

India launches first hydrogen-powered train built in the country to expand clean energy on railways: PM Modi



HARYANA, JULY 17
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday flagged off India's first hydrogen-powered train connecting Jind to Sonapat in Haryana from here, calling it a successful example of the 'Make in India' campaign.

With this, India has joined a select group of countries that have operational hydrogen-powered trains and marks an important step towards the adoption of

clean and sustainable mobility in the railway sector.

The 89-km distance between Jind and Sonapat will be covered in two hours, with the train halting at 12 intermediate stations.

After flagging off the train, the prime minister also dedicated to the nation and laid foundation stone of various development projects worth Rs 14,700 crore.

Addressing a public gathering later, Modi called the hydrogen-

powered train a successful example of the 'Make in India' campaign.

Today, Indian Railways has taken a major step in this hydrogen train from Jind to Sonapat & the world's most powerful train, he asserted.

Referring to the West Asia conflict, Modi said India receives huge quantity of petrol, diesel, LPG gas, and fertilizers through the Strait

PM Modi lays foundation stone and inaugurates multiple development projects in Punjab & Chandigarh

CHANDIGARH: Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid foundation stones of various rail and road infrastructure projects worth over 5,470 Crore rupees from Jalandhar this evening. These projects are aimed to strengthen connectivity, improve passenger convenience and accelerate economic development in the region.

Soon after reaching at Jalandhar from Chandigarh, Mr. Modi inaugurated 75 redeveloped railway stations, including Jalandhar Cantt, under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme. He inaugurated redeveloped railway stations across 20 States virtually

"Shri Amarnathji Yatra-2026"; Lieutenant Governor visits Nunwan Base Camp, inspects facilities for pilgrims

LG directs all departments to operate in mission mode to ensure the welfare of the pilgrims

SRINAGAR, JULY 17
Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha on Friday visited the Nunwan base camp and inspected the facilities in place for the Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra pilgrims.

At the Base Camp, the Lieutenant Governor chaired a meeting with senior officials and reviewed the arrangements being made for essential services provided to pilgrims including drinking water, electricity, telecom connectivity, accommodation, food, healthcare, emergency services and security. He also inspected the Yatra Registration Counter and reviewed the registration process.

The Lieutenant Governor directed all departments to work in mission mode to ensure the welfare of the pilgrims.

"Today marks 15 days since the pilgrimage began, and in these 15 days more than 3.50 Lakh pilgrims have had darshan of Baba Bholenath. By the grace of



Lord Shiva, the yatra is proceeding smoothly. There is great enthusiasm among devotees coming from every corner of the country, and local residents and service providers are also actively engaged in making this sacred pilgrimage a success," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor directed the officials to ensure

that the environment remains fully protected. He further instructed for special cleanliness drives along both routes and camps.

"We are dedicated to a waste-free Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra and we must, working together under a whole-of-government approach, fulfill this commitment," the Lieutenant Governor

One killed, three SOG personnel injured in firing incident in J-K's Baderwah

BHADERWAH, JULY 17
A man was killed and three Special Operations Group (SOG) personnel were injured in firing after he allegedly tried to snatch a service rifle here in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said on Friday.

A religious preacher has been detained in connection with the incident, which occurred late Thursday night, the police officials said. The detained person's link to the incident was not immediately clear. An SOG team laid an ambush on Thursday along the Jaigandh road, about 35 km from Baderwah town, following reports of suspicious movement in the high-altitude area, a senior officer said. Around 11.30 pm, the

Jal Shakti Department Places 50 AEEs As XENs, Transfers 76 Others

SRINAGAR, JULY 17
The Jammu and Kashmir Government has ordered a major administrative reshuffle in the Jal Shakti Department, sanctioning the immediate promotion and transfer of engineering officials across the Union Territory.

According to Government Order No. 127-(K)SD of 2026, the department has placed 50 Assistant Executive Engineers as Executive Engineers on an in-charge basis with immediate effect to meet urgent operational requirements.

The extensive list of elevated personnel includes Rohit Padha, Sanjay Gupta, Malik Basharat Alam, Mukhtar Ahmad Khanday, Vishal Pandita, Mahesh Sharma, Gulzar Ahmad Kumar, Hakeem Zahoor Ahmad,



Vinod Mehra, and Ajeaz Ahmad Malik. Joining them are Ch. Sajad Ahmad, Sadiq Hussain Bhatt, Nasir Hussain Para, Gowhar Hussain Ganai, Shafkat Hussain Vinod Raina, Sumert Kumar, Zahoor Ahmad Mir, Zulfiqar Ali, and Sumit Thappa. The promotions also extend to Nazir Ahmad Mir, Javed

Ahmad Raina, Sandeep Kumar, Tanveer Ahmad Wani, Abdul Rashid Ganai, Ishfaq Ahmad, Rajiv Kumar, Ashish Kundan, Mohd Younis Wani, and Showket Hussain. Furthermore, Bashir Ahmad Shah, Zameer Ahmad Raina, Mudassar Mushtaq, Umair, Ghulam Hassan Yattoo, Mudasi

L-G VK Saxena commissions India's first two geothermal wells at Puga Valley in Ladakh

Development marks a historic milestone towards PM's vision of Carbon-Neutral Ladakh and towards setting up India's first geothermal power project

LEH, JULY 17
In a landmark milestone in India's clean energy mission, Lieutenant Governor Shri VK Saxena, today commissioned India's first and deepest two geothermal wells at Puga Valley in Ladakh, executed by ONGC Energy Centre.

The development is a big stride towards the establishment of India's first-ever Geothermal Power Plant in Ladakh.

The commissioning of the two 1000-meter-deep wells, at a high altitude of over 14,000 feet, would significantly advance Ladakh's journey towards



becoming a clean energy hub, powered by renewable sources, as envisaged by Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi. The project also fulfils the Hon'ble PM's vision of Carbon-neutral Ladakh and the call to harness alternative, renewable energy sources for our future security.

The two geothermal wells are critical for the successful implementation of the 1 MW pilot geothermal power project at Puga, which will be India's first demonstration-scale geothermal power project.

Notably, the geothermal power project had suffered a major setback

Government establishes JK4C to combat cyber crimes across J&K

SRINAGAR, JULY 17
In a significant step towards strengthening the cyber security architecture and enhancing the capacity to combat cybercrime in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, sanction has been accorded for the establishment of the Jammu & Kashmir Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (JK4C) as an independent organization under the overall superintendence and control of the Director General of Police, J&K.

The newly established JK4C will serve as the nodal cyber-crime coordination agency for the Union Territory and will be responsible for coordinating, preventing, detecting and investigating cybercrimes across Jammu and Kashmir. The Centre will function in close alignment with the Indian Cyber Crime



Coordination Centre (I4C) under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, ensuring seamless coordination with the national cyber-crime framework.

According to order issued by home department, the JK4C will be headed by an officer of the rank of Inspector General of Police (IGP), who will function as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Centre.

As part of the restructuring, the subject of cybercrime has been detached from the Crime Wing of J&K Police and will henceforth be exclusively handled

by the JK4C.

The Government has further ordered that the existing two Zonal Cyber Crime Investigation Centres (CICs) and 23 District Cyber Police Stations shall become integral components of the JK4C, thereby creating a unified and coordinated institutional mechanism for tackling cybercrime across the Union Territory.

The order also stipulates that the proposal for creation of various posts required for the functioning of the JK4C shall be processed separately in accordance with the prescribed procedure after completion of all requisite formalities.

Pending the creation and regular filling of sanctioned posts, the Police Headquarters, J&K, has been directed to deploy the

J&K Govt Orders Reshuffle in Information Department; 17 Officers Transferred

SRINAGAR, JULY 17
The Jammu and Kashmir Government on Friday ordered a major reshuffle in the Information Department, transferring and posting 17 officers in the interest of administration with immediate effect.

According to Government Order No. 28-(K)ID of 2026 dated July 17, 2026, issued by the Information Department, Civil Secretariat, and signed by the Minister/Secretary to the Government, Alice Vaz, IAS, several District Information Officers (DIOs), Editors, Information Officers and other officers have been transferred and posted across the Union Territory.

As per the order, Showkat Hussain Ganai, JKAS (Jr. Scale), District Information Officer, Shopian, has been transferred

and posted as District Information Officer, Kulgam, against a vacant post of Information Officer.

Erim Aziz, JKAS (Jr. Scale), District Information Officer, Budgam, has been posted as Information Officer in the Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), J&K, against a vacant post.

Rajinder Kumar Dingra, JKAS (Jr. Scale), District Information Officer, Kathua, has been posted as Cultural Officer, Jammu, while Abhimanyu Singh, JKAS (Jr. Scale), District Information Officer, Doda, holding additional charge of DIO Kishtwar, has been placed at the disposal of the Director, Public Relations (J&K), New Delhi, till further orders. The government has also posted Adil Manzoor Wani, JKAS (Jr. Scale), District Information

Officer, Kupwara, as District Information Officer, Bandipora. Among other transfers, Rajinder Paul Singh has been posted as Editor in DIPR, while Gulshan Sumbria will continue on deputation in the office of Deputy Director, Information (J&K), New Delhi, as Editor. Majeed Ahmad Ganai and Gulshan Ahmad have also been posted as Editors in DIPR, with Gulshan Ahmad additionally directed to look after the post of Assistant Director, Information (Advertisement) in the office of the Joint Director Information, Kashmir. Further, Shabir Ahmad Bhat has been posted as Field Publicity Officer, Kashmir, Gurpreet Singh as District Information Officer, Kathua, Liyaqat Ali Mir as District Information Officer, Budgam, Mohammad

J&K Govt transfers 5 IPS officers to newly-set up cyber coordination centre

JAMMU, JULY 17
The Jammu and Kashmir government Friday ordered a major reshuffle in the police department, transferring five senior IPS officers to the newly-established JK Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (JK4C) as part of a concerted effort to strengthen the Union Territory's cyber crime fighting apparatus.

The transfers, ordered with immediate effect, were issued by the Home Department, according to a government order accessed news agency.

Sheikh Junaid Mehmood, IPS, currently holding the charge of In-charge IGP, has been posted as the Chief Executive Officer of JK4C. Sameer Sharma, IPS, who was serving as DIG Armed Jammu, has been transferred and posted

Jammu and Kashmir Congress to Join NC's July 20 Statehood Protest in Delhi: JKPC Chief

JAMMU, JULY 17
Jammu and Kashmir Congress president Tariq Hamid Karra on Friday said the party will join the National Conference's statehood protest in New Delhi, asserting that the movement was initiated by the grand old party.

Addressing a press conference here, Karra said the NC has invited the Congress leadership, including party president Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, to join its protest.

"Statehood represents the aspirations, emotions and sentiments of 1.4 crore people of Jammu and Kashmir. Any individual, NGO or political party that wants to join this movement is welcome," he said.

This movement transcends



political affiliations, he asserted.

Karra said the Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) will participate in the sit-in on July 20 in the national capital, while the level of participation by the Congress central leader-

ship would be decided by the party high command.

The Congress leader maintained that the campaign for the restoration of statehood was originally launched by the Congress and welcomed other parties joining the cause, Karra

CS assess the preliminary draft for Public-Private Partnership Policy Calls for creating a robust framework to attract investments in J&K

SRINAGAR, JULY 17
Chief Secretary, Atul Dulloo, today chaired a high-level meeting to deliberate upon the broad contours of the preliminary draft of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Policy being formulated by the Planning, Development & Monitoring Department through the Centre for Innovation, Technology and Governance (CITA), with the objective of creating an enabling ecosystem for attracting private investment and accelerating infrastructure and public service development across Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, APD, ACS, Finance; ACS, PWD; Director, IIM-Jammu; Commissioner, P&RMD; Commissioner, H&RUD; Commissioner, Industries; Secretary, Transport; Chief Executive Officer, CITA; and other senior officers.



Addressing the meeting, the Chief Secretary underscored the importance of building institutional capacity for successful implementation of the proposed policy. He stressed the need for systematic capacity building of officers and officials at different levels so that they are adequately equipped to operationalise the policy in an effective and time-bound manner.

Emphasising the need for delivering tangible outcomes on the ground, Dulloo observed that the Government must lead by example in implementing the policy to instil confidence among investors as well as the general public. He directed the Industries Department to take lead in formulation of the policy by suitably refined it and incorporating the

suggestions received during the meeting so that a comprehensive and well-structured policy document is finalised within the next month.

Referring to global best practices, the Chief Secretary cited the World Bank's well-established STEP model, describing it as a dynamic and self-evolving framework that

Lakhanpur To Be Developed As Street Food Hub In J&K: Jitendra Singh

JAMMU, JULY 17

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Friday said that Lakhanpur has been selected among 50 towns across the country to be developed as a 'street food hub' under the PM SVANidhi initiative, while announcing the construction of a Rs 1.5 crore gateway monument at the entry point to Jammu and Kashmir City & Local Guides.

The minister, who was accorded a warm welcome by street food vendors and traders during his visit to the Lakhanpur Vendors Market, said the Narendra Modi government has, for the first time, prioritised the welfare of street vendors through a dedicated national scheme.

Addressing vendors and traders, Singh said successive governments had ignored the concerns of street vendors, but the PM SVANidhi scheme has brought them into the mainstream by providing financial assistance, dignity and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

He said Lakhanpur's selection in the first phase of the Street Food Hub initiative reflects the government's commitment to empowering small vendors while creating organised, hygienic and visitor-friendly vending spaces.

According to the minister, the proposed Street Food Hub will be



developed in two clusters near the old bus stand and the Sales Tax Office in Lakhanpur market. Spread over 1,754.25 square metres, the project will provide modern vending infrastructure while promoting Dogra cuisine and other regional delicacies.

Located at the gateway to Jammu and Kashmir from Pathankot and on the route to the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi shrine, Lakhanpur witnesses heavy movement of tourists, pilgrims and transit travellers, making it an ideal location for the project, he said.

Singh said the government had received 126 proposals from 32 states and Union Territories covering 106 Urban Local Bodies and seven Census Towns, with Lakhanpur being selected in the

first phase.

The Union minister also announced that a landmark gateway to Jammu and Kashmir, along with beautification works at Lakhanpur, will be developed at an estimated cost of over Rs 1.5 crore. He said part of the funding would come from his Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) allocation, while the remaining amount would be mobilised from other available resources.

During the visit, Singh inaugurated a statue of Maharaja Gulab Singh at Lakhanpur, describing it as a tribute to the Dogra ruler's contribution to nation-building and the history of Jammu and Kashmir.

Referring to major infrastructure

projects in the region, the minister said the long-delayed Shahpur Kandi project has become operational, while work on the Ujh Multipurpose Project is expected to begin soon after the project reaches the final stage of approvals.

He said the Ujh project, pending for decades, would significantly improve irrigation facilities in Kathua, Samba and parts of Jammu district besides ensuring better utilisation of water resources.

Singh also said approvals have been obtained for naming Kathua railway station after Shaheed Captain Sunil Sharma and expressed confidence that the formal process would be completed shortly.

On the issue of shifting the vehicle fitness testing facility from Kathua to Samba, the minister said the move was necessitated by the establishment of a modern automated testing facility at Samba and added that a similar facility for Kathua was under consideration. Local vendors thanked the Union minister for securing the Street Food Hub project for Lakhanpur, saying it would provide a cleaner, organised and dignified working environment while improving facilities for pilgrims, tourists and other visitors.

Army Commander Reviews Operational Preparedness in Forward Areas of Ladakh, Interacts with Troops



LADAKH, JULY 17

Lieutenant General Pratik Sharma, PVS, AVSM, SM, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (GOC-in-C), Northern Command, visited the forward areas in Ladakh to review the operational preparedness of formations deployed along the sensitive frontier.

During the visit, the Army Commander was briefed on the prevailing security environment, operational readiness, capability enhancement measures, infrastructure development, and the ongoing integration of advanced technologies to strengthen

the overall defence posture in the sector.

A key highlight of the visit was Lieutenant General Sharma's interaction with troops deployed in the high-altitude and challenging terrain of Ladakh. Appreciating their unwavering commitment, exceptional professionalism, and indomitable spirit, he lauded the soldiers for their steadfast dedication in safeguarding the nation's frontiers under extremely demanding weather and operational conditions.

Addressing the troops, the Army Commander emphasised the importance of remaining innovative, main-

taining seamless synergy across all arms and services, and staying future-ready to effectively counter emerging threats in the evolving multi-domain operational environment. He encouraged the soldiers to continue upholding the highest standards of operational excellence, vigilance, and combat readiness. The visit reaffirmed the Indian Army's unwavering commitment to maintaining a high state of preparedness and ensuring the security and integrity of the nation's borders through motivated troops, modern capabilities, and robust operational readiness.

Congress Spokesperson Deepak Jha visits the historic, ancient Valmiki Temple at Nehru Park, Delhi, to seek forgiveness from Lord Valmiki

NEW DELHI, JULY 17

Deepak Jha, National Spokesperson of the All India Congress Party, visited the ancient, historic Valmiki Ashram at Nehru Park today to seek forgiveness from Lord Valmiki. He stated that he had no malicious intent and that the words had slipped out due to an inadvertent error. He said, "Today, I have come to Lord Valmiki's shrine to bow my head and humbly beg for forgiveness, vowing never to speak in such a manner about any deity—or Lord Valmiki—in the future." Speaking to journalists, he urged that the matter not be blown out of proportion. He apologized—both



physically and sincerely—to the Valmiki community and to Lord Valmiki, requesting

that the issue not be escalated further. He affirmed his commitment to following the ideals and path shown by Valmiki Ji, who guided humanity toward the righteous path of Sanatan Dharma through the creation of the epic Valmiki Ramayana. He expressed a deep sense of peace upon visiting the shrine and stated that he would remain forever grateful if Lord Valmiki granted him forgiveness.

Congress Spokesperson Deepak Jha openly apologized to the Valmiki community and declared unequivocally that he would dedicate his life to propagating the teachings and glory of Lord Valmiki

CBI arrests J&K

PWD assistant engineer for accepting Rs 30,000 bribe

JAMMU, JULY 17

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Friday said it has arrested a Jammu and Kashmir Public Works Department (PWD) assistant engineer after allegedly catching him red-handed while accepting a Rs 30,000 bribe to process compensation for a house damaged during a PMGSY road project in Doda.

In a statement issued to a spokesperson said the accused assistant engineer was posted with the PWD for the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) in Jammu and Kashmir.

The spokesperson said the CBI registered the case on July 16, 2024, following a complaint alleging that the complainant's house was damaged during the execution of the PMGSY road project connecting Thathi and Kathawa in Doda district, making the complainant eligible for compensation of around Rs 10 lakh. He said the accused allegedly demanded a bribe of Rs 50,000 for processing and releasing the compensation amount. After negotiations, the accused agreed to accept Rs 30,000 from the complainant. The spokesperson said the CBI laid a trap on July 16 and caught the accused red-handed while demanding and accepting the Rs 30,000 bribe. Investigation into the case is underway.

Interactive Academic Lecture Enhances Professional Teaching Skills of M.A. Education Students

CDOE, University of Jammu Organises Guest Lecture on Innovative Teaching-Learning Approaches

JAMMU, JULY 17
The Centre for Distance and Online Education (CDOE), University of Jammu, organised a guest lecture on 'New Innovative Approaches in the Teaching-Learning Process' today at Hall 'A' of the CDOE. The programme commenced with a welcome address by Dr. Anuradha Goswami, Coordinator of the MA education programme, who introduced the resource person, Dr. Madhu Singh, former Principal, Khalsa College of Education.

The lecture was organised to equip M.A. Education students with contemporary knowledge and practical teaching skills essential for effective teaching practice. During her insightful session, Dr. Madhu Singh highlighted how innovative teaching-learning approaches serve as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical classroom experience. She emphasised the importance of effective lesson planning and discussed various teaching methodologies, including the Herbartian Approach, RCM



Approach, and Constructivist Approach, explaining their significance in strengthening students' pedagogical skills and preparing them for professional teaching. Prof. Pankaj Srivastava, Director, Centre for Distance and Online Education (CDOE), presided over the function. Addressing the gathering, he underscored the importance of adopting innovative teaching practices and stated that such lectures provided students with practical strategies for classroom organisation, time management, and student engagement. He added that these

skills help create a more focused and productive learning environment while preparing students for future academic and professional challenges in the field of education.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Anuradha Goswami, who expressed gratitude to the resource person, faculty members, students, and all those who contributed to the successful organisation of the event, particularly Dr. Anshika Sharma, Dr. Manisha, and other faculty members for their support and cooperation.

IFA, Home Department reviews CapEx expenditure; stresses GeM procurement, budget discipline, zero creation of liabilities

SRINAGAR, JULY 17

The office of the Internal Financial Advisor (IFA), Home Department, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, today conducted a meeting, held in two sessions, with the Drawing & Disbursing Officers (DDOs) of the Home Department at the Police Headquarters. The meeting was initiated by the Additional Director General of Police (Headquarters), J&K Police, while both the sessions were chaired by Shafeel Maqbool, IFA, Home Department.

The meeting focused on two key agenda points. The first was a detailed review of the Home Department's Capital Expenditure with directions to expedite the



fund disbursement and clear pending payments without delay. The second was to ensure strict compliance with the General Financial Rules, 2017, to maintain financial discipline and prevent creation of any new liabilities.

In his address, the IFA laid strong

emphasis on financial discipline and said that all supply orders must be placed through the Government e-Marketplace wherever items are available on the portal. He directed that budget should invariably be blocked at the time of placing any supply order and no order shall be issued without ensuring budget availability.

The IFA further stated that payments for received supplies shall be made exclusively through GeM-PFMS integration and creation of liabilities without budgetary provision must be scrupulously avoided. He also stressed that all sanctions should be accorded strictly within

the competence of the sanctioning authority as per the Delegation of Financial Powers and within the allocated budget.

The sessions witnessed active participation of the DDOs of the Home Department, including those from Jammu and Kashmir Police, Fire & Emergency Services, Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL), Prisons Department, Prosecution Department, Home Guards and SDRF, among others. The participants apprised the IFA of the issues being faced by them and were assured that wherever the support of the IFA office or enhancement of delegation is required, the same is being looked into.

J&K Police Attach Assets Worth Rs 65 Lakh Of Two Drug Peddlers

JAMMU, JULY 17

Police have attached properties worth about Rs 65 lakh belonging to two alleged drug peddlers in Jammu and Rajouri districts under the NDPS Act as part of an intensified drive against narcotics trafficking, officials said.

In Jammu, the police seized and froze illegally acquired movable properties worth over Rs 38 lakh belonging to Sheriff Hussain alias Beta, a resident of the Nikki Tawi area.

The attached assets include cash amounting to Rs 14.15 lakh, a Mahindra Scorpio-N SUV valued at Rs 22.33 lakh and a Royal Enfield Bullet motorcycle worth approximately Rs 1.50 lakh.

Investigations established that the assets had been acquired through proceeds of illicit drug trafficking and were identified as illegally acquired properties under Chapter V-A of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, the



police said.

The properties were attached under Section 68F(1) of the NDPS Act.

Officials said Hussain is a habitual offender involved in multiple criminal cases, including repeated offences under the NDPS Act.

In a separate action, the police attached an immovable property worth around Rs 27 lakh belonging to Waseem Akram, a resident of Fatehpur Dama in Rajouri district, they said.

The attached property comprises a single-storey residential house at Fatehpur Dama, which was acquired through the proceeds of drug trafficking, the police said.

The accused is involved in multiple cases under the NDPS Act registered at different police stations in the district, they said.

The attachment was carried out under Section 68F of the NDPS Act after investigations established that the property had been acquired through the illicit narcotics trade, the officials said.

The police said the action was aimed at dismantling the financial infrastructure of drug traffickers and reaffirmed their commitment to continue stringent action against those involved in the narcotics trade as part of the ongoing 'Nasha Mukti Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan'.

NHRC Special Monitor discusses Tawi conservation, waste management with civil society groups in Jammu

JAMMU, JULY 17

NHRC Special Monitor (Environment, Climate Change and Human Rights) Vidya Bhushan Kumar today held a consultative meeting with representatives of NGOs and civil society groups based in Jammu. The meeting, held at the district headquarters, was convened as part of the Special Monitor's ongoing district-level assessments undertaken across the country to examine environmental concerns through a human rights lens and recommend corrective measures to the government.

The Tawi river is vital to Jammu

and its adjoining areas, Vidya Bhushan Kumar said, calling for strict measures to keep it clean. Environmental degradation affects all sections of society, he observed, but its burden falls heaviest on the poor and vulnerable. He said the purpose of the visit was to gather ground-level facts and recommend measures to the government to ensure a healthy and dignified environment for all citizens, and stressed the need to spread awareness about welfare schemes so their benefits reach every eligible person.

The Special Monitor termed plastic pollution a major chal-



lenge and called upon NGOs and local organisations to identify and develop plastic-free zones, beginning with small, sustained steps to change public

habits. Most of the waste can be converted into a valuable resource through better recycling and reuse practices, he said. The Jammu Municipal

Corporation was directed to intensify public awareness campaigns and hold open discussions on the issue, officers concerned to identify sites of illegal

garbage dumping and cordon them off with barricades, and construction agencies engaged in road and infrastructure projects to strictly comply with dust-control norms to curb air pollution.

Officers from government bodies, including Special Forestry Department and Jammu Municipal Corporation, shared the activities being undertaken for environmental protection, waste disposal and afforestation. Feedback and inputs from local residents and representatives of NGOs and social organisations were also noted by the Special Monitor.

Kumar urged citizens to plant more trees, take up voluntary clean-up campaigns and adopt personal responsibility in reducing waste.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Vidya Shekhar thanked the Special Monitor and assured him of the district administration's full cooperation in implementing the measures suggested.

Among those present were Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti Department (Kathua), Rajiv Sharma, Joint Commissioner JMC Abdul Sattar and Assistant Commissioner Assistant (ACG) Sania Haq Khan.

CS for emulating national best practices for enhancing Ease of Doing Business in J&K

SRINAGAR, JULY 17

Chief Secretary, Atal Dholoo, today chaired a high-level meeting to review the best practices adopted by leading States in promoting Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) and Ease of Living, with a view to examining their suitability for implementation in Jammu & Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by various Administrative Secretaries and senior officers of the concerned departments.

At the outset, the Chief Secretary was given detailed presentations on the governance and regulatory reforms undertaken by the States of Maharashtra and Gujarat, highlighting their initiatives aimed at creating a business-friendly ecosystem through simplification of procedures, digital governance, regulatory reforms, citizen-centric service delivery.

The presentations outlined a wide range of initiatives adopted by the two States, including reduction in regulatory compliances, elimination of redundant procedures, end-to-end digitization of government services, strengthening of single-window systems, rationalization of inspections, decriminalization of minor regulatory offences, investor facilitation mechanisms, time-bound service delivery, simplification of land and construction-related approvals and adoption of technology-driven governance models.

The reforms implemented under the Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP), District BRAP, deregulation initiatives and Jan Vishwas framework were also highlighted during the meeting.

Reviewing the reforms presented during the meeting, the Chief



Secretary observed that Jammu & Kashmir has already undertaken several governance reforms over the past few years and now needs to further accelerate the pace of administrative transformation by adopting proven national best practices suited to the Union Territory's governance framework.

He stressed that reforms aimed at improving Ease of Living should complement economic reforms by ensuring hassle-free access to government services, minimizing procedural delays and enhancing public satisfaction.

The Chief Secretary emphasized that immediate focus should be laid on rationalization of services, further simplification of regulatory processes, decriminalization of minor offences and undertaking the necessary amendments in the relevant Acts, Rules and regulations.

Addressing the officers, the Chief Secretary observed that sustained

and well-directed reforms invariably translate into greater investor confidence and increased investments. He said that several States and UTs have emerged as frontrunners in governance reforms and service delivery, and Jammu & Kashmir should proactively emulate such proven best practices rather than reinventing the wheel.

He remarked that there are numerous success stories across the country that offer valuable learning opportunities for the UT. By adopting these tested models and adapting them to local requirements, J&K can accelerate its reform agenda while avoiding duplication of effort and ensuring faster outcomes.

He directed the Centre for Innovation, Transformation and Governance (CITAG) to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the reforms already implemented in the Union Territory vis-à-vis those adopted by leading States, and accordingly prepare a roadmap outlining the future

course of action. He stressed that such an assessment should clearly identify the existing gaps and prioritize reforms that can be implemented in the days to come.

Underlining the importance of adopting an investor-centric approach, the Chief Secretary said that all reforms must be viewed from the perspective of entrepreneurs and investors rather than from the standpoint of government departments. He maintained that governance systems should be designed to make compliance simpler, approvals faster and service delivery more efficient and transparent.

He further impressed upon CITAG to formulate a comprehensive, well-defined and time-bound action plan with clearly identifiable milestones and measurable outcomes for implementation of these reforms in Jammu & Kashmir.

He also directed the organisation to maintain close coordination with the concerned authorities in Maharashtra and Gujarat to gain a deeper understanding of their reform processes, implementation strategies and institutional mechanisms so that the best practices can be effectively adapted to the needs of the Union Territory.

The meeting concluded with a consensus that the adoption of proven governance models from across the country, suitably customized to local requirements, would significantly strengthen institutional efficiency, enhance investment confidence and further the Government's vision of achieving higher standards of Ease of Doing Business and Ease of Living in Jammu & Kashmir.

People's voice will defeat NC's politics of deception: Sat Sharma

BJP gears up for major agitation against NC govt's failures in Kashmir**SRINAGAR, JULY 17**

J&K BJP President and Rajya Sabha MP Sat Sharma, along with Leader of the Opposition Sunil Sharma, chaired a series of meetings of BJP state office bearers at district presidents and Morcha office bearers at the party office in Srinagar to review organizational preparedness and finalize the roadmap for upcoming political and public outreach programmes.

J&K BJP General Secretaries

Mohammad Anwar Khan, and Gopal Mahajan, former MLC Sofi Yousuf, and other senior party leaders participated in the meetings.

Sat Sharma, while addressing

the meetings, stressed on the strong organizational principles, discipline and commitment of the cadre in

whole of Jammu & Kashmir, who are dedicated to serving the nation, and society from the core of their heart.

Sat Sharma launched a

scathing attack on the BJP as

the principal opposition, has

consistently highlighted

utterly failed to provide

responsive governance and

has betrayed the aspirations

of the people of Jammu &

Kashmir. "The NC govern-

ment has remained busy in

political theatrics while

neglecting public welfare,

development, employment,

infrastructure and basic

civic services. It has repeatedly

ignored the sentiments

of the people of Jammu as

well as Kashmir and has

failed to provide a clear

direction for the future of the

Union Territory," he said.

Sat Sharma said that the

BJP would not allow the "vision-

less and deceptive" govern-

ment to continue misleading

the people. He said that the

BJP will raise the voice of

every citizen, whether in

Jammu or Kashmir, and

expose the anti-people poli-

cies and administrative fail-

ures of the NC government

through a series of strong

public movements and mass

contact programmes.

Sunil Sharma said the BJP as

the principal opposition, has

consistently highlighted

every issue affecting the

people both inside and out

side the Assembly. He said

the party would launch

strong protests across

Jammu & Kashmir to protect

the rights of the people and

hold the NC government

accountable for its failures,

misgovernance and unful-

filled promises. BJP will

ensure that every section of

society gets a strong voice

against the government's

anti-people policies, he said.

Sunil Sharma called the

party leaders to prepare for

an intensified political cam-

paign to safeguard the inter-

ests and aspirations of the

people of Jammu & Kashmir.

Mohammad Anwar Khan

emphasized that the party

organization in Kashmir is

expanding steadily and

directed office bearers to

intensify grassroots out-

reach by connecting with

every household, exposing

the failures of the NC gov-

ernment and communicat-

ing the developmental

vision of Prime Minister

Narendra Modi.

Police Attach Properties Worth Over Rs 3.34 Crore Under NDPS Act in Srinagar

SRINAGAR, JULY 17

In a major action against drug trafficking under the Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyan - 100 Days Campaign, Srinagar Police has attached four immovable properties worth Rs 3,34,51,957 (Rupees Three Crore Thirty-Four Lakh Fifty-One Thousand Nine Hundred Fifty-Seven only) under the provisions of Section 68F of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985.

The attachment was carried out by Police Station Safakadal during the investigation of NDPS cases. The properties have been identified as illegally acquired assets derived from proceeds of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

The attached properties include a three-storey residential house constructed on land recorded as Abadi Deh, valued at ₹1,19,90,765, falling under Survey No. 119/19 land situated at Estate Nawakadal, belonging to Adnan Lateef Sheikh S/o Late Mohd Lateef Sheikh R/o Baripora, Nawakadal, involved in FIR No. 74/2026 under Section 8/22 NDPS Act of Police Station Safakadal.

The second property is a single-storey residential house constructed on land measuring 7 Maras and 50 Sq. Ft., valued at ₹1,18,28,965, falling under Survey No. 386 Min situated at Estate Palpora, belonging to Dargal Ahmad Bisati S/o Aljaz Ahmad Bisati R/o Palpora, Noorbagh,

involved in FIR No. 24/2025 under Section 8/20 NDPS Act of Police Station Safakadal.

The third property is a double-storey residential house constructed on approximately 4.5 Maras of land, valued at ₹71,31,905, falling under Survey No. 201 Min situated at Estate Barhama, Qammerwari, belonging to Shahid Gul S/o Ghulam Mohammad Sheikh R/o Barhama, Qammerwari, involved in FIR No. 48/2026 under Section 8/20 NDPS Act of Police Station Safakadal.

The fourth property is a single-storey residential house constructed on 03 Maras of land (under and appurtenant thereto), valued at ₹25,00,322, falling under Survey No. 490 Min situated at Estate Goripora, belonging to Adil Ahmad Mir S/o Mohammad Sultan Mir R/o Palpora, Srinagar, involved in FIR No. 62/2025 under Sections 8/21, 29 NDPS Act of Police Station Safakadal. The accused persons have been served with attachment orders and have been prohibited from selling, leasing, mortgaging, transferring, or otherwise disposing of the attached properties, or creating any third-party interest therein, without prior permission of the competent authority.

This action forms part of the sustained campaign of Srinagar Police against the menace of drug trafficking and reflects its firm resolve to dismantle the financial infrastructure of the drug trade by targeting assets acquired through the proceeds of illicit drug trade.

Ashok Koul calls for stronger digital outreach, grassroots coordination

**JAMMU, JULY 17**

J&K BJP General Secretary (Organization) Ashok Koul chaired a series of organizational meetings at the BJP Headquarters, Trikuta Nagar, Jammu, and the BJP Office, Kachi Chawni, Jammu, reviewing the party's functioning and discussing strategies to further strengthen the organization from the grassroots to the digital platform. Koul first chaired a meeting of the District In-Charge of the BJP Social Media Department at the party headquarters. The meeting focused on enhancing digital outreach, ensuring effective coordination among district social media teams, and strengthening the party's presence across various online platforms. J&K BJP Vice-President Rekha Mahajan, Social Media Department In-Charge Dr. Makson Tickoo, Co-In-Charge Naveen Sharma and Lovisha Gupta attended the meeting.

Later, Koul addressed a meeting of the District Kashmir Displaced Team at the BJP

Office, Kachi Chawni, where

organizational activities were

reviewed and discussions were

held on improving coordination

and public outreach. District

President KDD Rajeev Pandia,

Seh-Prabhari Hira Lal Bhat, and

other senior leaders were present.

Subsequently, Koul presided

over the monthly meeting of

the District Team, Jammu South,

at the BJP Headquarters. The

meeting reviewed organizational

affairs and finalized preparations

for upcoming party programmes

aimed at strengthening

booth-level functioning and

expanding public engagement.

J&K BJP General Secretary

Rajdev Singh, Billawaria,

Prabhari Jammu South

Praduman Singh, District

President Nareesh Singh, and

M.A. Bhat, Prabhari Vikram

Randhawa also participated.

Ashok Koul, while addressing

the meetings, emphasized that

a strong organization is built

throughout, ensuring the effective

implementation of party pro-

grammes at every level.

asked party functionaries to

remain in constant touch with

the people, effectively publicize

the achievements and welfare

initiatives of the Narendra Mod-

ied government, and ensure that

every organizational programme

is implemented with dedication

at the booth level. He stressed

that social media has emerged as

a powerful medium to counter

misinformation and connect

directly with the masses, asking

cadre to use digital platforms

responsibly and effectively.

Rekha Mahajan said that the

Social Media Department plays a

crucial role in taking the party's

ideology, achievement, and

public welfare initiatives to every

household. She asked district

teams to remain proactive, cre-

ative, and fact-based while

engaging with people on digital

platforms. Baldev Singh

Billawaria said that regular orga-

nizational reviews help strength-

en coordination among party

workers and ensure the effective

implementation of party pro-

grammes at every level.

Srinagar Police Recovers Three Minor Girls From Amritsar Within 72 Hours

SRINAGAR, JULY 17

The Srinagar Police on Friday said they traced and recovered three minor girls from Amritsar within 72 hours of their disappearance through a swift and well-coordinated operation carried out in collaboration with the Punjab Police.

The recovered girls are being

the three missing girls. A

team was immediately

deputed to Punjab, where,

with the active support and

close coordination of the

Punjab Police, all three

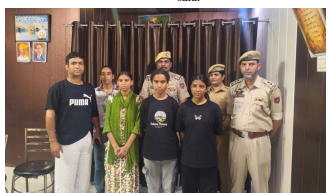
minor girls were successfully

traced and recovered safely

from Amritsar within 72

hours," the spokesperson

said.



brought back to Srinagar,

where all necessary legal for-

malities will be completed

and further investigation will

be carried out in accordance

with the provisions of law, a

Srinagar Police spokesperson

said in a statement.

"Acting promptly on a com-

plaint, the Srinagar Police launched

an intensive investigation and

developed vital leads

regarding the whereabouts of

The recovery was made in

connection with FIR No.

63/2026 registered under

Section 137(2) of the

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita

(BNS) [punishment with

imprisonment for a term

which may extend to seven

years, and shall also be liable

to fine] at Police Station Ram

Munshi Bagh, Srinagar.

However, the spokesperson

did not elaborate on how the

three minor girls reached

Amritsar.

Satish Sharma inaugurates, launches development projects worth over Rs10 crore in Chhamb

JAMMU, JULY 17

Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Information Technology, Youth Services & Sports, Science & Technology, Satish Sharma, today inaugurated and laid foundation stones for a series of landmark developmental projects across the Chhamb Constituency.

These development initiatives reaffirm the Jammu and Kashmir government's unwavering commitment to accelerate infrastructure development, strengthen the public service delivery and ensuring equitable growth across rural and border areas.

The extensive programme witnessed the inauguration and foundation stone laying of projects collectively valued at over ₹10 crore, encompassing roads, bridges, administrative infrastructure, sports facilities, healthcare and veterinary services. The initiatives are expected to significantly enhance connectivity, improve access to essential public services,

strengthen the rural infrastructure and create new opportunities for socio-economic development.

The Minister inaugurated the Thandi Chai-Sainth Road, developed at a cost of ₹1.50 crore. He described road connectivity as the backbone of economic growth, saying that well-developed road infrastructure not only shortens the travel time but also facilitates trade, education, healthcare access and overall regional development.

"The government is committed to ensure that even the remotest villages are connected with quality infrastructure. Better roads translate into better opportunities, improved livelihoods and enhanced quality of life for our people," he remarked.

At Kharah Balli, the Minister laid the foundation stone for the new Teshil Office Building, to be constructed at an estimated cost of ₹76.74 lakh. He said the modern administrative complex will bring government



services closer to the people, improve administrative efficiency and provide a more citizen-friendly environment for the delivery of public services.

On the occasion, Satish Sharma also inaugurated the Bridge at Kharah, constructed at a cost of ₹3.45 crore.

The bridge is expected to provide reliable all-weather connectivity to several adjoining villages, facilitating easier movement of residents, students, farmers and emergency services.

Continuing the developmental programme, the Minister laid the foundation stone for the Chapral-Bardol Road, a major connectivity project worth ₹2.50 crore.

He said the project would improve transportation facilities, strengthen rural connectivity and provide a much-needed boost to agriculture, trade, tourism and other economic activities in the area.

Recognising the pivotal role of sports in youth empowerment and nation-building, Satish Sharma inaugurated the newly constructed Volleyball Court at

Pallanwala, built at a cost of ₹20.99 lakh.

"J&K youth possess immense talent. It is our responsibility to provide them with the best possible infrastructure and opportunities so they can excel at the national and international level. Sports not only produce champions but also promote discipline, confidence, fitness and social harmony," he said.

The Minister also distributed medical equipment aimed at strengthening healthcare facilities in the area and improving the quality of healthcare service-

es available to the local population. He said the Government continues to invest in health infrastructure to ensure accessible and affordable healthcare for every citizen.

Later, Satish Sharma laid the foundation stone for the Veterinary Hospital at Khour, a project estimated to cost ₹2.07 crore.

He observed that livestock forms the backbone of the rural economy in many parts of Jammu and Kashmir, and strengthening veterinary infrastructure would directly benefit the farmers by improving animal healthcare, productivity, and income generation.

Addressing public gatherings during the programme, the Minister said that the government is working tirelessly to ensure that developmental benefits reach every village, every household and every citizen through sustained investment in infrastructure and public welfare.

"Development is meaningful only when its benefits reach the

common people. Every project that we have inaugurated or launched today has been carefully planned to address the needs of the local population and improve their quality of life. Our government remains committed to create modern infrastructure, strengthening institutions, and ensuring that every region progresses on the path of inclusive and sustainable development," the Minister said.

Satish Sharma also interacted with the local residents, public representatives, youth, and members of various community organisations, patiently listening to their concerns and developmental aspirations. He assured them that all their genuine issues raised during the interaction would be examined on priority for prompt resolution.

Senior officers from the district administration, engineers from executing agencies, local public representatives and local residents were present during the programme.

DC Samba reviews anti-drug measures at NCORD meeting; Calls for stronger enforcement, awareness and rehabilitation



SAMBA, JULY 17 Deputy Commissioner Samba Ayushi Sudan today chaired a meeting of the District Level Committee under the Narcotics Coordination (NCORD) framework at the Conference Hall, DC Office, Samba to review the implementation of anti-narcotics initiatives and strengthen the district's strategy to combat drug abuse under the Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan. During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed the Action Taken Report (ATR) on the decisions taken in previous NCORD meetings and assessed the progress achieved by various departments in the areas of enforcement, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and awareness. Emphasising the need for a coordinated and result-oriented approach, the DC directed all stakeholder departments to intensify action against drug trafficking while simultaneously strengthening preventive interventions. She stressed that protecting youth from the menace of narcotics must remain a collective responsibility of all departments and institutions. The DC directed all departments to ensure effective implementation of the action points assigned to them

and instructed officers to sensitise their employees about the harmful effects of drug abuse through regular awareness and counselling programmes. She called upon every government office to actively contribute towards creating a drug-free society. Reviewing healthcare interventions, Ayushi Sudan instructed the Health Department to further strengthen the Addiction Treatment Facility (ATF) at the District Hospital by ensuring quality treatment, counselling and rehabilitation services for individuals affected by substance abuse. She also directed the Education Department to enhance the capacity of teachers and educational institutions through regular awareness and counselling programmes so that vulnerable students can be identified at an early stage and guided towards a healthy and drug-free lifestyle. Highlighting the importance of community participation, the DC directed the concerned departments to organise intensive awareness campaigns across schools, colleges, panchayats and other public institutions. She also called for the organisation of inter-departmental awareness programmes and mega camps under

the Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan, besides promoting sports, cultural, educational and youth engagement activities to encourage positive social participation among young people. The DC further emphasised the need to widely publicize the MANAS National Narcotics Helpline (1933) to encourage citizens to anonymously report drug-related activities and support law enforcement agencies in curbing the menace. Reiterating the administration's commitment to sustainable rehabilitation, the Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned departments to facilitate employment, skill development and livelihood opportunities for recovering individuals through suitable government schemes, stating that lasting rehabilitation must be supported by economic empowerment and social reintegration. The meeting was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Chief Medical Officer, Chief Education Officer, Sub-Divisional Magistrates, District Social Welfare Officer, Principals of Government Degree Colleges and senior officers from various departments.

JKTPO showcases Jammu & Kashmir's textile heritage at Bharat Tex 2026; New Zealand Minister visits J&K pavilion



NEW DELHI, JULY 17 The Jammu & Kashmir Trade Promotion Organisation (JKTPO), under the aegis of the Industries & Commerce Department, government of Jammu and Kashmir, successfully showcased the region's rich handloom, handicraft and textile heritage at Bharat Tex 2026, held from 14-17 July 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. The event provided a premier international platform for the manufacturers, exporters, buyers, designers and sourcing agencies from across the globe. Approximately 20 exhibitors from across Jammu and Kashmir participated under the J&K Pavilion (Hall No. 11, Ground Floor), presenting an impressive collection of traditional and contemporary textile products before thousands of domestic and international buyers, exporters, retailers, sourcing agencies, designers and industry stakeholders. The pavilion showcased an extensive range of premium handmade products, including GI-tagged Pashmina

shawls, GI-tagged Kani shawls, GI-tagged Kashmiri carpets, handmade GI Pashmina rugs, fine wool stoles, shawls, scarves, chain stitch rugs, handcrafted bags and several other authentic products representing the unparalleled craftsmanship and cultural richness of Jammu and Kashmir. The participation enabled the local artisans, weavers, cooperatives and MSMEs to showcase their products, establish valuable business linkages and explore new domestic and international market opportunities. A major highlight of the exhibition was the visit of Hon. Mark Patterson, New Zealand's Minister for Rural Communities and Associate Minister for Agriculture and Regional Development, to the J&K Pavilion. The delegation was accompanied by Mr. Mathew Ayers, Deputy High Commissioner of New Zealand, Mr. Andy Caughey, Wool Impact Limited, Aotearoa New Zealand; Dr. Romesh Khajuria, Chairman, (JKWDA), Mr. R.C. Khanna,

Chairman, WWPEC; Mr. H.S. Bhalla, Vice Chairman, WWPEC and Mr. Sanjay Chawla, Executive Director, WWPEC. During the visit, the delegation interacted with the exhibitors and appreciated the exquisite craftsmanship, rich handloom traditions and exceptional quality of the products displayed by the artisans of Jammu & Kashmir. The delegation was briefed on the Jammu and Kashmir's rich heritage in wool, pashmina, handloom and handicrafts and textile products, promoting sustainable value chains, technology exchange and enhancing trade and investment opportunities between India and New Zealand. Speaking on the successful participation, Managing Director, JKTPO, stated that participation in such events reflects JKTPO's continued commitment to provide global market exposure to the artisans, weavers and entrepreneurs of the Union Territory. The overwhelming response received at the J&K Pavilion demonstrates the

growing appreciation for our GI-tagged products and traditional crafts. Such national and international pavilions play a vital role in connecting producers with buyers, promoting exports, strengthening sustainable livelihoods and positioning Jammu and Kashmir as a leading destination for premium handloom and handicraft products. Throughout the four-day exhibition, the J&K Pavilion witnessed encouraging footfall from buyers, exporters, retailers, designers, sourcing agencies and textile professionals from India and overseas, generating significant business enquiries and opening new avenues for market expansion for participating enterprises. The visit of the New Zealand delegation further highlighted the growing scope for international collaboration in the wool and textile sector. This reaffirmed the shared commitment of both sides to explore mutually beneficial partnerships supporting innovation, sustainability, value addition and market development.

Block-Level Monitoring Committee Meetings held across Doda

DODA, JULY 17 Under the guidance and directions of the Deputy Commissioner Doda Krishan Lal and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Vinod Sharma and in compliance with the Government's directions for strengthening the implementation of the TB Mukht Bharat initiative, the Block-Level Monitoring Committee meetings were convened across all Medical Blocks of district Doda. At Medical Block Assar, the meeting was chaired by the SDM Assar Ashok Katnath in the presence of BMO Dr. Syed Mohd Ismail and other members nominated under the Block-Level Monitoring

Committee. At Medical Block Bhaderwah, the meeting was chaired by the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADQ) Bhaderwah Anil Thakur along with BMO, Dr. Vansha Sharma identified high-risk villages. At Medical Block Gandoh, the meeting was chaired by the SDM Gandoh Arun Kumar Badyal in the presence of BMO, Dr. Ranoo Saleem and other nominated members. At Medical Block Thathri, the meeting was chaired by the SDM Thathri Sheetal Kumar Sharma, along with BMO Dr. Shakeel Ahmed Kichloo and members of the committee. During the meetings, detailed deliberations were held on the

Terms of Reference of the Block-Level Monitoring Committees. The members resolved to ensure 100% screening through digital chest X-rays in identified high-risk villages, wards and congregate settings through TB Shikhs and outreach activities, promote 100% utilization of the TB Mukht Bharat App and Khushi Chatbot, ensure 100% upfront NAAT testing for all presumptive TB cases, provide differentiated TB care for all TB patients and achieve 100% TB Preventive Treatment (TPT) coverage for all eligible individuals after ruling out active TB.

DC Samba reviews preparations for Independence Day 2026 celebrations



SAMBA, JULY 17 Deputy Commissioner Samba Ayushi Sudan today chaired a meeting with district officers to review the arrangements for the smooth, dignified and successful celebration of Independence Day 2026 across the district. During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner conducted a comprehensive review of preparations for the main function to be held at Rani Suchet Singh Sports Stadium, Samba. She directed all concerned departments to complete their assigned works well in advance and ensure seamless coordination for the successful conduct of the national event. The DC instructed the concerned departments to ensure proper sanitation and cleanliness at the venue and its surrounding areas. She also directed the Power Development Department to ensure uninterrupted power supply and illumination of all important Government buildings, bridges and the main venue. The Jai Shakti Department

was asked to make adequate arrangements for safe drinking water, while the concerned department was directed to install a robust Public Address System for the smooth conduct of the programme. The Education and Youth Services & Sports Department were instructed to coordinate cultural programmes, march past rehearsals and other ceremonial activities reflecting the patriotic spirit and cultural diversity of the district. The Deputy Commissioner also stressed strict adherence to the Flag Code of India while displaying the National Flag at all government offices and public institutions. The DC asked the Police Department to put in place comprehensive security, traffic regulation and parking plans to facilitate smooth movement of participants and the public. She further reviewed the arrangements for the felicitation of distinguished individuals and presentation of awards during the function. The Chief Medical Officer was

directed to ensure adequate medical facilities, including deployment of medical teams, ambulances and emergency healthcare services at the venue. The Deputy Commissioner also instructed the concerned departments to make proper arrangements for seating, stage decoration, barricading, refreshments, fire safety, lighting and other essential services to ensure the celebrations are conducted in a befitting manner. Emphasising timely completion of all assigned responsibilities, the Deputy Commissioner called upon all departments to work in close coordination and ensure that the Independence Day celebrations are organised with utmost efficiency, discipline and patriotic fervour. The meeting was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, General Manager DIC, Chief Education Officer and officers of the concerned departments.

BIP OBC Morcha Holds Digital Learning Programme Meeting in Srinagar, Strengthens Digital Outreach in Zadibal and Hazratbal Constituencies.

SRINAGAR, JULY 17 The BIP OBC Morcha, Jammu & Kashmir, on Thursday organised a Digital Learning Programme meeting for the Zadibal and Hazratbal constituencies in Srinagar district with the objective of strengthening the party's digital communication network and equipping its cadre with modern technological skills for effective public outreach. The meeting was organised under the guidance of Brahmajyoti Satti, State President, BIP OBC Morcha, Jammu & Kashmir, and was chaired by Hiral Ahmad Kunhar, District President, BIP OBC Morcha, Srinagar. The programme focused on enhancing the digital capabilities of party workers by providing guidance on the effective use of social media platforms, digital communication tools, and organisational applications. Detailed discussions were held on strengthening coordination among party workers and ensuring the wider dissemination of government welfare schemes and party programmes through digital platforms. Addressing the meeting, Hiral Ahmad Kunhar said that the Digital Learning Programme is a significant initiative aimed at mak-



ing every BIP OBC Morcha worker technologically proficient so that they can connect more effectively with the people and ensure faster communication at the grassroots level. He urged all office bearers to actively participate in the campaign and take the programme to every booth and block across the district. Brahmajyoti Satti, State President, BIP OBC Morcha in his message said that in today's rapidly evolving digital era, every party worker must be equipped with modern communication tools to effectively connect with the people. He said that the Digital Learning Programme is not merely a training

initiative but a movement to build a technologically empowered organisation capable of reaching every section of society with speed, transparency and efficiency. He further urged the workers to utilise digital platforms responsibly to highlight the achievements of the government, spread awareness about public welfare schemes, and strengthen the organisation at the grassroots level. The meeting concluded with a resolve to intensify the Digital Learning Programme across Srinagar district and ensure its successful implementation in every constituency, mandal, booth and

polling station. Among those present were Amir Hameed Baha (District General Secretary), Nazir Ahmad (District Vice President), Feroz Ahmad (District Vice President), Abdul Majeed (District Vice President), Mehraj-ud-Din (District Vice President), Fazil Faiyaz (District Secretary), Ghulam Nabi Shahkash (District Secretary), Basit Ahmad (District Publicity Secretary), Zafar Ahmad (District Office Secretary), Mohd Amin Dar (Constituency President, Hazratbal), Asif Ahmad (Constituency President, Zadibal) and several other senior BIP OBC Morcha leaders and workers.

J&K Youth Services & Sports clarifies Surya Bhanu Pratap Singh's disqualification under S.O.-12 of 2022 Recruitment

SRINAGAR, JULY 17 Department of Youth Services & Sports, has taken note of certain statements made by Surya Bhanu Pratap Singh, a Wushu athlete, on various media platforms alleging injustice in relation to his non-selection under S.O.-12 of 2022, which governs the appointment of Outstanding Sports Persons. In the interest of transparency and to place the correct factual and legal position before the public, the Department acknowledged that Surya Bhanu Pratap Singh has represented India and the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir in Wushu and has secured medals during his sporting career and respect his sporting achievements. However, appointments under S.O.-12 of 2022 are governed strictly by the statutory provisions contained therein, and eligibility is determined exclusively in accordance with those Rules rather than on sporting achievements alone. According to the Department, Singh had submitted an application seeking appointment under S.O.-12 of 2022. As part of the recruitment process, all applicants underwent detailed scrutiny and verification through concerned National and International Sports Federations and other competent authorities to establish the authenticity of sporting achievements and the eligibility of applicants under the notified Rules.

During this verification, it was established that Surya Bhanu Pratap Singh had been held guilty of an Anti-Doping Rule Violation by the International Wushu Federation (IWUF) Anti-Doping Disciplinary Committee in Doping Case No. 2018-IC-01 (Surya Bhanu Pratap Singh), vide its decision dated 04 June 2019. The disciplinary decision categorically recorded the presence of the prohibited substances (Mephentermine and Phenentermine) in the athlete's sample. Consequently, under Article 10.2 of the IWUF Anti-Doping Rules, Singh was declared ineligible, subject to a period of ban, and all competitive results obtained at the concerned event stood disqualified, including forfeiture of medals, awards, prizes, ranking points and all other consequential sporting benefits. He was also prohibited from participating in any competition or sport-related activity during the prescribed period. The Department further stated that every applicant under S.O.-12 of 2022 was required to furnish a declaration affirming that they had not been found guilty of any Anti-Doping Rule Violation. Despite the existence of the international disciplinary decision, Singh submitted

a declaration stating that he had not been found guilty of any Anti-Doping Rule Violation. The furnishing of a declaration contrary to the official record raises serious concerns regarding the correctness and bona fides of the information supplied. It emphasised that Rule 4(ii) of S.O.-12 of 2022 expressly provides that any applicant found guilty of an Anti-Doping Rule Violation shall stand disqualified from the selection process. The Rule is mandatory in nature and leaves no discretion with the Selection Committee. The Department clarifies that the Rules would not be interpreted to relax, dilute, ignore or reinterpret the disqualification prescribed under Rule 4(ii). Any decision contrary to the express provisions of the Rules would be illegal, arbitrary and inconsistent with the principles governing public employment. The Department also clarified that Singh had challenged the disciplinary action before the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), but the Anti-Doping findings were not set aside and therefore remained valid and binding.

Refuting allegations of arbitrary action, the Department stated that Singh was provided a reasonable opportunity to present his case and submit supporting documents. His representation was examined in accordance with the principles of natural justice before the competent authority concluded that the statutory disqualification under Rule 4(ii) applied in his case. A reasoned order communicating the grounds of disqualification was subsequently issued to him. Reaffirming its commitment to transparency and fairness, the Department stated that recruitment under S.O.-12 of 2022 was conducted strictly in accordance with the notified Rules following multi-level scrutiny and verification by the competent authorities. It advised all stakeholders to refrain from circulating misleading or incomplete narratives that overlook the statutory framework governing the recruitment process. The Department reiterated that the Government of Jammu & Kashmir remains committed to promoting clean sport and recognizing deserving athletes who uphold the highest standards of integrity, fairness and sportsmanship, while ensuring uniform enforcement of Anti-Doping regulations and recruitment rules without fear or favour.

Innovations in women's health: Breaking chains of pain with Transdermal Patches

NEW DELHI: In the grand tapestry of life, women often find themselves weaving through various roles and responsibilities, neglecting a crucial thread - their own health - but the journey of womanhood is fraught with challenges and among them, the silent struggle with chronic pain often remains veiled in shadows. It is time to illuminate this path and empower many women across different walks of life, to reclaim control over their health, which should start from an early age.

Women's health is susceptible to various ailments that can manifest as chronic pain if left unchecked. That's when Transdermal Patches can come to the rescue. Balancing the demands of her career, family and personal aspirations amidst her bustling life, women often brush aside the twinges of pain that linger in their joints or the dull ache that often hinders them from performing their best at the workplace.

Many women push through and attribute these discomforts to fatigue or stress, unaware of the silent turmoil brewing within their body.

The truth is, women's health is a delicate ecosystem, susceptible to various ailments that can manifest as chronic pain if left unchecked. From menstrual cramps to migraines, endometriosis to fibromyalgia, the spectrum of pain that women endure is vast and multifaceted yet,



society often trivialises or overlooks these experiences, brushing them off as common or insignificant.

What happens when pain becomes a constant companion, gnawing away at the very fabric of one's existence? For many women, it is a silent battle fought behind closed doors, where the weight of pain seeps into every aspect of life - social, personal and professional. Relationships strain under its burden, careers falter and dreams dim in its shadow. Having witnessed, firsthand, the toll that chronic pain takes on women, Dr Nikita Varun Agarwal, Associate Consultant - Pain Medicine at ApolloMedics Super

Specialty Hospitals, shared in an interview with HT Lifestyle, "We often see women who have been enduring pain for years, dismissing it as a minor inconvenience but what they don't realise is that untreated pain can evolve into a debilitating condition, robbing them of

their vitality and joy."

The journey towards breaking the chains of pain starts with awareness and advocacy hence, women must prioritise their health by paying attention to their bodies and seeking help early, before symptoms worsen. Unfortunately, diagnosis and treatment are often delayed due to societal norms or personal neglect.

Enter the realm of new-age solutions, where innovation meets empowerment. Transdermal patches emerge as a beacon of hope, offering targeted relief without the burden of pills or injections. Shedding light on their efficacy,

Dr Nikita Varun Agarwal said, "Transdermal patches provide a discreet, convenient way to deliver medication directly to the source of pain. They offer a personalised approach to pain management, tailored to fit the unique needs of each person living with mild to moderate pain."

Malavika Kaura Saxena, Chief Marketing Officer at Rusan Pharma, emphasised the role of technology in transforming women's healthcare that is dedicated to empowering women to seize control of their health journey where through relentless innovation and pioneering research, exemplified by new age delivery systems, transdermal patches aim to offer safe and effective solutions to elevate the quality of life and and restore dignity to those battling chronic pain. However, beyond pharmaceutical advances lies a deeper truth - the power of resilience and community.

Women must stand together, lifting each other and breaking the silence surrounding pain, where support networks, both online and offline, offer solace and solidarity, reminding women that they are not alone in their journey.

As the dawn breaks on a new era of women's health, let us embark on this transformative journey together. Balancing the demands of her career, family and personal aspirations amidst her bustling life, women often brush aside the twinges of pain that linger in their joints or the dull ache that often hinders them from performing their best at the workplace. Many women push through and attribute these discomforts to fatigue or stress, unaware of the silent turmoil brewing within their body.

People with serious mental illness may have higher risk of heart disease

NEW DELHI: A new analysis of nearly 600,000 adults in the US revealed that those diagnosed with bipolar disorder, schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder might have a higher risk of cardiovascular disease at younger ages compared to adults not diagnosed with one of those serious mental illnesses. The study was published in the journal, 'Journal of the American Heart Association'.

"Previous research has indicated that people diagnosed with a serious mental illness die 10-20 years earlier than the general population, and their leading cause of death is heart disease," said study lead author Rebecca C. Rossom, MD, MSc, a senior research investigator in behavioral health at the Center for Chronic Care Innovation at HealthPartners Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

"Our study focused on the contribution of cardiovascular risk factors, such as blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, body mass index and smoking status, to compare overall heart disease risk for people with and without serious mental illness," he added.

The researchers believed this is the first study to examine estimated 30-year (lifetime) cardiovascular risk in a large sample of adult outpatients diagnosed with bipolar disorder, schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder. Three serious mental illnesses specific to this study. Many previous studies of cardiovascular risk for people with serious mental illness have included only people who were hospitalized, and they tend to have more severe mental illness and frailer health than outpa-

tients, according to Rossom. In contrast, this study included a large sample of non-hospitalized U.S. adults.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, bipolar disorder (formerly called manic-depressive illness or manic depression) is a mental illness that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, concentration and the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks. Schizophrenia can cause hallucinations, delusions or disorganized speech. People with schizophrenia may seem like they have lost touch with reality, which can cause significant distress for the individual, their family and friends. The symptoms of schizophrenia can be persistent and disabling. Schizoaffective disorder is defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders as an unusual mix of duration of illness during which there is a major mood episode (manic or depressive) in addition to meeting the criteria for schizophrenia. This analysis evaluated health data for nearly 600,000 people, ages 18-75 years, who visited a primary care clinic in Minnesota and Wisconsin between January 2016 and September 2018. Nearly 2 percent, or approximately 11,000 adults, had a diagnosis of serious mental illness.

Of these, 70 percent were diagnosed with bipolar disorder, 18 percent with schizoaffective disorder and 12 percent with schizophrenia. On average, people with serious mental illness were more likely to be younger; female; self-identify as Black race, Native American, Alaskan race or of multiple races; and be

insured by Medicaid or Medicare, compared to their counterparts not diagnosed with one of the three serious mental illnesses.

Prediction models providing a standardized metric were used to assess cardiovascular risk factors and predict the likelihood of a heart attack, stroke or cardiovascular death. To assess 10-year risk, the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association's atherosclerotic cardiovascular risk scoring tool was used for adults ages 40-75 years old. The Framingham Risk Score was used to estimate 30-year cardiovascular risk among adults ages 18-39 years old.

Researchers found:

1. Adults in the study with one of the serious mental illnesses reviewed had an estimated 10-year cardiovascular risk level of 8.5 percent, compared to 8 percent for adults without a mental condition.

2. The estimated 30-year risk of cardiovascular disease was significantly higher among those individuals with one of the three serious mental illnesses - 25 percent compared to the 11 percent of people without a serious mental illness.

3. The increased risk of heart disease was evident even in young adults (ages 18-34) with a serious mental illness.

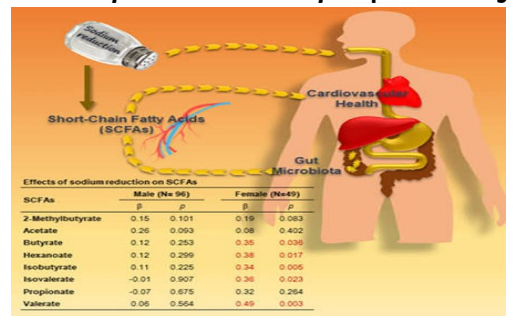
4. Within the subtypes of each of the three serious mental illnesses in this study, in analyses adjusted for age, sex, race, ethnicity and insurance coverage, people with bipolar disorder had the highest 10-year cardiovascular risk compared to those with schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder.

Study: Medium chain fatty acid can someday help in treating heart attacks

Washington: A medium-chain fatty acid found in energy drinks might one day help protect against heart attack injuries, suggests a recent study by researchers at the University of Michigan Frankel Cardiovascular Center.

The preclinical study was published in 'eLife'. "Heart attacks are still a leading cause of death worldwide, that often come with devastating complications," said Zhong Wang, Ph.D., an associate professor of cardiac surgery at the University of Michigan Frankel Cardiovascular Center, who is the senior author of the study.

He added, "Better options are needed to reduce injury to the heart after a heart attack, and even improve heart function. In this publication, we target the interplay between energy metabolism and epigenetics mediated by the medium-chain



fatty acid 8C." Wang and colleagues were able to protect against heart attack injury in rat models with octanoic acid, an eight carbon (8C) medium-chain fatty acid, as well as a few other metabolites. Those fatty acids produced

acetyl-CoA, a building block for energy metabolism, which a stressed heart desperately needs. The idea is that a physician would administer this therapy to a person once they arrive at the hospital after having a heart attack, to

reduce further injury and improve heart function during recovery, he says. "Understanding the crosstalk between energy metabolism and epigenetics may not only provide an effective target for myocardial infarction, but also have

broad implications in other ischemic injury-caused organ damage beyond cardiac diseases," said Jenglan Lei, Ph.D., from the Frankel CVC's Department of Cardiac Surgery and the University of Macau in China, who conducted the study's key experiments.

Wang says the next step would be to test this molecule in large animal models, followed by clinical trials. The preclinical study was published in 'eLife'.

"Heart attacks are still a leading cause of death worldwide, that often come with devastating complications," said Zhong Wang, Ph.D., an associate professor of cardiac surgery at the University of Michigan Frankel Cardiovascular Center, who is the senior author of the study.

The research team has been studying the epigenetic regulation of heart attack for more than 10 years.

Three-parent baby born in UK using IVF; what experts have to say

LONDON: A baby in UK has been created using IVF procedure with DNA of three people in a bid to prevent children from inheriting incurable diseases, reported The Guardian. Known as Mitochondrial donation treatment (MDT), the procedure involves development of embryo combining sperm and eggs from the biological parents along with the mitochondria from donor's eggs. More than 98% of the DNA in the children would come from their mother and father. The idea is to prevent babies of mothers with mutated mitochondria from genetic disorders. People inherit all their mitochondria from their mother, so harmful mutations in the 'batteries' can affect all of the children a woman has, says the Guardian report. This isn't the first time, a three-parent baby has been born. A US doctor in 2016 is credited with world's first MDT birth after a Jordanian woman carrying mitochondrial mutations that could cause a fatal condition called Leigh syndrome was treated.

How this pathbreaking procedure is carried out: Eggs of the mother and a healthy female donor is fertilised using sperm from the father and the nuclear genetic material from the donor's egg is then removed and replaced with that from the couple's fertilised egg. The resulting egg has healthy mitochondria with the full set of chromosomes from both mother and father. This is then implanted in the womb.

"It is great to learn that Mitochondrial donation treatment (MDT), although in its experimental stage, has been successful in producing its first UK baby with three genes. The process is at its nascent stage designed to help couples with inherited mitochondrial illness have babies without the risk of passing genetic disorders. The embryo developed is combined with sperm and eggs from the biological parents along with the mitochondria from the donor's eggs."

Expert tips for women to optimise nutrition as they age since no diet suits all

new delhi: Although the future is optimistic with the Covid-19 headed towards an endemic, we must continue to take precautions and work on building a strong immune system over time as it can fight the non-stop evolution of the coronavirus variants but more importantly, to enjoy good health throughout the changing years of our lives. Our eating habits are the biggest contributor in spoiling the health of our body and if our eating habits are not right, we cannot keep ourselves healthy even if we want to.

Good health begins with good food, proper diet is the foundation of a strong digestive system, a balanced diet meets our individual and physical needs and a nutritious diet acts like a medicine to promote vitality but given that no diet suits all, it is essential for women to optimise nutrition as they age. Whether you are a student attending online classes or a corporate honcho working from home these days; a homemaker who never gets a moment's rest or maybe you're none of the above but

as a woman, you need to know from an expert about what nutrition is right for you and when.

Dr Ganesh Kadhe, Associate Director of Nutrition Medical and Scientific Affairs at Abbott, shares, "Starting from the time you're a teenager, what you eat will define who you are in the years to come as nutrient needs are higher now than any other time in your lifecycle. As teenage years are a time of rapid growth and development, eating a well-balanced diet is key, as healthy food is essential for proper hormonal balance. One must stay fit by consuming good fat from fish, avocado, nuts, olive oil etc. The onset of menstruation at this stage often causes low haemoglobin so load up on food rich in iron, protein and avoid junk food containing refined sugar, saturated and trans-fat."

For women over 30, Dr Ganesh Kadhe advises increasing your calcium intake. He suggested, "In case the pandemic continues to play spoilsport of how much of vitamin D, B12, iron, calcium and folic acid are essential. A

well-balanced diet for all women this age should include some meat and dairy, seafood, green leafy veggies,

those in their 40s and 50s must say hello to more calcium and iron, food rich in antioxidants like berries,

those in their 40s and 50s must say hello to more calcium and iron, food rich in antioxidants like berries,



teins, iron and vitamin C (to absorb the iron) are all must-haves for you. In case you are planning a pregnancy, intake of supplements comprising of vitamin D, B12, iron, calcium and folic acid are essential. A

pulses and grains, dry fruits, and citrus-rich fruit." Women must make the transition into menopause a smooth one by limiting on foods high in salt, preservatives and saturated fats and

cocoa, green tea and more fibrous food like whole grains, veggies and fruits. "In addition to vitamins D and C, another one that cannot be ignored as we age is B12, which is responsible for neu-

rological function and is usually deficient in vegetarians so consciously supplement your diet with vitamin b12 fortified food if you don't get it naturally. As the onset of metabolic disorders and vitamin deficiencies are seen often in this age group, following a low glycaemic, low fat high protein diet topped with regular exercise is essential," according to Dr Ganesh Kadhe. "If you're pregnant or breast feeding then lean proteins, iron and vitamin C (to absorb the iron) are all must-haves for you. In case you are planning a pregnancy, intake of supplements comprising of vitamin D, B12, iron, calcium and folic acid are essential. A well-balanced diet for all women this age should include some meat and dairy, seafood, green leafy veggies, pulses and grains, dry fruits, and citrus-rich fruit."

For women over 60, the amount of nutrients in their food needs to increase in proportion to stay active and fit. Dr Ganesh Kadhe explains, "As a woman in her senior years, your diet should

already include all that is recommended above. So that means foods rich in calcium, iron, protein get a big yes and processed foods, saturated fats and excess salt get a big no. The other red flags at this age are spicy foods that can trigger acidity issues, too many sweets that can lead to sugar imbalance and eventually diabetes. One should be conscious that avoidance of dairy due to lactose intolerance is not a solution and they should rather consume dairy products rich in calcium and proteins."

In general and irrespective of the age, women should drink plenty of water to keep the body well hydrated, add a nutritional drink to diet for a healthy balance of nutrients, get enough sleep to feel fresh and rejuvenated, stay active with age-appropriate exercises and pay equal importance to mental wellbeing. Dr Ganesh Kadhe asserted that a lifestyle that combines all of this with a healthy, well-balanced diet will ensure that you're in good health at any stage in your life.

EDITORIAL

Dal is a bright idea

We knew in April this was going to be a weak monsoon. With half of July gone, around 400 of India's districts have a rain deficit. That's a challenge for Indian agriculture, which is still highly rain-dependent. Govt data shows about 45% of our net sown area is rain-fed. So, this was an opportunity for govt to nudge farmers towards hardy, nutritionally superior and environment-friendly crops, like millets, oilseeds, and pulses. Instead, as TOI reported on Tuesday, total acreage under these three crop categories has fallen sharply - pulses 23%, coarse cereals 22%, and oilseeds 21%.

This is clearly a costly problem. Pulses are a key source of protein in Indian diets. They also boost soil fertility. But in a good year, India imports about a fifth of its requirement. This time, it will need to import much more. Likewise, about 55% of India's edible oil requirement is normally met through imports. With sown area down, expect a bigger import bill. Millets aren't a major import, but when production falls, prices will rise, and the campaign to make them popular will suffer.

Given the monsoon situation, perhaps some of this decline is unavoidable. But what's shocking is that, despite the rain deficit, sown area under sugarcane - the most water-hungry crop - has increased. Why are farmers running their tubewells overtime, depleting ground water, for this cash crop? The answer is cash. Since petrol is now mandatorily sold with 20% blended ethanol, and sugarcane is feedstock for it, its cultivation has become remunerative. So, instead of being guided by govt's well-intentioned "Missions" on pulses, oilseeds and coarse cereals, farmers are simply following the money, even if it involves environmental and social costs.

Govt should take notice, and tweak its support-price signals.

Scrutiny, not applause: Philosophy meets its skeptics

BY ACHARYA PRASHANT

Indian spiritual figures have been travelling abroad for more than a century. Halls have filled, applause has sounded, and followings have formed across the world. My tour of Britain in May to July 2026 might look like one more link in that chain. But what mattered was who sat across from me, and the standard against which the argument was placed. The tour began on May 30 at the Cambridge Union, moderated by Professor Jaideep Prabhoo. A student put her point: "At Cambridge, learning is based on evidence, and every belief is tested against a standard. So how is this philosophy any different from any other belief?"

"Let us rebuild this framework right now, right here, from scratch," I said, "learning as little as possible on belief and dogma." If a framework is universal, it cannot belong to any one person; it has to be built and tested together. A session scheduled for one hour stretched into nearly three sittings across two days. When a participant thanked me for sharing "my philosophy," I corrected her: it had been built together in that room.

At the London School of Economics, there was a dialogue with Professor Jonathan Birch, who has led the Jeremy Collier Centre for Animal Sentience and whose work has shaped Britain's animal welfare laws. At University College London, there was a long conversation with Professor Steve Fleming, an expert in metacognition. There were dialogues with Cambridge-trained biologist Rupert Sheldrake in Hampstead; Professor Lars Chittka, a Fellow of the Royal Society and an expert in insect cognition, at Queen Mary University; and Harvard-educated psychologist Melanie Joy, who works on the psychology of eating animals.

These gatherings assembled not for emulation but examination. Those present had every reason to challenge the framework in their own professional fields. At the centre of this philosophical framework is a question that shifts the source of human problems. The real issue is not external but psychological: a mistaken sense of "I" that identifies itself with the body and mind. Vedanta calls it the ego. From it arise fear, desire, conflict and consumption that lead into social and ecological crises. Without examining this inner structure, external solutions such as law, technology and reform remain incomplete.



because the same agent that creates the problem stays active within the solution.

At London Climate Action Week, the present climate effort was compared to a society that keeps repairing roads and ambulances without addressing the drunk driver. The belief that technology and policy will solve the crisis has to be abandoned. Technology is born not of human need but human desire, and what the world calls success is, to a large extent, another name for a growing carbon footprint.

At Queen Mary University of London, when the ego was called the "master exploiter" behind every discovery, Professor Chittka offered examples where scientific work led directly to conservation. "I am perhaps a little less pessimistic," he said. The answer was that the agent that does the damage is the one that repairs it too, and the repair does not acquire it: a clean-up campaign run by the exploiter himself.

When animal violence was called instinct rather than psychological, Chittka countered with field observations. The answer was that the observer projects human interiority onto animal behaviour. "Sir, you yourself have long campaigned against anthropomorphism," I said, "and I am afraid that at this moment you are doing exactly that." The dialogue ended without agreement, but with full engagement. Animal welfare law has been growing for nearly two centuries, yet neither species extinction nor per-capita meat consumption has fallen. The one who

makes the law and the one who breaks it are the same person. At LSE, Professor Birch did not give up his ground: "Do laws help? I think they do. But I do not believe they solve all our problems."

The sharpest moment came when Birch said, "But I think we matter." I answered, "No, we do not." His counter-question was direct: what measurable change has come from my work? Media reports record more than a million animals saved from slaughter in 2024, and more than two hundred thousand registered students in structured programmes of self-enquiry. At UCL, Professor Fleming appreciated an analogy separating metacognition from self-knowledge: a car's speedometer reads the system, while the driver examines himself and finds that there is no driver at all. But Fleming did not agree. "There is one part of your analogy where I would perhaps differ," he said, "and that is the notion of the driver."

If the system has no separate dashboard, then the sense of a separate ego reading it is itself the error. Fleming asked: if the ego is an illusion, then whose is the error? My answer was that the one speaking and thinking is the one predicating itself. No separate observer exists apart from the ego who could say there is an error. Professor Fleming held out a research goal that runs against the framework: an account of the mind so complete in its computations that there is no need to admit any third thing. My answer was direct: "You may explain it, and the ego will say, I did

the explaining, but it will still remain."

In Kingston, the conversation with Rupert Spira was the closest philosophically, yet it was not allowed to dissolve into mutual admiration. Where most Advaita teachings turn towards awareness, I keep bringing the conversation back to the ego. "If you are speaking of spirituality without the ego," I said, "then we are speaking of medicine without the patient."

The professors were on their own ground, in their subjects and institutions. The conversation was held in the language of empirical science, not in the tradition's vocabulary. The framework had to be tested; there was no room to escape by saying, "This lies beyond the scope of my tradition." The established guru circuit usually keeps its distance from such a format.

What this proves is limited, but real. It made a demand of both sides that traditional gurdism does not. The speaker had to bear the risk of being shown wrong, and the audience had to take part in examination in place of applause. In a field where success is usually measured by crowd size, this tour set down another test: whether the argument holds up in that room. Whether this can grow larger, or even vanish, remains an open question.

Acharya Prashant is a philosopher and author whose work centres on self-inquiry and its application to contemporary life. Views presented are personal.

Female criminality: A lesser-addressed dimension of the criminal justice system

BY AKLAVYA ANAND | SHALINI SABOO

The alleged unfortunate homicide of Ketan Agarwal has brought the debate surrounding the actors and factors of the criminal justice system to every nook and corner of our nation. Ketan was visiting Lohagad Fort, a scenic spot popular with tourists and trekkers, with his fiancée, Siya Goyal, when he fell into a ditch. Days later, police arrested Siya, 20, and her friend, Chetan Chaudhary, 22, alleging that they murdered Agarwal by pushing him from a height. The alleged motive for this murder was that Ketan was to be married to Siya, though she was clandestinely in a relationship with Chetan. In this particular case, a pattern appears that is similar to other recent incidents in which neither Siya nor Chetan had a criminal record prior to this alleged crime. Their alleged participation and the subsequent public response warrant a thoughtful examination of pertinent questions regarding female criminality.

Societal expectations towards females always seek to create an ideal woman. This notion is challenged when a woman is involved in a particularly heinous crime that involves the killing of her husband. As a result, when the criminal justice system puts a woman on trial, we see that the house of justice is marked by two parallel trials. One is the justice system, which is formally designed to conduct a trial, and the second is the media trial. Here, deterministic answers are sought about the mores of society which have been broken by the acts of perpetrators at all levels, including those of the accused and of womanhood itself.

Considering the wider outcry around the question of female involvement in the crime, there is a need to examine the theoretical framework for understanding and explaining female criminality and the pathology surrounding the deviant acts of women perpetrators. There is also a need to ensure parity and fairness in the treatment of female offenders compared with their

male counterparts so that justice must not succumb to any kind of sexist ideology. The very idea of women being cross-examined elicits indignation among stakeholders and justice entrepreneurs globally. Further, the criminal justice system is accustomed to viewing women as victims, and society still struggles to accept that women can also be perpetrators. As a result, when a woman is involved in a homicide case, it often attracts disproportionate public attention. Therefore, when women are accused of serious violence, it challenges not only criminal law but also deeply rooted social expectations. However, a dominant discourse on female criminality, propagated by Pollock, argues that females have an equally strong deviant character, and their methods differ from those of their male counterparts. He argues that it is rooted in manipulation, deceit, and treachery, whereas male criminality is predominantly rooted in physical force. Many landmark cases in criminal law, especially those related to murder, involve male perpetrators. A notable example is the case of South African athlete Oscar Pistorius, who was convicted of killing his girlfriend, claiming he mistakenly believed an intruder was present. In the recent case of the killing of Shraddha Walkar, after killing her, her body was kept in a freezer. Such a narrative portrays males as the primary perpetrators of crime. However, it overlooks female criminality in the current context, in which no gender has a monopoly over deviant behaviour. To substantiate women's role in violent crimes, a few cases are important, showing how violence can be committed through deceitful means. Within this context, Battered Women's Syndrome (BWS) emerged as one of the most influential developments in criminal law. This challenges the stereotype that women are inherently nonviolent, showing that women may use violence as a means of emancipation from prolonged domestic abuse, eventually resorting to lethal violence against their abusers. So, violence could also be a tool to equalise



and at times it is an act of rebellion. Recently, in Kerala, a daughter-in-law killed six of her husband's relatives by administering cyanide. In another case, Shabnam, along with her lover, killed seven relatives after administering sleeping pills. Mamta Patask was convicted of murder for electrocuting her husband.

In the recent Sonam Shillong case, the husband was killed in Shillong and the whole episode was again allegedly planned with the active mental participation of the woman, who was not so much in the physical aspect of the act. In all these cases, one thing is apparent: female criminality is not based on physical aspects. They are a clear sign of treachery. Killing by poison, electrocuting, and hiring an assassin shows that women are capable of committing crimes in their own ways. It is important to realise here that society finds female criminality shocking because it challenges traditional gender stereotypes.

Deviance is often viewed as masculine. The female body is often regarded as sacred and, in many ways, perceived as incapable of committing heinous crimes. When a man commits murder, society typically views him simply as a man who has killed someone. In contrast, when a woman commits the same act, it tends to be viewed in a more complex manner, eliciting a range of emotional reactions that probe the collective conscience.

If gender becomes a basis for justice, it undermines the notion of justice as impartial and objective. In the current

case, equality before the law demands more than recognising women as victims. It requires criminal justice professionals to understand that a person can be both a victim and a perpetrator, regardless of gender. Until our public conversations integrate these possibilities, every woman accused of murder will continue to face two trials: one in court and another in the court of public opinion.

Crime can be committed regardless of gender. A criminal must be punished as per the law. Punishment devoid of a legal basis becomes revenge. In this context, the statement by the parents of Siya Goyal that if she has committed the crime, she should also be pushed from the same fort from where Ketan was pushed and given the same punishment has no legal basis. Gandhi has said that an eye for an eye will make the whole world blind. Law needs to be reformative and forward-looking.

To understand the current situation, the criminal justice system needs to be better equipped to handle cases of female criminality and society must recognise that it is on the cusp of a transformation in which the dominant narrative that portrays crime as a monopoly of males needs to be rethought.

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Ali is not well in Balen's Nepal

NEPAL Prime Minister Balendra "Balen" Shah cultivated the image of a disruptor even when he was the Kathmandu mayor from 2022 to January 2026. And it was this trait of the rapper-turned-politician, minus the baggage of the previous generation of Nepali politicians, that proved so attractive to voters in the national elections earlier this year.

The passage of a hundred days since he assumed the office of PM has not dented his popularity, which propelled the fledgling Rastriya Swatantra Party's (RSP) sweeping electoral victory, among millions of his fans. He has earned praise for acting swiftly to expedite the delivery of some public services and signalled that he is serious about prosecuting corrupt politicians from previous regimes.

However, a streak of authoritarianism is evident in many of his acts of commission or omission. His disregard for due process, reclusive decision-making and bypassing of his cabinet on important decisions have left even those who voted for him angry, worried or just plain puzzled.

On July 12-13, sections of "Gen Z", whose anger against the corruption of entrenched political elites toppled the KP Oli government, took to the streets once again to protest two unrelated events. One was the bulldozing of long-standing hutment colonies on the banks of the Bagmati river in Kathmandu that left their residents without viable accommodation in the rainy season. The other was the death by suicide of a 25-year-old ride-share app driver, who immolated himself, reportedly after being fined by traffic cops in Kathmandu. It was a fine he could ill afford to pay.

The protests coalesced, appearing to warn Balen that Gen Z does not entirely consist of blind camp followers. Balen's response to both protests has been silence. Even as mayor, he did not interact with Nepal's media. During the elections, he barely uttered a word at his campaign rallies. As Prime Minister, he seems to have taken a lead out of PM Narendra Modi's book. He has given no interviews so far, and does not meet the media. His occasional posts on social media are read like tea leaves. "When a young man has immolated himself and the atmosphere on the streets is



charged, remaining silent can also be seen as a lack of empathy," said Bishwas Baral, Editor of Kathmandu Post.

At the same time, offices of the Post and other media organisations, as well as the residence of Nepali Congress President Gagan Thapa, were barricaded by cars parked across their entrances, as if to send out the message that if the media found the traffic rules too harsh on the public (even more draconian changes are in the offing), it should not complain about wrongly parked cars.

Balen's contempt is not reserved for the media alone. His walkout from the first session of Parliament midway during the President's address

caused outrage among the intelligentsia. His absence from subsequent sittings of Parliament has also raised concerns. Balen's supporters say he has no time for all this due to the long hours he puts in daily at "work". Whereas his predecessors would meet their cabinet colleagues, officials and party workers at home all day and night, Balen is at the secretariat by 10:30 am every day and leaves at 5:30 pm. A recent profile published on the ekanipati site said he plays video games at home.

Balen's relations with RSP leader Rabi Lamichhane are also being watched. The latter, a former broadcast journalist, formed the RSP four years ago, and for a newbie did well enough in the 2022 elections to be wooed into

joining the ruling alliance led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda", the Nepali Communist Party leader who would form the government that year. In the 2026 elections, he refrained from projecting himself as his party's candidate for the PM's post, as graft cases are pending against him, and welcomed Balen into the party. But this is also the first time in the history of Nepali politics that the prime minister is not in charge of his party. A recent amendment to the RSP constitution empowering the party chairman (Lamichhane) to remove the leader of the parliamentary party (PM Balen), has increased speculation that the two are on a collision course. For those who expected miracles

from Balen, his inexplicable silence on foreign policy is a huge concern in a country that is a theatre of geopolitical rivalries, landlocked as it is between India and China. After Balen stopped the practice of one-on-one meetings with diplomats, both the Indian and Chinese envoys, along with other diplomats, lost their privileged access to Kathmandu's ruling party circles. As optics go, this has been welcomed by the public as putting an end to foreign interference in Nepal's domestic politics. But there is also the gnawing realisation that this cannot be a substitute for foreign policy. Last month, Vikram Misri, India's Foreign Secretary, had to cancel a visit to Kathmandu, where he was

going with an invitation to Delhi for Balen, after it was announced that the Nepal PM would meet only his equal in rank. Sergio Gor, the Delhi-based US envoy for South and Central Asia, was also unable to meet him. In the Chinese camp, there are concerns about the fate of its many infrastructure projects in the hands of an unpredictable and inaccessible leadership.

Suspicion is rife that the US is leveraging its influence in Nepal to push the Tibetan cause. For the first time, the Tibetan refugee community in Nepal celebrated the Dalai Lama's birthday without the event being disrupted by the police. Kathmandu-based Western diplomats, including the US Ambassador, attended it.

World's future hinges on using nuclear energy wisely

The existence of the nucleus in an atom became known to humanity as recently as the first decade of the last century. Hidden within that tiny space is an enormous amount of stored energy. Under special conditions, when heavy atoms split or lighter atoms combine, energy is released. The surprising part is the scale of this energy release.

We are used to energy from burning fuels such as coal, petrol or wood which involve chemical reactions due to the extra-nuclear part of the atom. However, nuclear reactions occur at a much deeper level and can release millions of times more energy than ordinary chemical processes. This is called nuclear energy. This difference is enormous, as burning a kilogram of standard coal gives 8 kWh of thermal energy whereas the same amount of pure Uranium-235 (a heavy atom) releases nuclear energy equivalent to roughly 26,000,000 kWh of thermal energy.

As such nuclear energy is a powerful tool, and society's future may depend on learning how to use it wisely, since immense power also brings immense responsibility. The discovery of nuclear energy has transformed modern civilisation. It has enabled clean electricity generation, revolutionised medicine, advanced scientific research and strengthened industry. Yet, the same knowledge also gave rise to the most destructive weapons ever created.

Unfortunately, each powerful technology, often called 'dual-use technology', can be used for both peaceful and malicious intent. The same scientific principles that can produce electricity and save lives can also create weapons of devastating capability. At a time when geopolitical tensions continue to rise, it is important to strengthen our preparedness against any possible nuclear emergency. Here, keeping aside numerous peaceful uses, let us focus on what we need to plug for safety.

Unlike conventional wars, nuclear wars possess the ability not only to devastate military targets and cities but also to produce long-term environmental, social, economic and



health consequences that may affect future generations. What nuclear war can unleash. Radioactive particles spread through the atmosphere and settle over vast regions, contaminating air, soil, water resources and food supplies. Ionising radiation emitted by radioactive materials possesses sufficient energy to damage biological molecules, including DNA. Modern scientific studies suggest that large-scale nuclear conflicts may trigger severe climatic changes, often described as 'nuclear winter'. Smoke and dust released from burning cities and industrial regions can enter the upper atmosphere and reduce the amount of sunlight reaching the Earth's surface. Such changes may significantly lower global temperatures, disrupt agricultural pro-

duction, create food shortages and threaten ecosystems worldwide. Economic systems and international trade networks would also experience severe disruption, potentially leading to widespread humanitarian crises. Nuclear wars can also produce significant social and psychological impacts. Large populations may be displaced from impacted areas, resulting in refugee crises and long-term social instability. Survivors may suffer psychological trauma, anxiety, depression and fear associated with radiation exposure and uncertainty about future health effects.

Safety measures. Given these dangers, numerous safety measures and preventive strategies have been developed to reduce the risk of nuclear conflict and min-

imise its consequences. The most important safety measure is prevention through diplomacy and international cooperation. Verification systems and international inspections help ensure compliance and increase transparency among participating countries. Early-warning systems and advanced monitoring technologies form another crucial layer of nuclear safety. Countries located in regions of strategic tension must continue strengthening their early-warning and disaster preparedness systems. Reliable communication channels between nations are essential in case of any misunderstandings or technical errors during periods of tension which could otherwise lead to unintended escalation. There are several areas where

nuclear energy is used for peaceful purposes. But there can be accidental radioactive fallout, in which case preparedness and civil defence measures are equally important. Governments need to establish emergency response systems and develop plans for evacuation, shelter construction, medical support and disaster management. Public education programmes can help individuals understand protective measures during nuclear emergencies. Research in radiation detection, medical treatment for radiation exposure, environmental monitoring and emergency management systems improves the ability of societies to respond effectively during crises. Major outreach activities should be planned to educate the masses. Disaster management centres at

divisional and state levels need to come forward with regular programmes to train the citizens on how to cope during radioactive fallout. Scientists, educators, policymakers and citizens, all have roles in promoting awareness and encouraging peaceful solutions to global conflicts. Education regarding nuclear risks helps societies understand the severe consequences associated with nuclear warfare while strengthening support for efforts toward international stability. The history of nuclear science teaches us that knowledge itself is neither good nor evil. The same understanding of the atomic nucleus has illuminated hospitals, powered cities, explored the universe and created weapons capable of destroying civilisation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PETS IN MORNING WALKS

In today's fast-paced world, stress, loneliness and unhealthy lifestyles have become common. People often struggle to find time for exercise and relaxation. One of the simplest and most enjoyable ways to improve physical and mental well-being is by taking a morning walk with a pet. Whether it is a dog, a cat, or another friendly companion animal, a pet can transform an ordinary walk into a meaningful daily experience.

A morning walk is already considered one of the healthiest habits. The fresh air, gentle sunlight and peaceful surroundings help the body wake up naturally. When a pet accompanies us, the benefits increase significantly. Pets encourage us to wake up early and maintain a regular routine. Since they depend on us for their daily exercise, they become a source of motivation, making it less likely that we skip our morning walk.

Walking with a pet is an excellent form of physical exercise. It strengthens the heart, improves blood circulation, helps maintain a healthy weight and increases stamina. Even a 30-minute walk each morning can reduce the risk of obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. The pet also enjoys better fitness, stronger muscles, healthier joints and improved overall health.

Beyond physical fitness, pets have a remarkable impact on mental health. Spending time with a loyal companion reduces stress and anxiety.

Scientific studies suggest that interacting with pets can lower the stress hormone cortisol while increasing the release of serotonin and oxytocin, often called the feel-good hormones. A cheerful dog wagging its tail or an affectionate pet walking beside its owner can brighten even the most difficult day.

Morning walks with pets also provide emotional support. Many people, especially senior citizens, children and those living alone, experience loneliness. A pet offers unconditional love, companionship and a sense of purpose. Talking to a pet or simply observing its playful behaviour creates moments of joy and emotional comfort that improve overall happiness.

Children benefit greatly when they accompany their pets on morning walks. They learn kindness, responsibility, patience and compassion by caring for another living being. They also become more active and spend less time on mobile phones and other electronic devices. Such experiences help shape responsible and emotionally balanced individuals.

Morning walks with pets also encourage social interaction. Pet owners often meet one another in parks and neighbourhoods, exchange greetings, share experiences and develop friendships. These casual conversations strengthen community bonds and reduce feelings of isolation. Pets often become the bridge that connects people from different backgrounds.

For the pets themselves, morning walks are essential. They provide opportunities to explore new surroundings, satisfy curiosity, release excess energy and interact with other animals. Regular outdoor activity prevents boredom, reduces behavioural problems and supports healthy physical and mental development.

Walking with a pet also increases awareness of nature. Owners begin to notice birds singing, flowers blooming, fresh breezes and changing seasons. Such mindful experiences promote inner peace and encourage people to value environmental cleanliness. Responsible pet owners also develop habits such as cleaning up after their animals, contributing to cleaner public spaces.

However, responsible pet ownership is essential. Pets should always be walked with appropriate control, such as a leash where required. Owners should carry water, avoid extreme weather, ensure regular vaccinations and respect public places by maintaining cleanliness. Caring for a pet is not only a privilege but also a lifelong responsibility. Modern scientific research continues to confirm that pets contribute positively to human health. Regular interaction with companion animals has been associated with lower blood pressure, improved cardiovascular health, reduced depression, stronger immune function and greater emotional resilience. In this way, a simple morning walk becomes a daily investment in long-term health.

In conclusion, pets are much more than domestic animals—they are faithful companions, motivators and silent healers. A morning walk with a pet combines exercise, emotional well-being, social connection and appreciation of nature into one healthy routine. In an age dominated by digital distractions and stressful schedules, this simple daily habit offers a practical path to a healthier, happier and more balanced life. Caring for a pet and sharing the freshness of each morning together reminds us that true happiness often lies in the simplest moments of companionship.



Rediscovering the soul's eternal divine connection

Let us pause and remember who we truly are. We are not merely fragile material bodies moving through a temporary world; we are eternal souls inhabiting these bodies for a brief span of time. In the Bhagavad Gita (15.7), Lord Krishna declares that every living being is His eternal fragment. This single truth has profound implications. If we are parts of the Divine, then our natural position is to reconnect with Him. Just as an orphan finds security and belonging when adopted into a loving family, the soul finds fulfillment when it accepts its relationship with God.

Yet, despite this divine invitation, we hesitate. We continue wandering through cycles of birth and death, searching for stability in a world that offers none. Why do we avoid taking shelter in the Supreme when He is omnipotent, omniscient, and ever-present? The answer lies in our misplaced faith. We seek refuge in wealth, status, power, and relationships, hoping they will grant lasting peace. Money has its utility, but it cannot purchase inner tranquility. Power may command obedience, but it does not silence anxiety. Even those who appear outwardly successful often struggle inwardly. The modern world, despite its comforts, is restless. Sleepless nights, fearful dreams, and the haunting sense of insecurity remind us that something essential is missing. Lord Krishna provides the solution with clarity. He explains that the soul is sat, chit, and ananda — eternal, conscious, and blissful by nature. Eternity (sat) means that while bodies perish, the soul never dies. In the Gita (2.17), He affirms that the soul is indestructible and cannot be annihilated. Death is merely a transition — a change of garments. Understanding this dissolves much of our fear. We are not extinguished at death; we continue our journey. God patiently waits for us to turn towards Him and promises that by taking His shelter (18.62), we can attain supreme peace and the eternal abode.

The second quality, chit, refers to consciousness. We are aware, but our awareness is misdirected. We identify with temporary labels — name, nationality, profession — forgetting that these dissolve with the body. We also misuse our free will, chasing desires under the illusion that unrestricted enjoyment will bring happiness. Instead, we encounter frustration, anger, and wounded pride. Our ego, built on false identity, becomes the source of suffering.

Then comes ananda, bliss. We confuse fleeting pleasures with true joy. Sense indulgence often carries hidden consequences — physical discomfort, mental agitation, or emotional emptiness. What we call enjoyment frequently leaves us more disturbed than satisfied. Real bliss is not dependent on external stimulation; it arises from harmony with our spiritual nature. The turning point begins when we consciously accept: "I am a soul, a part of God." With this understanding, free will is used wisely. We cultivate remembrance of the Divine through prayer, mantra, sacred study, and contemplation. The senses, once restless and outward-driven, become disciplined and purposeful. The mind, trained through practice and detachment, gradually rests in divine awareness.

As this connection deepens, insecurity fades. Guidance begins to flow from within, illuminating decisions and correcting missteps. Life becomes anchored in dharma. One feels protected — not by circumstance, but by divine presence. This is the beginning of jeevan mukti — liberation even while living. The journey is gradual, yet transformative. Soul consciousness reshapes priorities, instills peace, and awakens hope for the ultimate destination: a spiritual existence beyond death, in eternal communion with the Divine.

The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal

What is Kodava wedding? Coorg rituals blended in Rashmika Mandanna-Vijay Deverakonda's marriage ceremony explained

Love, legacy, and a lot of dramatic rituals. That's exactly what people whispered about when Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda reportedly tied the knot on February 26, 2026, in Udaipur. But their wedding was not just about celebrity sparkle. It was a rare cultural crossover moment. A Telugu groom, a Kodava bride from Coorg. Two traditions, two histories, one grand wedding stage. And suddenly, fans everywhere started asking: what exactly is a Kodava wedding and why does it feel so different from other Hindu ceremonies?

Let's break it down step by step, ritual by ritual, and decode the full cultural drama behind the Coorg wedding traditions that reportedly shaped Rashmika and Vijay's big day. Who are the Kodavas and why their weddings are so unique are a native community of Kodagu, known as Coorg. They are famous for their strong community bonds and martial history. Their lifestyle evolved from hilly terrain and local environment.

Even the word for wedding in Kodava language, Mangala, reflects joy and festivity. No brahmin priests, only elders and ancestors. Unlike most Hindu weddings, Kodava weddings are not solemnised by Brahmin priests. Instead, prayers are offered to ancestors at a sacred hanging lamp. The ceremony is guided by elders of the family. How long does a traditional

Coorg wedding last?

Traditionally, a Kodava wedding is a two-day affair, sometimes stretching into early morning of the third day if celebrations continue through the night.

Day 1: Urkooduva or Karik Muripa (preparation day and clan gathering)

Day 2: Mangala (the main wedding rituals and ceremonies)

DAY 1: Urkooduva or Karik Muripa

First day is called Urkooduva, meaning "village gathering". This is when family members close and distant participate in wedding preparations. Every clan (okka) has representation. A person from each administrative unit (nad) helps organise rituals. A traditional pandal (temporary wedding structure) is erected. It is decorated with mango leaves, banana bunches, topped with leaves of young jackfruit or wild litchi branches.

The mediator called Aruva plays major role during preparations. He acts as link between the bride's and groom's families, supervises feast arrangements, oversees installation of main pandal and water over the house. By evening, preparations shift into celebration mode. Close relatives and friends gather for a small party where alcohol and different varieties of meat are served.

On wedding eve, groom dresses in traditional white long-sleeved kupa secured with red and gold chela (sash). A checked red silk

scarf is tied on his head.

Bride wears an off-white sari with gold border draped in Coorg style, pleats tucked at the back and pallu pinned over the right shoulder, along with long-sleeved blouse and embroidered veil tied at the neck.

Groom guided by his best man (bojakaara) prays at sacred hanging lamp to honour ancestors and clan deities. His mother places a pavaala maale, chain of coral and gold beads.

He then seeks blessings by touching elders' feet thrice and raising hands to his forehead.

The bride performs identical rituals with her matron of honour (bojakarhi). Her mother ties a pathaak (a gold, coral, and bead chain with a cobra-hood pendant).

Meanwhile, drums (dudis) beat wedding songs and the volaga band plays outside. DAY 2: Mangala

The wedding day begins early. Groom undergoes a ritual shave where milk is applied to his face before shaving part of his forehead. Then comes the ritual bath, where his mother and two married women pour pots of water over his head. This cleansing prepares him for marriage.

After bathing, he dresses again in kupa attire with dagger (poche kathi) tucked in front and war knife (odi kathi) at the back.

At the same time, bride undergoes bale iduva, bangle wearing ceremony. She sits on a mat while bangle-seller



adorns her wrists with colourful glass bangles, including at least one black pair believed to ward off evil.

After her ritual bath, she dresses in a red silk sari with gold border, a red veil, jasmine garland, heavy traditional gold and silver jewellery for hair, ears, wrists, fingers, neck, feet.

One of the most dramatic rituals follows: Baale Brud. Rows of banana plant stems decorated with flowers are fixed along the wedding path. The maternal uncle of the bride or groom is honoured to cut these stems with a single stroke using an odi kathi.

Also Read: Late nights aren't cute; they're a full-blown disaster for your brain, skin, sanity you've been ignoring

walks around them thrice, taps flowers. Then he cuts each stem cleanly showcasing warrior heritage.

The groom arrives holding a gejjel thand. It is an ebony staff with bells, symbolising his presence even if he were absent. He is shaded by an umbrella held by his best man and accompanied by drummers, singers, and a girl carrying a reed basket of puffed rice, coconuts, bananas, jaggery, and milk.

On arrival, the bride's family washes his feet and showers rice over him. A white cloth path is spread for him to walk on. The bride's mother feeds him a mix of rice, milk, and sugar as a welcome gesture.

At the sacred dais, the groom walks thrice around his seat,

sprinkles rice, and sits facing east. The bride repeats the same ritual and sits beside him.

Then begins the main blessing ceremony. Mothers bless first, followed by fathers, elders, women, and then men. Drums sing wedding songs and the volaga band plays outside.

Finally the groom stands, showers rice on the bride, offers her milk, gifts her a small red silk bag containing gold, silver, copper coins. They hold hands and exchange jasmine garlands. Sammanda Kodupa ritual legally and culturally seals the marriage. Elders from both families stand before sacred lamp and recite traditional dialogue granting bride rights

in the groom's clan. Bride's elder gives twelve pebbles representing her birthright in her parental home. Groom's elder accepts only eleven allowing her right to return to her parents if needed.

For Batta Thadpa, the groom prepares to take his bride home, her cross-cousin blocks her path claiming he has the traditional right to marry her. After humorous arguments and bargaining, he accepts a gold coin and allows the bride to leave.

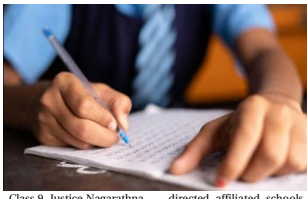
Once rituals end, the bride's mother invites everyone to the grand feast. The head of the family eats with guests while others serve the meal. They usually serve women first.

Don't burden class 9 students with a new language, SC tells Centre, CBSE

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Thursday questioned the Central Board of Secondary Education's (CBSE) decision to introduce a compulsory third language at the class 9 level, observing that it placed avoidable academic pressure on students already preparing for board examinations and suggesting that any such language should instead be introduced from Class 6.

The remarks by Justice BV Nagarathna assume significance as they come barely a fortnight after the CBSE announced a one-time relaxation for the current batch of Class 9 students, exempting them from taking the third language in the Class 10 Board examination after widespread concerns from schools, parents and students over the abrupt implementation of the policy. Justice Nagarathna made the observations during the hearing of the Tamil Nadu government's appeal against a Madras High Court's 2017 judgment directing the state to facilitate the establishment of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs) in every district. Tamil Nadu has consistently opposed the scheme, contending that JNVs follow a three-language policy that is incompatible with the state's long-standing two-language policy. Although the validity of the CBSE's three-language policy was not under consideration before the bench that also comprised Justice R Mahadevan, the discussion veered towards the stage at which a third language is introduced in schools.

When counsel for Tamil Nadu submitted that the third language becomes compulsory only from



Class 9, Justice Nagarathna reacted, saying: "No, that is very bad. Ninth standard is very bad. You introduce it in 9th? You introduce it in 6th." Drawing upon her own schooling, the judge recalled that when in her school began learning the third language during middle school so that they were adequately prepared before secondary school. "In the middle school the third language was started... The earlier, the better," she observed.

Addressing the Union government directly, Justice Nagarathna said: "Union of India, please don't have third language in 9th standard. CBSE, ICSE, state boards, 10th standard is a board exam. From the end of 8th standard onwards, the pressure starts." Recalling her own academic experience in the 1970s, she said students were introduced to Class 10 concepts as early as Class 8 because of the rigours of board examinations. "So, if we had that kind of preparation and all, what about today's students? Don't start it in 6th... I am recalling my experience from 1976," she remarked.

Her observations echo concerns that had been raised by schools and parents after CBSE, through a circular issued on May 15,

directed affiliated schools to make three languages compulsory for Class 9 students from July 1, 2026, notwithstanding that its revised scheme of studies had envisaged a phased rollout beginning from Class 6.

The May 15 circular required schools to immediately implement the policy for the existing Class 9 batch, even asking them to use Class 6 third-language textbooks as an interim arrangement until dedicated material became available. Following widespread objections over the logistical and academic difficulties, CBSE on June 29 announced a one-time transitional relaxation. It allowed the current Class 9 batch, as well as students presently in Classes 7 and 8 who had already opted for two non-native languages. Following widespread objections over the logistical and academic difficulties, CBSE on June 29 announced a one-time transitional relaxation. It allowed the current Class 9 batch, as well as students presently in Classes 7 and 8 who had already opted for two non-native languages to continue with their existing language combinations by merely adding one Indian language. Crucially, the Board announced that the third lan-

guage for this batch would be assessed only internally and would not form part of the Class 10 Board examination. The CBSE's May 15 circular is separately under challenge before a bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, which has scheduled a hearing next week.

The remarks by Justice BV Nagarathna assume significance as they come barely a fortnight after the CBSE announced a one-time relaxation for the current batch of Class 9 students, exempting them from taking the third language in the Class 10 Board examination after widespread concerns from schools, parents and students over the abrupt implementation of the policy. During Thursday's hearing, Justice Nagarathna also rejected the suggestion that the policy mandated Hindi. The state language has to be taught, English has to be taught, and any third language. It doesn't say Hindi," she observed.

When counsel for the respondent NGO pointed out that the National Education Policy prohibits imposition of any language, the judge asked the counsel for Tamil Nadu: "You don't want Hindi, but if it's Sanskrit, what is the issue?" She also advised the state not to reject central schemes merely because they originate from the Union government, observing: "You may have your education system, but don't prevent the Central government's schools."

The bench noted that consultations between the Union and the state over establishing Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas were still underway and posted the matter for further hearing on August 11.

Centre hikes windfall tax on diesel, jet fuel; cuts petrol export levy

NEW DELHI: Amid escalating tensions in West Asia due to the US-Iran war, the government has announced a hike in the windfall gains tax on exports of diesel and aviation turbine fuel (ATF). However, the Centre has also announced that it will lower the petrol levy for the fortnight, effective from Thursday, July 16.

Based on the official gazette released by the Ministry of Finance, the rate of Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED) on diesel exports has been increased to 715.5 a litre from 38.5 a litre. Similarly, SAED on ATF exports has been raised to 714.5 per litre from 71.5 per litre.

Meanwhile, the export duty on petrol has been cut to 22.5 per litre from 24 per litre.

The ministry added that there will be no change in the existing duty rates on petrol and diesel cleared for domestic consumption. This hike in windfall gains and jet fuel comes as the conflict between the United States and Iran escalated last week.

The US and Iran launched fresh strikes in the region and reinstated the blockade on the Strait of Hormuz, which is a key passage for 20 per cent of the world's oil and gas supply. The government had earlier, on March 27, imposed an export duty on diesel and ATF and revised the rates every fortnight. And from May 16 onwards, an export duty was also imposed on petrol. The hike in the wind-



fall tax is also intended to ensure exporters are not taking undue advantage of price differences arising from the rise in crude oil prices. According to the government, this tax hike was also intended to ensure domestic availability of petroleum products. Earlier this month, following the de-escalation of the war and the reopening of the Hormuz Strait, fuel prices across industries in India fell. Prices of commercial LPG, used in hotels and restaurants, were cut by 118.50 per 15 kg cylinder, news agency PTI reported.

Narayana Energy, India's largest private fuel retailer, reduced petrol prices by 35 per litre and diesel by 33 across its nationwide network.

Kanwariyas vandalise pickup truck after vehicle allegedly brushed against Kanwar in UP's Muzaffarnagar

LUCKNOW: A group of Kanwariyas allegedly vandalised a pickup vehicle after it apparently came in contact with a 'kanwar' on the Delhi-Haridwar National Highway in Uttar Pradesh's Muzaffarnagar district, police said on Thursday.

The incident took place near Khadar Chowk in Purkazi town on Wednesday night when a group of Kanwariyas, including Naveen, Prince and Navneet, was returning from Haridwar carrying holy water in 'kanwars', according to a report by news agency PTI.

Vehicle brushed against Kanwars. According to Station House Officer (SHO) Manvendra Singh Bhati, the pickup vehicle allegedly brushed against one of the 'kanwars', triggering anger among the pilgrims, who



allegedly vandalised the vehicle. Police rushed to the spot after receiving information about the incident and brought the situation under control, the SHO said.

The Kanwariyas later resumed their yatra, while the police seized the pickup vehicle and launched an investigation into the incident. Traffic affected briefly on Delhi-Haridwar National Highway

police prepare for Kanwar Mela 2026

Ahead of the upcoming Shravan Kanwar Mela 2026, the Uttarakhand Police held a high-level review meeting on Thursday to assess security and logistical preparations for the annual pilgrimage, ANI reported. According to a release issued by the Uttarakhand Police Headquarters, the meeting was chaired by Director General of Police (DGP) Deepam Sethi at the Police Headquarters. Reviewing the preparations, the DGP said the Kanwar Mela is a massive and highly sensitive religious event. Ensuring the safety of pilgrims, smooth movement, effective traffic management, and maintaining law and order are the top priorities of the Uttarakhand Police, he said.

The annual Kanwar Yatra is scheduled to begin on July 30 this year and conclude on August 11. However, some devotees begin their pilgrimage before the yatra officially starts. Uttarakhand and UP

Uttarakhand: Worker killed in concrete lining collapse inside Silkyara tunnel

DEHRADUN: A 21-year-old construction worker from Bharkhand was killed after a section of the concrete lining inside the Silkyara-Barkot tunnel collapsed in Uttarakashi district during the early hours of Thursday, officials said.

Confirming the incident, Uttarakashi District Magistrate Prashant Arya said the incident occurred at around 2am, nearly 900 metres from the Barkot-side part of the 4.5-km-long tunnel. "The fatal incident occurred when a heavy section of the tunnel's concrete shotcrete lining fractured and collapsed on the worker," Arya said.

The worker sustained fatal injuries after being struck by the falling debris and died at the site, he added. Arya said no other workers were trapped in the collapse and the tunnel remained accessible. "No other labourers are currently caught under the debris. However, the final details will be available only after the complete inquiry report is submitted," he said.

The district magistrate directed senior district officials, including the sub-divisional magistrate (SDM), Barkot, to visit the site, assess the situation and submit a detailed report. Meanwhile, the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) has launched a probe into the incident to determine the exact cause of the structural failure. Officials said conclusions would be drawn



only after the factual assessment is completed. The Silkyara tunnel had drawn international attention in November 2023 when a major collapse in the tunnel blocked a 60-metre stretch of the tunnel, trapping 41 workers inside for 17 days. The workers were eventually rescued in a complex multi-agency operation after specialised rail-hole miners manually drilled through the final section of debris and twisted steel to reach them.

After the collapse, the tunnel was sealed off. The workers were eventually rescued in a complex multi-agency operation after specialised rail-hole miners manually drilled through the final section of debris and twisted steel to reach them.

NEW DELHI: Devotees thronged the Odisha temple town on Thursday for the annual Rath Yatra despite rain and waterlogged streets after Puri received more than 200 mm of rainfall over the previous 45 hours.

Authorities mounted an unprecedented security and logistics operation for the 3-km ceremonial journey of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra to the Gundicha Temple located 20-km away. Around 12,000 security personnel, including contingents of the Border Security Force (BSF), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Rapid Action Force (RAF), National Security Guard (NSG) commandos, anti-drone units and snipers, were deployed. The Coast Guard and Marine Police are patrolling the coastline, while 473 AI-enabled CCTV cameras linked to drone-jamming systems monitored the festival through two integrated command-and-control centres.



The East Coast Railway operated special trains connecting Puri with key destinations across Odisha, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra to handle the surge in pilgrim traffic. At Puri railway station, authorities created waiting facilities for about 30,000 passengers, installed 129 modular toilets, 68 bathing units, 65 drinking water kiosks and 10 chilled water booths, and deployed three round-the-clock medical centres with ambulances. Battery-operated vehicles and wheelchairs were arranged for senior citizens and

persons with disabilities. To streamline ticketing, the railway opened 40 booking counters, installed 12 automatic ticket vending machines and 32 mobile ticketing machines. Ticketing System (UTS) machines, besides setting up additional ticket counters at 21 stations. Railway officials said passenger demand would be monitored continuously and more special trains would be introduced if required. The state administration also created 36 parking zones across Puri, deployed more than 500 lifeguards and fire service personnel along the beach, and

kept 268 additional hospital beds ready. Self-help groups were expected to distribute free meals to about 3.5 lakh devotees during the festival.

President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi led greetings on the occasion. In a post on X, Murmu said Rath Yatra was a rare celebration symbolising the union of the deity with devotees and prayed for the nation's peace and prosperity. Modi also took to X, where he said the festival reflected India's enduring spiritual and cultural heritage, embodying humility, collective participation and selfless service.

Sand artist Sudarshan Pattnaik unveiled a sand sculpture on Puri beach depicting Lord Jagannath and 100 miniature chariots. The installation, created with students of the Sudarshan Sand Art Institute, also paid tribute to the 15th-century saint-poet Balaram Das, whose devotion to Lord Jagannath occupies a revered place in the festival's traditions.

'Ram Mandir Trust treasurer must also be investigated': Sena UBT's Sanjay Raut amid donation scam row

MUMBAI: Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut has demanded an investigation into Ram Mandir Trust Treasurer Govind Giri if he alleged theft from the Ram Mandir treasury took place during his tenure, saying the treasurer bears primary responsibility for safeguarding the Ayodhya temple's funds and maintaining its accounts. Addressing reporters on Thursday, Raut said that if the alleged financial irregularities took place during Govind Giri's tenure as treasurer, he too should be investigated.

"If the alleged theft of the Ram Mandir treasury took place during his tenure, then Ram Mandir Trust Treasurer Govind Giri must also face investigation. The treasurer bears the primary responsibility for safeguarding the temple's funds, financial oversight, and maintaining the temple's accounts. The claim that auditors were merely sent from Pune is highly criticisable; a temple of such national and religious significance deserves a far more robust financial management system. The Ram Mandir represents not only the faith of Hindus but also the pride of the nation, and countless

people have made sacrifices for its construction," Raut said.

'Ram Raksha Stotra' campaign. On the proposed 'Ram Raksha Stotra' campaign, Raut said he had written to Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis inviting him to participate in the movement, which is scheduled to be launched in Nagpur on July 18.

"I have written to Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, inviting him to participate in the 'Ram Raksha Stotra' campaign in Nagpur on July 18. This campaign is being organised against the alleged theft in the Ram Mandir, the alleged misappropriation of devotees' offerings, and the alleged financial irregularities. Since Devendra Fadnavis has publicly described himself as a devotee of Lord Ram and claimed to have participated in the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, he too should be concerned about these allegations. All devotees of Lord Ram will be invited to the programme, which will be held in the presence of Uddhav Thackeray," he said.

In his letter dated July 15, Sanjay Raut addressed Maharashtra CM Fadnavis as a "devout devotee of Lord Ram" and



recalled his association with the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. He said the Ram Mandir was built after the prolonged struggle of millions of devotees. "However, in this very Ram Mandir, serious offences such as theft, looting, and fraud are currently taking place, resulting in the misappropriation of hundreds of crores of rupees. Even the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)



itself has expressed profound 'grief' and concern over the theft occurring in Ayodhya," Raut wrote. Stating that the Shiv Sena (UBT) has launched the 'Ram Raksha' initiative to create public awareness over the alleged financial irregularities, Raut said the campaign symbolises the protection of Lord Ram. The claim that auditors were merely sent from Pune

is highly criticisable; a temple of such national and religious significance deserves a far more robust financial management system. The Ram Mandir represents not only the faith of Hindus but also the pride of the nation, and countless people have made sacrifices for its construction, Raut said.

"To raise public awareness regarding this plundering of the Ram Mandir, the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasahab Thackeray) party has launched the 'Ram Raksha' initiative. Please understand that 'Ram Raksha' signifies the security and protection of Lord Ram," Raut wrote.

Raut invited the Chief Minister to attend the programme, scheduled to be held at Ram Mandir in Ramnagar, Nagpur, on July 18 at 4:30 pm, in the presence of Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray. "Since this event is taking place in Nagpur, I earnestly request and urge you to specially participate in this 'Ram Raksha' initiative and extend your best wishes to the devotees of Lord Ram," Raut wrote. Raut on delimitation

On the proposed delimitation exercise, the Shiv Sena (UBT) leader said any proposal to increase the number of parliamentary seats should be discussed collectively by all constituents of the INDIA alliance before a decision is taken.

"Any proposal to increase the number of parliamentary seats by up to 50 per cent can only be considered after discussions with all political parties. No individual party in the INDIA alliance, including Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress or the NCP, will take a unilateral decision. Any decision on the delimitation bill will be taken collectively by the alliance partners," he said. Reacting to political defections, Raut rejected claims that leaders switching parties had completed all legal formalities.

"I completely reject claims that 'all legal formalities' have been completed by leaders switching parties. Such defections are carried out through 'illegal formalities' and are contrary to the law. MPs leaving their party under such circumstances will ultimately lose their parliamentary membership," he said.

CONTINUATION

India launches first hydrogen-powered train built in the country to expand clean energy on railways: PM Modi

of Hornumz. However, for the last three to four months, this path has continuously become a battlefield, he said. Despite the war and oil crisis, India's railways and the country's development vehicle has not stalled, he said.

"If this situation had arisen before 2014, the work of India's railways would have come to a complete standstill," he asserted.

Modi also said that this visit to Jind has opened a window to old memories. "I cannot forget the love I have got," he said. Jind's 'ghee' and 'ghevar' have not changed in years but its 'tevar' (attitude) has, he said, while adding Jind is becoming a model of BJP's good governance.

Names of Jind, Sonipat and Haryana will come up whenever there is mention of hydrogen train. I congratulate the entire country, he added.

The train, styled in a striking sky-blue and white colour scheme, is powered by hydrogen fuel cell technology, which converts hydrogen into electricity to propel the train. The process produces only water vapour as a by-product, resulting in zero carbon emissions during operation.

Compared to diesel trains, they eliminate tailpipe emissions, lower dependence on fossil fuels and fossil fuel imports, and operate with significantly less noise. Unlike conventional electric trains, they do not require continuous overhead electrification infrastructure, as electricity is generated onboard through hydrogen fuel cells, making them a clean and efficient solution.

The use of green hydrogen also reduces dependence on electricity generated from fossil fuel-based thermal power plants, supporting India's transition to sustainable energy. The Jind's hydrogen train features a 10-coach configuration, making it among the longest hydrogen-powered passenger trains developed so far. Its 3,200 HP propulsion system makes it one of the most powerful hydrogen-powered trains in operation. A 1,200-kilowatt hydrogen fuel cell propulsion system will power the 10-car train with a capacity of around 2,600 passengers, demonstrating the scalability of hydrogen-powered rail transport for high-capacity passenger operations.

PM Modi lays foundation stone and inaugurates multiple development projects in Punjab & Chandigarh

which include S.A.S. Nagar (Mohali) Railway Station, Sri Muktar Sahib Railway Station and Sri Anandpur Sahib Railway Station. The transformation of these stations is part of one of the world's largest station redevelopment programmes, Amrit Bharat Station Scheme. These railway stations are equipped with all the modern facilities.

The Prime Minister, who was accompanied by the Union Minister of Railways and Information and Broadcasting, Ashwini Vaishnaw and other dignitaries, also flagged off Sant Ravidas Express Train from Jalandhar Cantt railway station. It is a first direct three-a-week train connecting two of India's most revered spiritual and cultural centres, Amritsar and Varanasi. Seer Gopandharipuri in Varanasi is the birthplace of Guru Ravidas Ji. Besides inaugurating Daulpur Chowk Kartal rail new line as part of the Nangal Dam-Talwara-Mukerian Rail Line Project and flagging off the Kartoli-Anbala train service, Prime Minister Modi inaugurated National Highway projects including a four-lane greenfield Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway and laid the foundation stone for the development of six-lane greenfield Southern Ludhiana Bypass.

Addressing a public gathering in Jalandhar, Prime Minister Modi said, the NDA government at the Centre prioritises serving every citizen of India, making their lives easier, and providing them with new opportunities for progress. He said, it is their endeavour to ensure that every family, whether poor or middle-class, receives the best possible facilities, and this spirit of Nangal Devo Bhava is reflected in government's work. Mr. Modi said, the NDA government is committed to the development of Punjab and has extended financial assistance worth crores of rupees to the state under various schemes and development projects. He alleged that the Punjab government had failed to utilise these funds effectively and was presenting them as its own. He said, the Prime Minister assured that the Centre would do everything possible to restore Punjab's past glory. He alleged that the state government was mired in corruption and burdened with debt, adding that a significant portion of its budget was spent on debt repayment, leaving less for development and order-situation. Mr. Modi alleged that incidents of crime, extortion and drug abuse had increased in the state. Mr. Modi also criticised the Congress and the Shiromani Akali Dal, alleging that both parties were preoccupied with their own political interests rather than the welfare of Punjab. Earlier, the Prime Minister launched several developmental projects worth around 4700 crore rupees in Chandigarh in key areas healthcare, education and road infrastructure. In a programme organised at Punjab Engineering College, Chandigarh, the Prime Minister inaugurated the new nation Advanced Mother and Child Care Centre built at cost of 505 crore rupees and Advanced Neurosciences Centre built at a cost of 440 crore rupees. He also laid foundation stone of 259 bed critical care block under PM-AHHM scheme at PCIMER, Chandigarh. Mr. Modi also dedicated Zrakpur-Kartal Greenfield highway to the nation and laid foundation stones for the Zrakpur bypass and the Chandigarh Airport Aerocity Greenfield highway. He also inaugurated hotel blocks at Punjab Engineering College and Government College of Sector 46 alongside a new multipurpose auditorium at Punjab University.

Addressing a gathering, Prime Minister Modi said with the development of Chandigarh, people's lives have been transformed but its benefits extend beyond the city, reaching the people of Haryana. Punjab has made significant progress and added that the expansion of the Advanced Neurosciences Centre, the Advanced Maternal and Child Care Centre and the Critical Care Hospital Block at PGI would improve treatment facilities for lakhs of people. He said, PGI had significantly expanded its capabilities over the past decade and praised its management, faculty and young doctors for their contribution to healthcare. The Prime Minister also referred to reforms in the criminal justice system, saying the country replaced the colonial-era penal laws with the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), and noted that the implementation of BNS in Chandigarh, speaking about the city's modernisation. Prime Minister Modi said, projects including the Integrated Command and Control Centre, smart traffic management, smart parking and digital governance initiatives had transformed Chandigarh into a high-tech city, with more than 2,500 crore rupees spent under the mission. The Prime Minister described Chandigarh as a benchmark for planned urban growth and said the city has remained a priority for the NDA government.

Lieutenant Governor visits Nunwan Base**Camp, inspects facilities for pilgrims**

told the officials.

The Lieutenant Governor directed the officers to regularly obtain feedback from the pilgrims and ensure prompt redressal of any issues brought to their notice. He instructed that all services provided to the pilgrims should strictly follow a 100 percent prepaid system to ensure transparency and prevent overcharging.

In view of the forecast of heavy rainfall over the coming days, the Lieutenant Governor directed the Administration and all stakeholder agencies to remain fully prepared, strengthen contingency measures and ensure the safety, security and convenience of the pilgrims under all circumstances. He also directed that each tent should have a mandatory Fire Extinguisher.

During his visit, the Lieutenant Governor interacted with the pilgrims and discussed about their experience during the holy pilgrimage. The pilgrims expressed satisfaction over the arrangements and appreciated the cleanliness, sanitation arrangements, security, accommodation facilities and invaluable support of the personnel engaged in Yatra duties.

The Lieutenant Governor stated that the expansion of infrastructure and pilgrim facilities in recent years has been reflected positively by the feedback from devotees. He said, alongside these advancements, it is essential to ensure that every pilgrim can access these facilities seamlessly, without any impediment.

The Lieutenant Governor also interacted with shopkeepers, service providers, langar-senadas, volunteers, and lauded their valuable contribution in facilitating the smooth pilgrimage of the devotees of Baba Barfani.

Speaking to the media-persons, the Lieutenant Governor said, "Through the seamless coordination of all departments of J&K administration, Police, Army, J&K Tourism Board and all stakeholders, the arrangements for this year's pilgrimage are significantly enhanced. Feedback from the pilgrims has been overwhelmingly positive. This pilgrimage continues to drive vital economic benefits for Jammu Kashmir. Furthermore, following the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's a appeal for visiting pilgrims to purchase local products, J&K's large number of devotees are buying local products such as handloom and handicrafts. In the days to come, this pilgrimage will be remembered as a truly memorable and historic one."

The Lieutenant Governor was accompanied by Shri VK Birdi, IGP Kashmir, Shri M. Suleman Choudhary, IGP Traffic J&K; Shri Sujit Kumar Singh, IGP Security; Dr. Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, Nodal Officer for Pahalgam Axis; Shri Anshul Gang, Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir; Shri Shabir Mahto, DIG South Kashmir Range; Dr. Bilal Mohiuddin Bhat, Deputy Commissioner, Anantnag; Shri Amol Nagure Ashok, SSP Anantnag; Ms Anoo Malhotra, DG Rural Sanitation; and senior officers of Shrine Board, civil administration, police and security forces.

One killed, three SOG personnel injured in firing incident in J-K's Baderwah

SOG team intercepted a youth who allegedly attacked the personnel and attempted to snatch a service rifle, he said.

"During the scuffle, an SOG jawan opened fire. The youth sustained bullet injuries, while three police personnel were injured in the incident," the officer said. All four of them were taken to the Sub-District Hospital, Baderwah, from where they were referred to the Government Medical College, Doda, for specialised treatment. The youth, Rajat Hussain (30) of Cheeka village, succumbed to his injuries, the officials said. A religious preacher has been detained, they said. As a precautionary measure, additional deployments of the Central Reserve Police Force and police have been made in Baderwah town. The Army has launched a search operation in the Jale area, the officials said.

Jal Shakti Department Places 50 AEEs As XENs, Transfers 76 Others

Ahmad Malik, Mohammad Farooq Dar, Muzaffar Ahmad Dar, Mohammed Ishfaq, Laqat Ali, Abdul Ghafoor, Abdul Qayyum, Parviz, Abdul Malik, Sunil Kumar, Gaurav Jarangal, Abdul Majid, Khalid Tanveer, Nareesh Kumar, Rakesh Singh Manhas, Ravinder Verma, and Arif Ghulam Nabi have been elevated under the same order.

The official order, released from the Jal Shakti Department in Jammu and Srinagar under the authority of Shaheen Kabir, Financial Commissioner and Additional Chief Secretary of the Jal Shakti Department, outlines distinct conditions governing these temporary stop-gap promotions.

The department has emphasised that these structural changes are implemented solely to satisfy pressing administrative exigencies. Consequently, these assignments do not bestow any preferential right upon the officers to demand promotions on a permanent or substantive basis, which will remain bound by established statutory regulations and due legal process.

Additionally, all placements remain strictly subject to any prior or superior claims from overlooked eligible officers that are subsequently validated, as well as the final outcomes of any relevant legal proceedings currently remaining unresolved before the courts. The directive explicitly mandates that should the operational needs of borrowing organisations conclude, or if the officials sent on deputation from the Jal Shakti Department are repatriated, the junior-most officers will face immediate reversion to their original lower posts without holding any valid legal claim to the financial or structural benefits of the higher temporary rank.

Simultaneously, a massive chain of transfers and new postings involving 76 Incharge Executive Engineers has been endorsed with immediate effect to rationalise regional operations. Under these new arrangements, Mahesh Sharma is deployed to the Public Health Engineering Division in Udhampur, replacing Sandeep Gupta, whilst Ch. Sajad Ahmed assumes control of the PHE Division in Poonch from Vishal Thapa. Zulfiqar Ali has been posted to the PHE Division in Rajouri to succeed Sudeesh Kumar, and Sunil Thapa will manage the PHE Division in Doda in place of Bharat Vikas Sharma.

The shake-up also sees Sandeep Kumar taking over the PHE Division in Reasi from Nareesh Kumar Gupta, and Ashish Kumar moving to the PHE Division in Kathua to replace Sunesh Hangloo. Meanwhile, Sudeesh Kumar transitions from Rajouri to the PHE Division in Mendhar against an available vacancy. Sanjeev Thapa shifts from the Irrigation and Flood Control Division in Baderwah to the Hydraulic Division in Ganderbal, while Rajesh Sharma moves to the Flood Control Division in Jammu for the Irrigation Division-II in Jammu to replace Rajesh Kumar, and Sandeep Gupta moves from Udhampur to the Mahore Irrigation Division in Dharmar.

Further field changes dictate that Nareesh Kumar Gupta will shift from Reasi to the Hydraulic Division in Ramban to succeed Zahoor Ahmad Shah, whereas Rahul Kotwal leaves Rajouri to fill an open vacancy at the Irrigation Division in Kathua. Sanjeev Gupta has been deployed to the Flood Control Division in Kathua, Sudeesh Kumar takes over the Flood Control Division in Jammu from Tilak Raj Sharma, and Sumesh Kumar relocates to the I and FC Division in Rajouri to succeed Rahul Kotwal. Additionally, Ishfaq Ahmed is assigned to the Tube Well Irrigation Division in Jammu, Mohd Ishfaq replaces Kumar Jaiswal at the I and FC Division in Poonch, Laqat Ali moves to the I and FC Division in Nowshera, Gaurav Jarangal is sent to the I and FC Division in Doda, and Vinod Raina replaces Sanjeev Thapa at the I and FC Division in Baderwah. Vishal Thappa moves from Poonch to the I and FC Division in Jammu, while Abdul Majid goes to the Ravi Canal Construction Upper Division in Kathua, and Rajesh Singh leaves Budgam for the Ravi Canal Construction Lower Division-II in Hiranagar to succeed Anil Kumar.

The local Infrastructure wings also see Gulzar Ahmad Kumar

posted to the Hydraulic Division in Gurez, Bashir Ahmad Shah to the Hydraulic Division in Tangdar, and Aejaz Ahmad Malik designated as Technical Officer to the Chief Engineer of PHE Kashmir, replacing Sajid Mushtaq Pandit. Zahoor Ahmad Ali is deployed to the PHE Division in Budgam to replace Rajat Sharma, Mohd. Yousuf Wani goes to the PHE Division in Chadoora in place of Gowhar Nabi Khan, Mudassar Mushtaq Untoo will oversee the PHE Division in Sopore instead of Mushtaq Ahmad Wani, and Mudassar Ahmad Malik replaces Mutayib Bashir Shan at the Hydraulic Division in Tangdar. Gowhar Hussain Ganai is transferred to the Flood Control Division in Anantnag to succeed Khursheed Ahmad Dar, Abdul Rashid Ganai heads to the Irrigation Division in Pulwama to replace Samiullah Naik, and Parvaiz Ahmad Malik assumes duties at the Irrigation Division in Anantnag, replacing Nisar Ahmad Malik. Zahoor Ahmad Shah leaves Ramban for the I and FC Division in Handwara to replace Shabir Hussain Alameer, Sajid Mushtaq Pandit takes over the I and FC Division in Baramulla from Abid Hussain Khan, and Sunesh Hangloo moves from Kathua to the Irrigation and Flood Control Division in Sopore to succeed Alaf Hussain Gilani.

Furthermore, Bharat Vikas Sharma has been moved from Doda to the Shalpur Kandil and Ranjit Sagar Dam Project, whilst Shabir Hussain Alameer leaves Handwara to report to the Secretary, Technical services, the Jal Shakti Department. Mushtaq Ahmad Wani has been sent from Sopore to the Water Quality and Monitoring Division in Srinagar, and Kumar Jatinder Sharma transitions from Poonch to the Water Quality and Monitoring Division in Kathua. Furthermore, following the Hon'ble Prime Minister Mutayib Bashir Shah has been posted as an Officer on Special Duty with the Mission Director of the Jal Jeevan Mission in Jammu and Kashmir, with his salary arrangements managed by transferring an Executive Engineer post from the overall Range strength directly to the Mission Directorate. Nisar Ahmad Malik has been relieved of his duties at the Irrigation Division in Anantnag and ordered to report straight to the Administrative Department for further instructions.

A substantial contingent of newly elevated and transferred officers has been inducted into specialised government departments to enhance urban infrastructure development. The Urban Environment Engineering Department has absorbed a major wave of personnel, including Rajesh Kachroo, Khursheed Ahmad Dar, Alaf Hussain Gilani, Rohit Padshah, Hussain Hussain, Rajiv Kumar, Shyokar Hussain, Abdul Ghafoor, Khalid Tanveer, Rakesh Singh Manhas, Malik Bashart Alam, Zameer Ahmad Raina, Hakeem Zahoor Ahmad, Arif Ghulam Nabi, and Muzaffar Ahmad Dar.

Simultaneously, the Jammu and Kashmir Power Corporation has received an influx of technical staff consisting of Samiullah Naik, Rajesh Kumar, Anil Kumar, Tanveer Ahmad Nabi, Nareesh Kumar, Ravinder Verma, Nazir Ahmad Mir, Javed Ahmad Raina, Ghulam Hassan Yattoo, Mohammad Farooq Dar, and Abdul Qayyum Kumar. Furthermore, Vinod Mehra, Sunil Kumar, Abid Hussain Khan, and Yousuf Hamid Kirmani have all been stationed at the Directorate of Design, Inspections and Quality Control, whilst Nasir Hussain Para and Gowhar Nabi Khan have been assigned to the Jammu and Kashmir Water Resources Regulatory Authority.

Lastly, Mukhtar Ahmad Khanday has been relocated to the Lake Conservation and Management Authority, and Vishal Pandita has been posted directly to the Jammu Municipal Corporation.

The official circular establishes that all affected engineering professionals must join their freshly designated operational units immediately.

L-G VK Saxena commissions India's first two geothermal wells at Puga Valley in Ladakh

Following the expiry of the earlier tripartite MoU between the Ladakh administration, LAHDC, LEI and ONGC Energy Centre, resulting in critical delays of several months in project execution. Recognising the strategic importance of geothermal energy for India's energy security and clean energy transition, L-G Shri Saxena personally intervened to facilitate the renewal of the MoU for another five years, in June this year, following which works resumed for the completion of the two geothermal wells.

The successful completion of the two wells would facilitate critical reservoir evaluation, power plant planning and the eventual commercial development of geothermal resources in Ladakh. Project Engineers informed that the maximum temperature of 135 degrees Celsius was recorded at a depth of 400 meters. Further testing is ongoing, and the engineers are hopeful to achieve even higher temperatures for operation of the 1MW pilot geothermal power project and eventual commercial exploration of geothermal energy.

The project has been underpinned in one of the world's most challenging operating environments, characterised by extreme weather conditions, rugged terrain and a limited annual working season.

Despite encountering geothermal activities, complex sub-surface geological challenges, the first of the two wells was successfully drilled to its target depth of 1000 metres on 22 May 2026. Subsequently, the other geothermal well was spudded on 03 June 2026, and in a record time of just over a month, it was successfully drilled and completed to 1000 metres depth on 08 July 2026.

Speaking on the occasion, the LG termed the commissioning of the geothermal wells as a historic milestone in India's clean energy journey and a defining moment in Ladakh's transition towards a carbon-neutral future. "This Geothermal Power project would act as a catalyst for Ladakh's holistic development. Beyond its scientific significance, this initiative will strengthen Ladakh's energy security, promote environmental sustainability and contribute to regional socio-economic development. What has been achieved in Puga Valley would serve as a blueprint for India's net-zero journey and significantly contribute towards making Ladakh a carbon-neutral and environmentally sustainable region," L-G Shri Saxena said.

Shri Saxena lauded the ONGC engineers, saying the Indian oil giant's expertise and resources were among the best in the world, capable of achieving the most difficult engineering feats, and they truly symbolise India's growing stature in the field of global engineering. He also appreciated every worker associated with the project, saying it was a true testament to their grit, determination and perseverance.

Government establishes JK4C to combat cyber crimes across J&K

The Government has appointed personnel of the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) and below from the existing police strength to ensure the Centre becomes operational without delay.

The Government has also approved the organisational structure, tentative staff strength, operational framework, working of various verticals, and the functions and responsibilities of different divisions and units of JK4C, as detailed in the annexure accompanying the Government order. The establishment of the JK4C is expected to significantly enhance the Union Territory's preparedness to address emerging cyber threats, improve inter-agency coordination, strengthen cybercrime investigations, and provide a more robust institutional framework for safeguarding citizens against cyber-enabled offences.

J&K Govt Orders Reshuffle in Information Department; 17 Officers Transferred

Owais Gurkay as District Information Officer, Bandipora, and Natpal Singh as District Information Officer, Ramban. The order further states that Parvaiz Ahmad Lone has been posted as Information Officer (Youth), Kashmir, Sajad Ahmad Shah as District Information Officer, Shopian, and Hardeep Singh Choudhary as District Information Officer, Poonch, who will also hold the additional charge of District Information Officer, Rajouri, until further orders. The government has directed that all the officers shall be deemed relieved from their present places of posting with immediate effect.

J&K Govt transfers 5 IPS officers to newly-set up cyber coordination centre

as DIG of the cyber coordination centre.

Mohd Yaseen Kichloo, IPS, Principal of Police Training School, Talote, has been made SSP Administrative Wing of JK4C with the additional charge of SSP Cyber Operations Wing.

Ramnish Gupta, SSP CICE Jammu, has been posted as SSP Cyber Investigation Wing. In a separate order, the Cyberombudsman Sharma, SP who was awaiting a posting, has been assigned as SP of the Online Crime against Women and Children Wing.

The government said the salaries of the transferees will be drawn against overall reserves till further orders. All officers have been deemed relieved from their previous postings with immediate effect.

The reshuffle comes amid rising incidents of cyber fraud, online financial scams, and digital crimes against women and children in the Union Territory, with officials emphasising the need for a specialised and dedicated cyber response framework.

Jammu and Kashmir Congress to Join NC's July 20 Statehood Protest in Delhi: JKPC Chief

said that the Congress has also planned a march from Lakhnau to Lolab to pressurise for the restoration of statehood if the Centre fails to fulfill its commitment.

"I have personally discussed it with Rahul Gandhi. He hope the Government of India fulfils its unfulfilled promises. If it does not, the Indian National Congress will undertake the march from Lakhnau to Lolab on an appropriate date. We are working out the logistics," he said.

Responding to questions on remarks made by senior Congress leader Salfuddin Soz on Article 370, Karra said the party had already distanced itself from the statement.

"Whatever he has written reflects his own views and has no connection with the Congress party," he said. Soz, on Wednesday, had said that the NC should not confine its protest to restoration of statehood but also raise the demand for the reinstatement of Article 370.

On relations between the Congress and the NC, Karra said the focus should remain on the larger issue of restoring statehood rather than political coordination.

"The issue before us is much larger. Let us not focus on smaller issues. Right now, the larger issue deserves our attention," he said.

Targeting the BJP, Karra alleged that the ruling party had failed to honour its commitments on the Union Territory's constitutional and political status.

"The BJP's intentions regarding Jammu and Kashmir are not clear. It has brushed aside every major issue and even undermined the Supreme Court's order. But that does not mean we will sit idle. We will continue to intensify our movement to remind the government of its responsibilities," he said.

CS assesses the preliminary draft for Public-Private Partnership Policy

enables efficient project execution with minimal procedural hurdles. He called for developing a similar institutional model tailored to the unique requirements, administrative structure and developmental priorities of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Chief Secretary further directed CITA to proactively identify a pipeline of viable PPP projects across sectors and simultaneously establish a robust institutional mechanism and implementation framework to facilitate their timely execution once the policy is notified.

Speaking during the meeting, Additional Chief Secretary, Finance, Shailesh Kumar, observed that the overarching objective of the proposed policy is to leverage private investment for creating public assets and delivering quality public services for the welfare of the people. He emphasised that while drawing from national and international best practices, the policy should remain rooted in the local context, addressing Jammu and Kashmir's unique developmental priorities, challenges and opportunities.

Earlier the Chief Executive Officer, CITA, gave a detailed presentation on the proposed policy framework, highlighting the prevailing PPP landscape across the country and the existing scenario in Jammu and Kashmir. The presentation outlined the need for a comprehensive, transparent and investor-friendly policy to position the Union Territory as a preferred destination for private investment in key sectors.

The presentation proposed a streamlined regulatory framework aimed at reducing procedural bottlenecks by facilitating timely statutory approvals, including No Objection Certificates (NOCs), environmental clearances and other mandatory permissions, thereby making the investment process more efficient, predictable and less cumbersome for prospective investors.

It further envisaged a multi-sectoral institutional mechanism with clearly defined roles and responsibilities to facilitate appraisal, approval, monitoring and implementation of PPP projects through a coordinated government setup, ensuring time-bound decision-making and seamless project execution. The proposed policy identified several high-potential sectors for PPP interventions in Jammu and Kashmir, including urban infrastructure, solid waste management, agriculture, food processing, energy, power, tourism, hospitality and healthcare, where private participation can significantly enhance service delivery, infrastructure creation and economic growth.

The presentation also elaborated upon the proposed framework for identification and prioritisation of projects, transaction structuring, operational modalities, legal architecture, governance safeguards, grievance redressal mechanism and a well-defined institutional hierarchy with clearly delineated powers and responsibilities to ensure transparency, accountability and effective implementation.

During the deliberations, the Administrative Secretaries and Heads of Departments offered valuable suggestions and sector-specific feedback for further strengthening the proposed policy framework, with emphasis on making it practical, implementation-oriented and aligned with the developmental aspirations of Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting concluded with a consensus to further refine the draft policy by incorporating the suggestions received from various departments and to evolve a comprehensive, transparent and investor-friendly PPP framework capable of unlocking private investment, accelerating infrastructure development and fostering sustainable economic growth in Jammu and Kashmir.

Deschamps leaves as France's finest coach, questions linger

NEW YORK: On the back of France's 2-0 defeat to Spain in the World Cup semi-finals, the French media were ruthless in characterising the performance as powerless in attack and lacking a plan B, in contrast to the surgical efficiency of Spain's style of play.

At the centre of much of this criticism were left-back Lucas Digne for giving away the penalty, captain Kylian Mbappe for registering more offences than shots on target, and head coach Didier Deschamps for being tactically schooled by Luis de la Fuente for the third consecutive summer.

Once teammates of Deschamps in France's victorious 1998 World Cup and Euro 2000 sides, Thierry Henry and Emmanuel Petit also commented. "If you're not at the races right from the start, it's going to be difficult. (Spain) are the worst team in the world to go 1-0 down against," said Henry during a Fox Sports broadcast. Petit, in an interview with TalkSport, rated the French attack a measly 2/10.

"We were so far away from each other. Tactically we lost the game but technically as well, we were so poor. We looked so nervous."

Publications like Le Parisien are already duffing off this disappointment and looking to the future as Zinedine Zidane is widely tipped to take over as head coach. The publication claimed that Zidane—he has not been officially announced yet—will be expected to lead France to win Euro 2026.

Such is the relentless pressure that comes with the job of coaching Les Bleus these days. It's a far cry from the state of the team before Deschamps took over—group stage exits at Euro 2008 and World Cup 2010 amid dressing room mutiny against Raymond Domenech had turned Les Bleus into a national laughing stock.



identity—Ideally by combining defensive steel with attacking flair that does previous legendary French sides.

Upon his arrival, Deschamps commanded respect due to his achievements as a player and promoted squad harmony over detailed tactical

instructions. He instantly transformed the team's culture and the results soon followed—quarter-finals at the 2014 World Cup, and runners-up at home in Euro 2016, with star Antoine Griezmann as the creativeynchpin. From the 2016-17 season onwards, Mbappe's emergence as a

generational talent in addition to Griezmann's prime years reinforced Deschamps' preference for simplicity in attack and defence-first pragmatism. France's 2018 World Cup win in Russia—the only major trophy in Deschamps' tenure—was built on his using a back four consisting entirely of centre-backs, ceding possession and maximising his team's pace in lethal counter-attacks.

However, cracks began to show in subsequent tournaments when Deschamps' unstructured 'let the players play' philosophy was put to the test against teams that were tactically better prepared.

After unconvincing performances in the group stage, a defensive collapse against Switzerland led to elimination on penalties in the round of 16 at Euro 2020. The decision to employ a back five—with Benjamin Pavard and Adrien Rabiot as the wingbacks—backfired spectacularly.

At 2022 Qatar, France reached the final and lost to Argentina on penalties—but only after getting 2-0 down in

what is described as Deschamps being outsmarted by his opposite number, Lionel Scaloni.

Despite the changes in personnel, France's defeat to Spain this time was little more than repetition from their semi-final at Euro 2024.

In both games, the battle was lost in midfield and Deschamps had little answer to it. Regarding his legacy, Deschamps can point to how his team made a deep run in every tournament except Euro 2020—and doubled their World Cup stars. However, this is the most talented French squad since the turn of the century. The pre-tournament expectations in France are now sky high, as if the team is meant to replicate Brazil's trio of World Cup wins from 1958 to 1970.

In modern football, that's far easier said than done. But the formulaic style of play and listless pattern of defeats after the glory of 2018 have given Deschamps' critics plenty of ammunition to characterise the second half of his tenure as one missed opportunity after another.

Asian U23 javelin champ Anand Singh targets 85m and more

NEW DELHI: Even after finishing fourth at the National Inter-State Senior Athletics Championships in Bhubaneswar in June with a throw of 77.08 metres, javelin thrower Anand Singh was a little more than a little more effort to make his presence felt at the Asian U23 Athletics Championships in Ordos, China this month. The 22-year-old achieved this by winning the javelin gold in China with a career-best 80.57m. He is now the sixth javelin thrower from Uttar Pradesh in India's 80m-plus club. The others are Rohit Yadav, Sachin Yadav, Vipin Kasana, Shival Singh and Rishabh Nehra. Anand Singh has now set his sights higher. Singh's gold medal was India's only win in an individual event as the country finished with 16 medals at



the inaugural Asian meet. "Now, after breaching 80 metres, I would like to cross the 85m mark, which is my next dream," he said on Wednesday. "I am happy I could win gold in my very first international appearance. It's a big boost to my confidence, and I will try to keep the momentum going," said Singh, who returns to training at NIS Patiala. "Now, I have to aim for the World Championships and the

next Olympics," he added. Singh, who hails from Kishun Devpur village in Azamgarh, feels he is a born athlete as his grandfather Brij Bahadur Singh was a volleyball player for the Railway Protection Force and his uncle Amarnath Singh also used to do javelin. "Growing up I had no option but to play a sport and I chose javelin. After doing initial training at home, I left for Jaipur to

train under Rustam Khan before migrating to Mumbai for higher training with backing from Reliance Sports Foundation," he said. Singh, who started doing javelin in 2018, admired 2023 Asian Games silver medalist Kishore Jena. "He isn't only my role model but also my gun, mentor and friend; I train alongside him. He keeps telling me so many things about the game." Singh's progress has been rapid. When he recorded his personal best at Bhubaneswar, it showed he was closing the gap on India's senior contenders. He also finished second at the Indian Open Throw Competition in Patiala with a 76.94m effort, showing consistent domestic form that earned him selection for the U23 squad.

'I'll do it my way': Virat Kohli refused to listen, but ex-India coach got his answer the very next match

NEW DELHI: After all these years, Virat Kohli stands in a league of his own because he believes in his own process. Years of experience, triumphs, heartbreaks, wins and losses have given him a deep understanding of what works for him and what doesn't. Which is why, despite not playing for most of the year, he rarely shows signs of rust. Just look at what happened last year. Kohli was out of action for six months, yet when he returned, he smashed 616 runs in just 7 ODIs. Even after his cheap dismissal against England in the previous match, few would bet against him roaring back in the remaining two games. When he isn't playing, Kohli follows his own preparation routine away from the public glare, training at Lord's indoor facilities to ensure he stays in tune with the evolving demands of international cricket.

A fascinating anecdote shared by former India batting coach Abhishek Nayar perfectly illustrates Kohli's unshakable faith in his own process. When Kohli returned to competitive cricket for India for the first time since the Champions Trophy, he registered a back-to-back ducks. But when Nayar reached out to him, Kohli politely declined any intervention, saying he trusted himself to work through the lean patch. And work through it he did. "I've known Virat for a really long time, but one thing I realised in the recent past is that the reason Virat Kohli is Virat Kohli is because of the belief systems he has. No matter what happens, that belief never changes. When Virat was struggling in Australia and had those two ducks in the ODI series, I'd just come out of the Indian team, so we were still in touch," Nayar said. "I asked him if everything was okay and whether there



was anything he wanted to talk about. He simply said, 'No, all good. It's part of the game.' I then said, 'I have an observation. Do you want to hear it?' He smiled and replied, 'No, I'll do it my way.' I laughed. After the next game, I got the answer, 'I did it my way.' For me, that is the hallmark of Virat Kohli. The great players know how to do it when the going gets tough. We can analyse, imagine and envision, but they've done it repeatedly at the highest level. That's why I have respect for players like Virat and Rohit is so much." Ro-Ko back and why it's good news for Team India With Kohli and Rohit Sharma back in action, and India securing a six-wicket win in the series opener at Edgbaston, the team's morale is understandably high. A victory in either Cardiff or at Lord's would do coach Gautam Gambhir, who has been stung by the T20 defeats, a world of good. Kohli and Rohit didn't score heavily in the opener, but with two matches still to come, a big innings from either could go a long way towards ensuring India builds on its winning start.

"What Rohit and Virat will bring is calmness and confidence, and that only comes with experience. The T20 squad lacked experi-

ence, so having players who have consistently performed against England across Tests, ODIs and T20s will give the dressing room belief because they know how to win. It won't be easy, England have identified certain areas that can target, and after a 4-0 T20 series defeat, there will naturally be some pressure on the team. But the confidence Rohit and Virat bring can rub off on the rest of the squad. They have also had time to prepare before the ODI series, and that preparation should help them perform well. I hope they have a strong series," mentioned Nayar. India and England kick off a three-ODI series at Edgbaston later today, and the spotlight now shifts to Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma from Vaibhav Sooryavanshi. Their performance in these matches can have a huge bearing on their participation in the 50-overs World Cup next year in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. Going by Virat Kohli's explosive postcard during the IPL earlier this year, one can safely say that the senior players' place in the team for the quadrennial event is not a foregone conclusion. With that in mind, going forward, every ODI series is important for both players because they can't

afford failure anymore. And since the series is in England, it's all the more important that they score runs and the team wins. The pitches in Africa are more like those in England than those in India. And India have three home ODI series in the current calendar against West Indies, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe. They are not strong teams by any means. Plus, the Indians will be playing on batters with small boundaries to clear. Kohli and Rohit should not have any issues scoring against them, but at the same time, these performances won't exactly boost their chances for the World Cup.

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'Heads could roll': Sunil Gavaskar warns BCCI against 'extreme steps' barely four months after World Cup triumph

NEW DELHI: In the wake of India's poor showing in the T20 series against Ireland and England, the BCCI Board of Control for Cricket in India has called a review meeting to assess the team's recent performances in the UK and, if necessary, take corrective action. However, legendary Indian cricketer Sunil Gavaskar has cautioned against knee-jerk reactions, urging decision-makers to avoid hasty decisions. It wasn't too long ago that India won the T20 World Cup, lifting the trophy for a third time after going unbeaten throughout the tournament. The current side, however, isn't nearly the same. Suryakumar Yadav is no longer part of the setup. Jasprit Bumrah has been rested after a gruelling IPL campaign, and Hardik Pandya is sidelined with an injury. Newly



appointed captain Shreyas Iyer failed to win any of his six matches, prompting critics to question his leadership credentials. In such a situation, Gavaskar believes that taking rushed decisions will only do more harm than good. "The BCCI is going to do a review of the defeat, and there are rumours that a few heads could roll. That

would be an extreme step, for barely four months ago India were the world champions and still are No. 2 in the ICC rankings," he wrote in a column for Sportstar. What was particularly worrying was the way India's batters, who had enjoyed terrific IPL campaigns not too long ago, struggled on surfaces that offered movement, swing and, to an

extent, bounce. Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Abhishek Sharma and Shreyas Iyer all excelled for their respective franchises, but when it came to batting on overseas pitches, they looked like players with glaring shortcomings. Gavaskar, however, believes the problem lies more with the Indian batters' technical frailties than with the nature of the wickets. "There's been a lot of talk about how playing on flat batting pitches has spoiled the Indian batters. Even on the so-called flat pitches in the IPL, most of the Indian batters struggled against the short ball. That is more of a technical failing. With the weight on the front foot and the back foot locked, there is simply no transfer of weight to deal with a ball climbing towards the face," he added.

Netherlands star hits out after ICC changes format for 2027 ODI World Cup: 'So you're telling me...'

NEW DELHI: Netherlands batter Max O'Dowd lashed out at the International Cricket Council (ICC) after the global body changed the formats for the ODI and T20 World Cups. On Wednesday, the ICC issued a press release confirming the changes to the 2027 tournament, set to be played in South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe. As a part of the revamped conditions, the 2027 edition will be played as a 14-team tournament, but there will be a more competitive structure designed to improve the experience for both players and fans.

Under the updated format, all 14 qualified teams will compete in a three-stage tournament culminating in the final. The revised system is intended to make every match more meaningful by increasing the importance of results from the very beginning of the competition. Round 1 will see Teams 12, 13 and 14 playing each other in a round



robin 'Super Series' format and the top team will progress to Round 2. Round 2 will then feature two groups of six teams each. The top 3 teams from each group, plus the next-highest placed team across both groups, will qualify for Super 7. The top four teams will then qualify for the semi-finals. However, O'Dowd isn't a fan of the associate teams being asked

to play the tri-series format in the World Cup, and is raising questions on the sanctity of the format, saying the smaller teams have been hard done by. "So you're telling me, associate sides have to play in a 3-year 50-over tournament, to qualify for a qualifier to qualify for another tri-series qualifier to then qualify for a World Cup," Max O'Dowd wrote on X (formerly Twitter).

Ashtin's take Former India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin said that the new format makes sense for increasing competition within the tournament; however, he also added that if the aim is to grow the sport, there needs to be stronger ways of supporting associate nations. "The ICC's changes to the fixture format for the 2027 ODI World Cup and 2028 T20 World Cup make sense from a competitive standpoint. But if the final goal is to grow the game, there needs to be a stronger pathway for emerging nations," Ashwin wrote on X. "Teams like the Netherlands, Scotland, Nepal, USA and Ireland need more meaningful matches (FOR EXAMPLE: getting added as the third team into every bilateral series), not just qualification tournaments. Let's not forget that collective growth will make this sport a spectacle at the Olympics," he added.

England legends lash out at Thomas Tuchel after FIFA World Cup loss against Argentina

NEW YORK: England's defeat to Argentina in the FIFA World Cup 2026 semi-final hasn't gone down well with legends like Wayne Rooney, Gary Neville and Michael Owen. The former Three Lions stars lashed out at manager Thomas Tuchel for making defensive moves after taking a 1-0 lead, saying the German coach really cost the side big time on the massive night. England appeared to be in control when Anthony Gordon broke the deadlock in the 55th minute, raising hopes of the nation's first World Cup final appearance since 1966. However, Argentina responded strongly, with Enzo Fernandez restoring parity before Lautaro Martinez completed the turnaround. Rooney argued that Tuchel's tactical choices played a decisive role in England missing out on a place in the final. He believed that the game changed after England took the lead, arguing that Tuchel's



decision to adopt a more cautious approach surrendered control of the match. "Once we got the first goal, we didn't look to go for the second goal. The decisions that Tuchel has made cost us tonight. It was too passive," Rooney said on the BBC. "The gamble he made was to go with five at the back, which allowed them to dictate the game. Top managers counter-attack what is going on and don't go even deeper. What they do is go more front-footed and try to change the game's tempo and rhythm. I think he got it

wrong. Against this team, the world champions, you will not get away with it. This has been the biggest test, and we have failed it," he added. Micah Richards shared a similar view, claiming England's defensive mindset after Gordon's goal allowed Argentina to dominate proceedings and gradually take command of the semi-final. "For all their effort, they have been outstanding, digging in at the right moments and getting over the line. But you have to look at the manager and his decisions."

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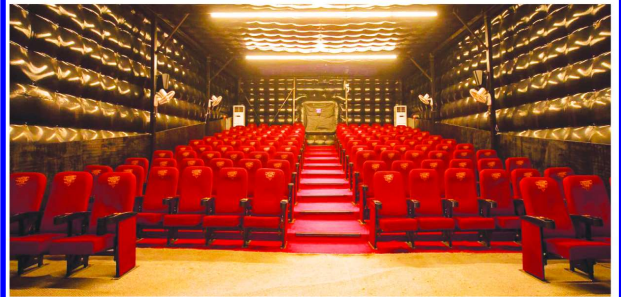
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