Achwal, Dara Shikoh Bagh, and Padshahi Bagh in the Anantnag district.

It would be quite interesting to call Srinagar the city of chinars. Besides Mughal gardens where chinars are planted in large numbers, one can see them everywhere in the city, on the

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Platanus orientalis, The plane tree called Chinar in Urdu and Boen in Kashmiri.

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6

banks of Jhelum, along the residency road and in the middle of Dal Lake.

The entire region of Kashmir is dotted by shady chinar trees be it cities or hillsides. The kings mostly planted these trees in important locations. It was the common people especially Sufi saints who took it to the villages of rural Kashmir.

A perfect example of beauty, this heritage tree is known for its gigantic size. Chinar is perhaps the only tree in the valley that can live for centuries. That is why the saying "Boen chi Gawah" which means chinar witness everything is very famous. This tree is a witness to history and holds a special place in the culture of this land. Under the shadows of this tree, many dynasties flourished.

The beautiful design of chinar leaf is well acclaimed in the Kashmiri handicraft and wood industries. Every part of the chinar tree is valuable. The timber is used for making furniture, the bark is used as medicine, and from twigs and roots fabric die is made. Its leaves are used to fuel the fire pot locally known as Kangri. But above all the majestic chinar is known for its aesthetic beauty. The experience of walking on the red carpet lying under the chinar trees is pretty special. The sounds produced by the crunching of leaves under one's feet are touching. With the onset of autumn, people throng to the valley in great numbers to feel the life-giving warmth of chinar trees.

Boen-e-Shuhul, The cool shades of this tree are quite popular. In summer, people often take shelter under its strong and spreading boughs. Many people wish to be buried under the shades of this tree. Perhaps Sheikh Abdullah the author of Aatish-e-Chinar would have wished the same. Luckily he was buried in the premises of the historic Naseem Bagh on the shores of Dal lake in Srinagar.

Despite being a state tree, protected by the legislation, the number of chinar trees continues to decrease. In the 1970s as per the official count, there were 42000 Chinar trees in Kashmir and that number has been reduced to a mere 5000 now. For some years now the government seems serious enough to promote heritage tourism by distributing saplings to increase the population of chinars in J&K. Last but not least we should also plant chinar trees in abundance on chinar day which is celebrated on March 15 every year.

(The author is Environmental Science at Govt Higher Secondary School Khellani Doda. Views are his own)

“Fake News Can Endanger Democratic Values Of Fraternity”: Chief Justice Of India

New Delhi: Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud on Wednesday said that fake news can create tensions between communities and thus endanger democratic values. Speaking at the 16th Ramnath Goenka awards ceremony, CJI Chandrachud, who was the chief guest, termed responsible journalism as the engine which drives democracy towards a better future. “Responsible journalism is the engine that drives democracy forward to a better tomorrow. In a digital age, it is more important than ever for journalists to be accurate, impartial, responsible and fearless in their reporting,” he said. Referring to the Emergency era, when the Indian Express carried blank op-ed pages, CJI Chandrachud said it is a reminder how powerful silence is. “It was a fearful time but fearless time also gives rise to fearless journalism,” he said, adding that June 25, 1975 is a defining moment in our history. “One proclamation defined and redefined our perceptions of liberty and threats to it and how tenuous it can



be,” he said, adding that is “why we celebrate these awards as symbolising our eternal sense of optimism on which we hope nation will continue.” The CJI stressed that there is a need to bridge the gap between truth and lie. “Fake news has the capability of creating tensions between communities, thereby endangering democratic values of fraternity,” he said, adding that “journalists and lawyers (or judges in my case) share something in common. Both share a belief in the saying ‘pen is

mightier than the sword’.” He said that vibrancy of democracy is compromised when press is prevented from speaking truth to power. “The press must remain free if the country is to remain a democracy. Newspapers have historically acted as catalysts for social and political change”, he said, adding that a comprehensive fact-checking mechanism should be in place as fake news can guide or misguide millions at once in contradiction to the fundamentals of democracy. Referring to media trials, DY

Chandrachud said there have been instances where media has rendered an accused guilty in eyes of public even before the courts find them so. “It is the job of the media to convey information to the public without violating the rights of the innocents. Responsible journalism is the beacon of truth and its drives the democracy forward. We at present navigate challenges of digital age and journalists have to maintain accuracy, impartiality and fearlessness in their reporting,” he said. Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud on

Wednesday said that fake news can create tensions between communities and thus endanger democratic values. Speaking at the 16th Ramnath Goenka awards ceremony, CJI Chandrachud, who was the chief guest, termed responsible journalism as the engine which drives democracy towards a better future. “Responsible journalism is the engine that drives democracy forward to a better tomorrow. In a digital age, it is more important than ever for journalists to be accurate, impartial, responsible and fearless in their reporting,” he said. Referring to the Emergency era, when the Indian Express carried blank op-ed pages, CJI Chandrachud said it is a reminder how powerful silence is. “It was a fearful time but fearless time also gives rise to fearless journalism,” he said, adding that June 25, 1975 is a defining moment in our history. “One proclamation defined and redefined our perceptions of liberty and threats to it and how tenuous it can be,” he said, adding that is “why we celebrate.

Manish Sisodia Sent To Judicial Custody Till April 5 In Liquor Policy Case



New Delhi: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Manish Sisodia was sent to two weeks of judicial custody by a court in Delhi on Wednesday in the money laundering case linked to the capital's now-scrapped liquor sales policy. Special Judge M K Nagpal sent the former Deputy Chief Minister to jail till April 5 after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) produced him at the end of his custodial interrogation in the case. The anti-money laundering probe agency questioned Mr Sisodia, who was divested of his ministerial portfolios after his arrest, for seven days in its custody in the matter. On Tuesday, the special court deferred the hearing on his request for bail in the main liquor sales policy case being probed by the CBI. The bail request will now be heard on Saturday. The CBI on February 26 arrested Mr Sisodia in connection with alleged corruption in the drafting and imple-

mentation of the now-scrapped Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22. The Enforcement Directorate arrested Mr Sisodia on March 9 in Tihar jail, where he was lodged in connection with the case being probed by the CBI. Requesting bail, the former minister had told the Delhi court that his wife is ill and there's nobody to take care of her. His lawyer said that his son studies abroad, and hence it's his responsibility to look after her. The CBI opposed his bail, saying he is at such a high post in the government that he can easily not just hide, but even destroy, evidence related to the case. Mr Sisodia argued that he has cooperated with the CBI investigation into the Delhi excise policy case and none of the searches have revealed any incriminating material against him. His lawyer said his custodial interrogation was no longer required and he was not a flight risk.

Delhi Finance Minister Presents RS 78,800 Crore Budget For 2023-24



New Delhi: Delhi Finance Minister Kailash Gahlot today presented a 78,800 crore budget in the Delhi Assembly for the financial year 2023-24 with the announcement of nine schemes as part of the G-20 preparations. The Delhi government's budget size for 2022-23 was 75,800 crore and 69,000 crore in the preceding year. This was the first time that Mr Gahlot presented the budget after taking charge of the finance department following the resignation of deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia who was arrested by the CBI in connection with the Delhi excise policy scam case. “I would have been happier if this budget was presented by Manish Sisodia who is like my elder brother. The budget is an expression of expectations and aspirations of the people,” Mr Gahlot said in his budget speech. The minister said the budget is dedicated to a clean, beautiful and modern Delhi with 19,466 crore to be spent on upgradation of 1,400 kilometres of roads in the next 10 years. The government has allocated 2,034 crore for 2023-24 for various infrastructure projects.

Paper Leak Reports Hit Morale Of Madhya Pradesh Students Taking Board Exam

Bhopal: As nearly 20 lakh students take the Class 10 and 12 board exams in Madhya Pradesh, reports claiming multiple question paper leaks have raised tough questions for the government and demoralised students working hard to achieve their ambitions. It is alleged that question papers of 12 out of the 15 exams held so far have leaked online, and that they are selling for as low as 299 on social media sites. The state government has denied the paper leak allegations. But 35 people, including teachers and non-teaching staff, have been arrested for alleged mishandling of question papers. In one of the cases, the English question paper for Class 12 students leaked at a government school in Dhar last week. The district administration intervened

and teachers and the school clerk were arrested. Collector Priyank Mishra said, “We went to Kanya High School Nalcha and traced the question paper that was being circulated on social media. It matched with the question paper scanned from this centre.” A day later, another case was reported in Raisen district. An accused, identified as Mandideep, had allegedly made over 4 lakh rupees by providing leaked question papers to about 600 students. In a new case reported this Monday, the Physics paper for Class 12 students leaked at a government school in Damoh. District collector S Krishna Chaitnya intervened and the peon of the school was arrested. The next day, the Maths paper for Class 12 boards leaked at St Xavier's school in Umaria and 5 people were arrested. The



subjects the question papers of which were leaked included Hindi, English, Biology, Physics and Maths. For Class 10 students, a paper scheduled for March 1 allegedly circulated on social media on

March 1. On March 11, the maths paper for Class 10 was viral 21 minutes before the exam began. Three days later, the Class 10 Sanskrit paper was on social media 50 minutes before the exam. Opposition Congress raised the issue in the Assembly. Leader of the Opposition Dr Govind Singh said, “The question papers of Class 10 and Class 12 are being leaked. Several persons have been caught in some districts. They are playing around with the lives of 20 lakh students in the state. We request the government to stop this.” School Education minister Inder Singh Parmar denied the allegations. “We checked the question papers that went viral. They are fake. This is being done to confuse the children. Our department has submitted an application to the crime branch .

Air India Expansion Stirs Debate Over Airline Flying Rights

New Delhi: Tensions over plans to transform Air India into a global airline with hundreds of new jets rippled across the aviation sector on Tuesday as foreign carriers clamoured for more access to the world's fastest-growing economy. PM Modi's government faces growing demands to ease a near-freeze on capacity that can be deployed on many routes to and from India, now that India's flag carrier has been sold to the cash-rich Tata conglomerate. Current limits on the amount

of flying allowed between India and many markets date back to heavy losses at Air India around the beginning of the last decade, analysts said. But a huge overhaul of the airline, including the world's largest ever plane order for 470 jets, rekindled a debate over market access at a New Delhi aviation conference on Tuesday. Dubai's Emirates, Turkish Airlines and Kuwaiti carrier Jazeera Airways all called for sharp increases in traffic rights

to and from India to meet demand. Vietnam and Indonesia also want more flights, an Indian official said. “We are not getting enough share from this market,” Turkish Airlines Chief Executive Bilal Eksi told the CAPA India conference. Dubai has requested an extra 50,000 seats a week on India routes. But in an exclusive interview, India's civil aviation minister told Reuters the government is not currently looking at easing curbs. He urged Indian air-

lines to order more big jets to meet demand without forcing passengers to change planes. “I think it's about time that our carriers looked at the international market with greater focus. That's what we are pushing the airlines to do and that process has already started,” Jyotiraditya Scindia said. Currently most Indians use foreign carriers for long trips, often changing at Gulf hubs, with relatively few long-range jets based in the country despite a population of 1.3 billion.

Modi, Kishida review ‘challenge’ of China; boost trade, defence ties

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi held wide-ranging talks here on Monday with Japanese PM Fumio Kishida, when both sides discussed Chinese military and economic assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region and the common “challenges” that both nations face on this score, with Mr Kishida hailing India as an “indispensable” partner for Japan and announcing a new plan for a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP) which includes Japanese investment to the tune of \$75 billion for the development of infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region by 2030, in what is seen as a move to counter Beijing. During the talks, India and Japan decided to further ramp up ties in the defence and security sector, including defence equipment and technology collaboration encompassing co-design and co-innovation, trade and investment ties, health and digital partnership, development finance, food security, climate change, people-to-people ties, skill development, as well as reliable supply chains in semiconductors and other critical technologies. As the current chair of the Group of

Seven, the Japanese PM invited Mr Modi as a guest for the G-7 summit to be held in May this year in Hiroshima. Mr Modi accepted the invitation and hoped that “India-Japan relations will continue to touch new heights”. India, as the current G-20 chair, also discussed its priorities for the G-20 with Japan, which is also a member of the grouping. Two pacts were signed on Monday between the two sides, including one for the fourth tranche of a 300 billion yen Japanese loan (about Rs 18,000 crores) for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR), which is commonly known as the bullet train project. The other was on Japanese Language Education in India. Both leaders also expressed satisfaction over the “good progress” on the target set last year of Japanese investment of 5 trillion yen (Rs 3.20 lakh crores) in India in the next five years. Delivering the 41st Sapru House Lecture here on his new plan for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), when he slammed the Russian “aggression” on Ukraine, Mr Kishida underlined the four pillars of this new plan that included peace with



protection of vulnerable countries, strengthening of maritime security between Japan's self-defence forces and the armed forces of other nations including the coast guards, safe use of the seas and airspace, and a multi-layered connectivity plan that includes Japan-Asean connectivity, linkages with Pacific island nations and an industrial value chain con-

cept for the Bay of Bengal that links Bangladesh with Northeast India. With an obvious eye on China without naming it, the Japanese PM emphasised that disputes in the Indo-Pacific should be settled peacefully and without coercion by adhering to international law. Not surprisingly, therefore, the most significant part of Mr Kishida's speech was

the announcement by him of a US\$ 75 billion plan for development of infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region by 2030 that is expected to include both private investment and Japanese yen loans and also official Japanese government assistance. The announcement is seen as a move to counter China in the region. When asked at a special MEA briefing about whether China was discussed at the talks, foreign secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra said both leaders discussed the “challenges” that both nations face in the region. It may be noted that both India and Japan have territorial disputes with China. It may also be noted that both India and Japan have significantly stepped up their bilateral military exercises. Praising the Japanese PM, Mr Modi said: “I have felt his positivity and commitment towards India-Japan relations. ... Our meeting today is special for another reason as well. This year India is chairing the G-20, while Japan is chairing the G-7. And therefore, this is the perfect opportunity to work together on our respective priorities and interests. Today, I explained in detail to Prime

Minister Kishida about the priorities of India's G-20 presidency. Giving voice to the priorities of the Global South is an important pillar of our G-20 presidency.” Mr Modi added: “The India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership is based on our shared democratic values, and respect for the rule of law in the international arena. Strengthening this partnership is not only important for both our countries, it also promotes peace, prosperity and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. In our conversation today, we have reviewed the progress made in our bilateral relations. We exchanged views on defence equipment and technology collaboration, trade, health, and digital partnership. We also had a fruitful discussion on the importance of reliable supply chains in semiconductors and other critical technologies. Last year, we had set a target of Japanese investment of 5 trillion yen in India in the next five years, that is, three lakh twenty thousand crore rupees. It is a matter of satisfaction that there has been good progress in this direction.”

At Least 12 Killed In Afghanistan-Pakistan Earthquake

Kabul: At least 12 people were killed in Afghanistan and Pakistan by a strong earthquake felt across thousands of kilometres, but the region appeared Wednesday to have dodged the mass casualties usually associated with a tremor of such scale. The United States Geological Survey said the magnitude 6.5 quake was centred near Jurm in northeastern Afghanistan, but the depth of 187 kilometres (116 miles) mitigated extensive damage. The quake, which struck around 09:30 pm (1700 GMT) Kabul time on Tuesday and lasted more than 30 seconds, was felt from central Asia to New Delhi. "It was a powerful earthquake and we feared maximum damage due to the intensity - that's why we issued an alert," Bilal Faizi, a spokesman for Pakistan's emergency Rescue 1122 service in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, told AFP. "But fortunately our fears proved wrong. Residents panicked due to the magnitude of the earthquake, but the damage was minimal." The region is frequently hit by quakes - especially in the Hindu Kush mountain range, which lies near the junction of the Eurasian and Indian tectonic plates. "Stayed awake" all night In Jurm district, near the epicentre, a resident of one village reported no casualties despite the location. "We are about 2,000 to 3,000 people in our village and we all spent the night outside under the sky," said Inamullah, reached by phone. "We were all scared and stayed awake the entire night."



Panicked residents of cities and towns in Afghanistan and Pakistan also fled their homes to seek safety away from buildings - with many too scared to return. "We stayed the night in our courtyard... it was cold outside, but we preferred to stay out rather than go back," 24-year-old student Neda Raihan told AFP in Kabul. Khudadad Heights, a vast multi-storey residential block in the Pakistani capital, was evacuated after huge cracks appeared in the building. Over 55,000 people were killed by an earthquake that struck southeastern Turkey and parts of Syria last month, heightening

fears across the region. "The children started shouting that there is an earthquake. We all ran out. The horrors of the earthquake in Turkey and neighbouring countries had a strong effect on our nerves," said Ikhtlaq Kazmi, a retired professor in the Pakistani city of Rawalpindi. Officials in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, north of the Pakistani capital, said nine people had been killed in the quake, including two women and two children. High alert In Afghanistan, officials reported three dead and 44 injured - but phone and internet

links to remote parts of the country had been severed and communication patchy. Government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said health centres across the country had been put on high alert. In the Afghan capital Kabul, shopkeeper Noor Mohammad Hanifi set up tents in the street for his family to spend the night in. "Nobody dares to go inside their homes," Hanifi told AFP as his family, cloaked in blankets, took shelter. In Afghanistan, many families were out of their homes celebrating Nowruz, the Persian New Year, when the quake struck. "I heard people screaming and yelling as they came out in the streets," said Masieh, who was outside with his family when the tremor hit. "It's possible that there could be another tremor so I'm still waiting outside." Those indoors also quickly left their houses and apartments. "They just fled without wearing shoes, just carrying their children in their hands," an AFP correspondent said. Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif ordered the National Disaster Management Authority to be ready to deal with any emergency. Last June more than 1,000 people were killed and tens of thousands made homeless after a 5.9-magnitude quake - the deadliest in Afghanistan in nearly a quarter of a century - struck the impoverished province of Paktika. Afghanistan is in the grips of a humanitarian disaster made worse by the Taliban takeover of the country in August 2021.

3 Killed In Russian Drone Attack On School In Kyiv Region

Kyiv: Three people were killed and seven wounded in a Russian drone attack that hit a vocational high school in the Kyiv region overnight, authorities said Wednesday. "Three people died, two people were injured and one person was rescued. Four people are probably under the rubble," the state emergency service said on Telegram. The military administration of the Kyiv said three people were killed and seven injured. The strike hit a high school about 80 kilometers (50 miles) south of Kyiv, said the emergency services, which published images of heavily damaged buildings. The attack "partially destroyed" two floors of two student residences and a building that is used for studying, the same source said. A fire affecting more than 300 square metres (3,200 square feet) of the school was extinguished shortly before 7 am local time, according to the emergency services.

South Korea, US To Hold Largest-Ever Military Drills Amid N Korea Tensions

Seoul: South Korean and US forces will hold their largest-ever live-fire exercises in June in a show of force to North Korea, which has ratcheted up tension with numerous missile launches, South Korea's defence ministry said on Wednesday. The exercises are part of a series of events marking the 70th anniversary of the alliance between the two countries this year. "We've planned various anniversary programmes focusing on realising 'peace through strength' through action based on our strategic deterrence capabilities and the solid combined defence posture amid North Korea's evolving nuclear and missile threats," the ministry said in a statement. "During the live-fire exercises, the combined forces will demonstrate the alliance's formidable firepower and mobility on an unprecedented scale." South Korea plans to mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of its military in September with a display by the allies' forces of their "overwhelming deterrence and response capabilities" against the North, that will include South Korea's missile defence system, the ministry said. In recent weeks, North Korea has been ramping up its military tests, firing an intercontinental ballistic missile last week and conducting a nuclear counter-attack simulation against the U.S. and South Korea over the weekend. The United States has about 28,500 troops in South Korea. U.S. and South Korean forces have been carrying out various types of military training in recent weeks including air and sea drills involving American B-1B bombers, and their first large-scale amphibious landing exercises in five years. North Korea has reacted furiously to those drills, calling them a rehearsal for its invasion.

Data from Wuhan animal market yields clues about origins

LONDON: Data from the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, briefly uploaded to a global database by Chinese scientists, gives crucial information on the outbreak's origins, including on an animal market in the Chinese city of Wuhan, researchers said. The virus was first identified in Wuhan in December 2019, with many suspecting the Huanan live animal market to be the source, before spreading around the world and killing nearly 7 million people. The scientists published a pre-print report based on their interpretation of the data on Monday, after leaks in the media last week and a meeting with the World Health Organisation, which has urged China to release more information. The data from the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is no longer available on the GISAID database where it was found by the scientists. It comprised new sequences of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and additional genomic data based on samples taken from the live animal market in Wuhan in 2020, according to the scientists who accessed it. The sequences showed that raccoon dogs and other animals susceptible to the coronavirus were present in the market and may have been infected, providing a new clue in the chain of transmission that eventually reached humans, they said. "This adds to the body of evidence identifying the Huanan market as the spillover location of Sars-CoV-2 and the epicentre of the Covid-19 pandemic," said the report.

TikTok says half of Americans use site as ban threat looms

WASHINGTON: TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew said on Tuesday that US user numbers had soared to 150 million - almost half the total population - as he prepared to fight at US Congress for the Chinese owned site's future. Chew will give testimony before the House Energy and Commerce Committee Thursday where he is set to face a barrage of questions over allegations by both Republicans and Democrats that the app is beholden to the Communist Party in Beijing. The company has also confirmed reports that the White House gave TikTok an ultimatum to part ways with its Chinese owners or face a US ban. "Today, I'm super excited to announce that more than 150 million Americans are on TikTok. That's almost half of the US coming to TikTok to connect, to create, to share, to learn or just to have some fun," Chew said in a TikTok post. This was up from TikTok's previous measure in 2020 that 100 million users came to the video-sharing site every month, which already made it one of the most popular. Chew also asked the app's devoted users to "let me know in the comments what you want your elected representatives to know about what you love about TikTok." "Some politicians have started talking about banning TikTok. Now, this could take TikTok away from all 100 and 50 million of you," Chew said. The Singaporean CEO said he would share with Congress "all that we're doing to protect Americans using the app," in a reference to a proposal called Project Texas that would guarantee special handling for the data of US users. TikTok has consistently denied sharing data with Chinese officials and says it has been working with US authorities for more than two years to address national security concerns. Time spent by US users on TikTok has surpassed that spent on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram or Twitter and it is closing in on streaming titan Netflix, according to market tracker Insider Intelligence. Norway ban

Xi departs Russia after 'new era' summit with Putin



Chinese leader Xi Jinping left Russia on Wednesday after a summit with President Vladimir Putin that was a display of unity against the West, with no apparent signal of a breakthrough to end the fighting in Ukraine. The nations, eager to curb Western power, expressed concerns about Nato expansion in Asia and agreed to deepen a partnership which has grown closer since Putin launched an offensive in Ukraine. Xi's plane left Moscow's Vnukovo airport after being seen off by an honour guard, Russian news agencies reported, capping a visit that was a boost for the internationally-isolated Russian leader. Putin said he was open to talks on Ukraine and praised Beijing's 12-point position paper on the conflict, which includes a call for dialogue and respect for all countries' territorial sovereignty. "Many of the provisions of the peace plan put forward by China [...] can be taken as the basis for a peaceful settlement when

Kyiv and the West will be ready for it," Putin said after talks with Chinese leader Xi Jinping. "However, so far we have not seen such readiness on their part." Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said Kyiv had invited China to talks, and is waiting for an answer from Beijing. "We offered China to become a partner in the implementation of the peace formula. We passed over our formula across all channels. We invite you to dialogue. We are waiting for your answer," Zelensky told a press conference. The United States, however, said it does not see China as capable of being an impartial mediator - Washington's most direct criticism yet of Beijing's aim to be a middleman in efforts to end the conflict. Unlimited possibilities Moscow and Beijing have over the past years ramped up cooperation, both driven by a desire to counterbalance US global dominance.

Sri Lanka leader warns hard times to follow IMF bailout

Sri Lanka's president warned Wednesday of more economic pain to come for the crisis-hit nation, with strict austerity measures needed to restore its ruined finances after an IMF bailout deal. The International Monetary Fund approved its long-delayed rescue package on Monday after China, the South Asian island's biggest bilateral lender, offered debt relief assurances. President Ranil Wickremesinghe lauded the deal in a speech to parliament as a milestone in Sri Lanka's recovery from last year's unprecedented economic crisis. But he also told lawmakers that the bailout was only the first step in more difficult structural reforms. "The IMF loan is not an end in itself, this is the beginning of a long and more difficult journey," Wickremesinghe said. "We have to traverse it with care and courage. The only objective is to rebuild the economy." Sri Lanka defaulted on its \$46 billion foreign debt last April after nearly exhausting its foreign exchange reserves, making it almost impossible for importers to source vital goods. The island nation's 22 million people endured months of food and petrol shortages, along with runaway inflation and prolonged blackouts, as a result. Wickremesinghe has sought to restore government coffers by sharp tax hikes and ending generous consumer subsidies on fuel and electricity. On Wednesday, he said more taxes were on the cards to meet the IMF's demand that Sri Lanka halve its spend on foreign debt servicing from the nine per cent of GDP recorded last year. The IMF also requires Sri Lanka to set up tough anti-corruption laws and sell off cash-bleeding state companies, including beleaguered carrier SriLankan Airlines. Wickremesinghe said the government would assume the external debts of key



public companies to make them more attractive to investors. Trade unions have opposed the austerity programme with strikes crippling the health and transport sectors last week and warnings of further industrial action to come. "The IMF loan is not an end in itself, this is the beginning of a long and more difficult journey," Wickremesinghe said. "We have to traverse it with care and courage. The only objective is to rebuild the economy." Sri Lanka defaulted on its \$46 billion foreign debt last April after nearly exhausting its foreign exchange reserves, making it almost impossible for importers to source vital goods. The island nation's 22 million people endured months of food and petrol shortages, along with runaway inflation and prolonged blackouts, as a result. Wickremesinghe has sought to restore government coffers by sharp tax hikes and ending generous consumer subsidies on fuel and electricity. On Wednesday, he said more taxes were on the cards to meet the IMF's demand that Sri Lanka halve its spend on foreign debt servicing from the nine per cent of GDP recorded last year.

India 'cancels' Pakistan's invite to SCO event

ISLAMABAD: India has blocked Pakistan's participation in a seminar of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), an unprecedented move in the context of the forum, sources told Dawn. The seminar, 'SCO Armed Forces Contribution in Military Medicine, healthcare and pandemics', was organised by India's Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses on Tuesday. The SCO members and observer states participated in the seminar. "India has misused its position as the Chair [of the SCO] and acted irresponsibly in denying a sovereign member state the right to participate in an SCO event," said an official. India claims Pakistan "skipped the event" after it raised objections to "incorrect depiction" of held Kashmir on the map. Pakistan has rejected the reasoning, saying that the region was an internationally-recognised disputed territory "whose final disposition will be made in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions through a fair and impartial plebiscite under the UN auspices". In line with its strong commitment to the Shanghai spirit and the charter and objectives of the SCO, Pakistan has been participating with a positive and constructive approach in various events being held under the current Chair, the official added. Pakistan has urged India not to exploit its position as SCO Chair to advance "self-serving objectives" and refrain from politicising the organisation. Pakistan has rejected the reasoning, saying that the region was an internationally-recognised disputed territory "whose final disposition will be made in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions through a fair and impartial plebiscite under the UN auspices". In line with its strong commitment to the Shanghai spirit and the charter and objectives of the SCO, Pakistan has been participating with a positive and constructive approach in various events being held under the current Chair, the official added. Pakistan has urged India not to exploit its position as SCO Chair to advance.

School year starts in Afghanistan, but no classes held

KABUL: Afghanistan's schools reopened for the new academic year on Tuesday, but no classes were held as students were unaware of the start and hundreds of thousands of teenage girls remain barred from attending class. Afghanistan is the only country in the world where girls are prohibited from going to secondary school. Taliban authorities have imposed an austere interpretation of Islam since storming back to power in August 2021 after the withdrawal of the US-led foreign forces that backed the previous governments. The education ministry made no public announcement of the reopening of schools, several teachers and officials said. "A letter issued by the minister of education was given to us by our principal to reopen the school today but, since no public announcement was made, no students came," said Mohammad Osman Atayi, a teacher at the Saidal



Naseri Boys High School in Kabul. Seven schools in Kabul saw only a few teachers and primary students arriving but no classes were held. Schools also reopened in provinces including Herat, Kunduz, Ghazni and Badakhshan but no lessons were held there either. Officials held a ceremony to mark the start of the new academic year at a boys' school in Kabul. Tuesday's start of the new academic year coincided with Nauroz, the Persian

New Year, celebrated widely in Afghanistan before the Taliban returned to power but now considered "illegal" by the country's new rulers. "Taliban snatched everything 'Hundreds of thousands of teenage girls remain barred from secondary school.' The Taliban have snatched everything away from us," said 15-year-old Sadaf Haidari, a resident of Kabul who should have started grade 11 this year. "I am depressed and broken." Eighteen-year-old Deena Rahimi should have started

grade 12 this year but is confined to her home while her brother attends class. "My brother and I used to go to school together daily but now he goes alone," Rahimi said. "I'm just forced to watch him go to school while we are not allowed." The ban on girls' secondary education came into effect in March last year, just hours after the education ministry reopened schools for both girls and boys. Taliban leaders - who have also banned women from university education - have repeatedly claimed they will reopen secondary schools for girls once "conditions" have been met, from obtaining funding to remodelling the syllabus along Islamic lines. The international community has made the right to education for women a key condition in negotiations over aid and recognition of the Taliban government. No country has officially recognised the Taliban as Afghanistan's legitimate rulers.

DCDRC Baramulla organises Introductory Cum Awareness Meeting at Uri

BARAMULLA, MARCH 22: In order to create awareness among general public with regard to their rights and responsibilities as a consumer, District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission Baramulla in collaboration with Food Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department Baramulla today organised an introductory cum awareness meeting at Dak Banglow Uri.

The camp was presided over by the President Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission Baramulla, Peerzada Qousar Hussain and attended by the Assistant Director Food Baramulla Tariq Ahmad, Member of the Commission Miss Nyla Yaseen, Tehsil Supply Officers of Uri and other Officials of the department.

The President while speaking on the occasion said that the interest of the general consumers stands our first and foremost priority and emphasised that the objective of this meeting is to Create awareness among the officials in particular and the Public in general regarding their rights and responsibilities as a consumer.

While highlighting the importance of consumer rights, President DCDRC said the empowerment of the consumers has been accorded the highest priority by the government by enacting the Consumer Protection Act 2019, to protect against the marketing of products that are hazardous to life and property. He also underlined that since con-



sumer awareness is essential to help the Consumers to exercise their rights, the Govt, in this regard, has been conducting a wide multimedia awareness campaign titled Jago Grahak Jago through which Consumers can learn about the fraudulent practices and how to tackle them.

AD Food during the introductory meeting pointed out some major issues and problems faced by the consumers, while reiterating the rights as responsibilities of the consumers, emphasised that in case any of the consumer feels dissatisfaction about the purchase of any of the products or notices any unfair trade practices, they should approach the District Consumer

Disputes Redressal Commission Baramulla for redressal of these grievances, as not to have accept substandard quality of products.

Other speakers also deliberated on the subject and said that the consumer needs to be informed about the quality, quantity, standard, purity and price of goods, so as to safeguard his interests against the unfair trade practices and services. AD Food during the introductory meeting pointed out some major issues and problems faced by the consumers, while reiterating the rights as responsibilities of the consumers, emphasised that in case any of the consumer feels dissatisfaction about the purchase of any of the products or notices.

Director Fisheries reviews preparation for rolling out HADP

Farooq Rather

KULGAM, MARCH 22: In order to review the preparations for roll out of Holistic Agriculture Development Plan (HADP), Director Fisheries, Mohammad Farooq Dar (JKAS), also holding the charge of Mission Director HADP visited District Kulgam and interacted with the officers & officials at ongoing training programmes under HADP at Govt Degree College Kulgam.

The Mission Director highlighted the importance of the Holistic Development Plan of agriculture and allied sectors in the UT for economic growth and prosperity of the farming community.

He stressed upon the officers to take advantage of the training programmes for efficient implementation of the Development plan on ground.

Director Fisheries later conducted extensive tour of District Kulgam to review the Developmental activities of Fisheries sector being taken under various schemes. He was accompanied by Joint Director Fisheries Kashmir and other officers of the Department. During visit to Trout Fish Farm at Chancer, Director interacted with fish farmers and also distributed fish farming equipments among the fish farmers covered under PMMSY



Scheme. The fish farmers were advised to transform their units on modern scientific lines to enhance their production.

The fishermen on the occasion raised their concern regarding various welfare schemes being implemented by the Department of Fisheries and social Welfare Department. The adverse impact of unscientific mining on fish and fisheries was also reviewed and the Director assured

that all the demands of fish farmers and fishers will be addressed in a time bound manner.

Director Fisheries also inspected the Trout Hatcheries and Medium RAS being established in Private sector under PMMSY Scheme. The officials also paid a visit to Trout Feed Mill which is first of its kind in the UT established in private sector. The entrepreneur was advised to supply quality feed to the farmers at reasonable prices.

Great staff response results in over-subscription of J&K Bank ESPS -2023

SRINAGAR, MARCH 22: Receiving an over-whelming response from the staff, J&K Bank's Employees Stock Purchase Scheme (ESPS-2023) has got over-subscribed by more than 32 percent. The issue was opened on 14th March and closed yesterday at 5 PM. Commending the immense staff response, the Bank's MD & CEO Baldev Prakash said, "From the day one, you have never failed to amaze me with your profound sense of commitment and belief in the bright future of this wonderful Bank. I am truly over-whelmed by your brisk and whole-hearted participation in the scheme that led to the over-subscription in first three days of the issue."

"I am sure that the over-subscription shall boost stakeholders perception especially that of investors about our strong belief and requisite will to script a new chapter of glory towards making J&K Bank one of the best and most successful financial institutions in the country", he added.

With a view to share with the employees' the value created by them, the Bank launched its Employees



Stock Purchase Scheme (ESPS - 2023) to promote and increase their direct ownership and participation in the institution. Members of the staff associations thanked the Bank's board and management for providing employees such great opportunity to invest and increase their stakes further in the institution. And with this kind of staff-response, we have deepened our emotional equity fur-

ther while exhibiting our belief in the unrealized potentialities of the Bank that rides and rises steadily on 85 year-old legacy of public-trust and profitability, they said in unison. Notably, under the ESPS -2023, the Bank has received applications for subscription of over 9.27 Cr shares amounting to around Rs 364 Cr. Pertinently, the Bank's Board had approved to offer up to 7 Cr new equity shares under the scheme to the employees thereby enabling them to subscribe to Bank's equity at a decently discounted price against the market value as per SEBI approved formula. The number of Bank's equity shares shall, however, be allotted proportionately to the staff as per the laid-down eligibility criteria. Bank has received applications for subscription of over 9.27 Cr shares amounting to around Rs 364 Cr. Pertinently, the Bank's Board had approved to offer up to 7 Cr new equity shares under the scheme to the employees thereby enabling them to subscribe to Bank's equity at a decently discounted price.

First time, Vasaknag Festival held at Kulgam

Vasaknag to be developed as tourist hotspot: DC

Farooq Rather

KULGAM, MARCH 22: In order to boost tourist activity in the Kund block

side by Deputy Commissioner, Kulgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-din Bhat. DDC Chairperson, Mohammad Afzal Parrey was Guest

Revenue, Education, Information & PR, YS&S, Forest and local Auqaf committee worked in collaboration to presented an impressive

over the conduct of the novel fest and said he is impressed seeing the talent of the youth which they showed in drama, skits, painting and essay competition.

He said, district administration is committed towards the development of serene tourist spots including harnessing the scenic, religious tourist potential of the area.

He added that war against drugs will continue to take this mission to the logical end and strict action is being taken to tackle drug traffickers.

While speaking about the ongoing enrollment drives, DC sought cooperation for making 100 percent enrollment so that no one should be out of school. Plantation drives are going on in the area, he said, while participating in one such plantation drive cum distribution function.

He also said that a community hall has been constructed in the block which was a demand of people. He stated that Tourist infra shall be put in place at Vasaknag to develop the area as a tourist hotspot. DDC Chairperson while speaking on the occasion said, he will be duty bound to lend any sort of support to district administration in developing the far off Kund block.

DDC member, Kund, Gulzar Ahmad Shiekh during his speech expressed gratitude towards district administration for organising the First ever Fest in the Kund Valley and said the area has witnessed appreciable development under the tenure of DC Kulgam.



of district Kulgam and to showcase rich cultural heritage, the District Administration today organised the First ever Vasaknag Festival.

The area which hosted the festival is popular for the Spring of Vasaknag which is a seasonal spring which remain brimmed with waters only for 6 months. The function organised for Vasaknag Festival was pre-

of Honour on the occasion. ADDC, Showkat Ahmad Rather, DDC member, Gulzar Ahmad Shiekh, BDC member Kund, ACR, ACD, DIO, DYSSO, Tehsildar, BDO, ZEO and other districts and tehsil level officers were present on the occasion besides hundreds of senior citizens, women, youth and school children. During the festival the departments of RDD & PR,

function. Children of various schools presented skits, stage dramas, and cultural performances on a variety of themes including brotherhood, drug abuse, sanitation, water conservation and other themes. Multiple cultural performances, including local tribal items were also presented. Addressing the gathering, DC expressed satisfaction

Engineering exports to 17 out of 25 key markets dip in Feb as slowdown grips more economies

New Delhi, Mar 22 (UNI) India's engineering exports to 17 out of 25 key markets such as the US and China declined in the month of February 2023 primarily driven by the global economic slowdown and low demand for metals and metal products, according to EEPIC India.

The export promotion body EEPIC India on Wednesday said that India's engineering shipments to the US dipped 9.1% year-on-year in February to US\$ 1.35 billion from US\$ 1.49 billion in the corresponding period last year. Exports to the US registered positive year-on-year growth of 10.8% in the first 11 months of the current fiscal. Exports to China, another key market, continued a downward trend with shipments to the neighbouring country slumping 33.3% year-on-year to US\$ 205.8 million in February 2023 as compared to US\$ 308.8 million in the same month last year. On a cumulative basis, India's engineering exports to China sank 54% year-on-year to US\$ 2.4 billion in the April-February period of 2022-23. India's engineering exports to China stood at US\$ 5.21 billion in the



April-February period of 2021-22. While the top exporting countries recording positive growth in February 2023 over February 2022 were Singapore, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, and Indonesia. The major decline observed among the top destinations includes the US, Germany, and Italy. Region-wise, positive year-on-year growth was noted only in ASEAN and WANA (West Asia and North Africa) during February 2023. On a cumulative basis, year-on-year growth in exports was witnessed in North America followed by Latin America and Oceania while the highest decline was observed in North-East Asia.

SBI Foundation announces 11th Youth for India Fellowship Program

Kolkata, March 22 (UNI) SBI Foundation, the CSR arm of State Bank Group, has announced 11th Youth for India Fellowship Program and invited applications for it. The fellowship provides a framework for educated urban youth - professionals or fresh graduates - to join hands and foster change with rural communities and NGOs at the grassroots across 17 Indian states. The applicants for this 13-month fellowship must be Indian Citizens, Overseas Citizens of India, or Citizens of Bhutan and Nepal, willing to adjust and adapt to rural life and work towards sustainable rural development goals.

The SBI Youth for India Fellowship, which is one of its kind, works on 12 thematic areas such as Health, Rural Livelihood, Food Security, Environmental Protection, Education, Water, Technology, Women's Empowerment, Self-Governance, Social Entrepreneurship, Traditional Craft and Alternate Energy. During the Fellowship program, the Fellows work on one of these 12 areas as per their interest.

All J&K Government Pharmacists Association call on Lt Governor

Farooq Rather

Srinagar: 20 March, A delegation of All J&K Government Pharmacists Association under the chairmanship of Mr. Sheikh Mehraj-ud-din called on Lieutenant Governor UT of J&K Sh. Manoj Sinha on 20th of March. A vote of thanks was submitted to Lt Governor with regard to Administrative Council approval for amendment of Pharmacy Act by virtue of which decision aims for amendment in Section 32-C inserted in Pharma-



cy Act, 1948 (Central Act) through an Adaptation Order under S.O.No:3465 (E) dated 5th of October 2020. It is pertinent to mention here that the move is going to benefit hundreds of qualified persons and Medical

Assistants trained persons for safeguarding their future and providing them the better career prospects in the field of medicine. During the interactive session various issues of the Government Pharmacists

have been confronting were put before the chair in order to seek early redressal. Mr. Sheikh Mehraj-ud-din hailed the highest chair of UT administration for having assured early redressal of grievances besides sparing moments of precious human articulation. The delegation included Mr. Bilal Ahmad Beigh, General Secretary, Mr. Mohammad Salim Wani, District President Srinagar, Mr. Suhail Mohiuddin & Mr. Arif Malik core members of Medical Assistant/Pharmacist Association.



نقشہ سحری و افطاریہ بابت سہ ماہ رمضان المبارک ۱۴۴۴ھ برائے سیرینگرہ و مضافات

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نوٹ: یہ نقشہ میر تقی میر (مرتبہ حضرت مولانا محمد رحمت اللہ علیہ القاسمی صاحب) کے تین مطلق ہے

افطار کی دعا	روزہ رکھنے کی دعا	نقشہ ہذا سے بڑھائیں	نقشہ ہذا سے گھٹائیں
اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي لَكَ صُومْتُ وَبِكَ أَمُتُّ وَعَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَعَلَى رِزْقِكَ أَفْطَرْتُ	وَبَصُومِ غَدَّ تَوَيْتُ مِنْ شَهْرِ رَمَضَانَ	اوری ۳ منٹ پونچھ ۲ منٹ سو پور ۱ منٹ بانڈی پورہ ۲ منٹ ٹیٹوال ۳ منٹ کرناتہ ۳ منٹ	اسلام آباد ۲ منٹ تراں ۲ منٹ لیہہ ۱۱ منٹ پلوامہ ۱ منٹ گلد ۲ منٹ ہرموٹھ ۱ منٹ پہلگام ۳ منٹ کوگام ۱ منٹ

رمضان	مارچ/اپریل	ایام	ختم سحری	وقت افطار	رمضان	اپریل	ایام	ختم سحری	وقت افطار
یکم رمضان	23	جمعرات	5:07	6:47	۱۶	07	جمعہ	4:45	6:58
۲	24	جمعہ	5:06	6:48	۱۷	08	سنپچر	4:43	6:59
۳	25	سنپچر	5:05	6:49	۱۸	09	اتوار	4:42	7:00
۴	26	اتوار	5:04	6:50	۱۹	10	پیر	4:41	7:01
۵	27	پیر	5:02	6:50	۲۰	11	منگل	4:39	7:01
۶	28	منگل	5:00	6:51	۲۱	12	بدھ	4:38	7:02
۷	29	بدھ	4:58	6:52	۲۲	13	جمعرات	4:36	7:03
۸	30	جمعرات	4:56	6:53	۲۳	14	جمعہ	4:34	7:04
۹	31	جمعہ	4:56	6:54	۲۴	15	سنپچر	4:33	7:05
۱۰	01	سنپچر	4:55	6:54	۲۵	16	اتوار	4:32	7:05
۱۱	02	اتوار	4:53	6:55	۲۶	17	پیر	4:31	7:06
۱۲	03	پیر	4:52	6:55	۲۷	18	منگل	4:30	7:07
۱۳	04	منگل	4:50	6:56	۲۸	19	بدھ	4:28	7:08
۱۴	05	بدھ	4:48	6:57	۲۹	20	جمعرات	4:27	7:09
۱۵	06	جمعرات	4:47	6:57	۳۰	21	جمعہ	4:25	7:10

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