



J&K youth creating jobs rather than waiting for them: LG Sinha

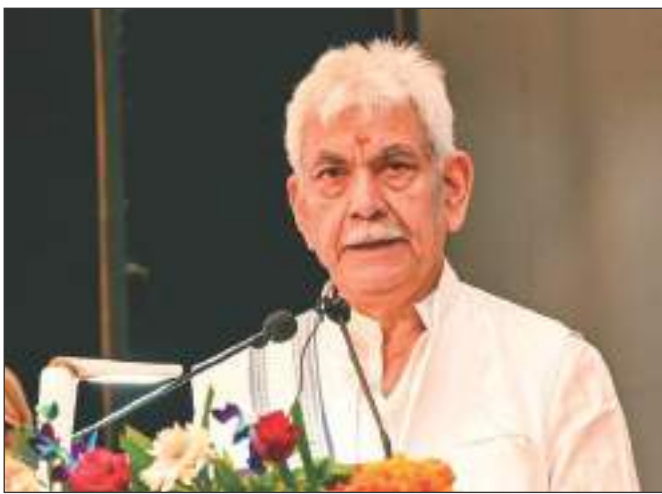
Says shift in aspiration central to vision of self-reliant Union Territory

KT News Desk

Jammu, Aug 21: Highlighting India's changing employment aspirations, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday said that J&K youth are looking to create jobs rather than wait for them.

Addressing a gathering after inaugurating a series of new infrastructure facilities at the Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST), here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Today's youth are increasingly looking to create jobs rather than wait in line for them. Such shift in aspiration is central to the vision of a self-reliant Jammu Kashmir."

The newly inaugurated facilities include the Unnati Girls Hostel, Centre for AI and ML in Agriculture, the Centre for Mushroom Research and



Innovation, the Advanced Sericulture Laboratory, and the Centre for Digital Media and Publication.

The Lieutenant Governor described the additions as more than physical infrastructure, calling them a commitment to the region's innovators,

entrepreneurs, researchers and farming families.

DEGREE IS NOT YOUR DESTINATION

The Lieutenant Governor said, "I want to tell all students that your degree is not your destination; rather, it is like a runway for your flight of success.

SKUAST-Jammu will give you knowledge, but your curiosity will give you new thoughts and ideas. Your courage will turn that idea into a startup, and if you continue to advance that startup with patience, honesty, and consistent hard work, one day that same startup will provide employment and dignity to someone who today is sitting exactly where you are. That is why I often say that the truest meaning of a Self-Reliant Jammu Kashmir is a region where every young citizen becomes an employer in some form, according to their ability and talent."

LG Sinha said that women's participation in the entrepreneurship ecosystem should be the key priority.

"No entrepreneurship revolution can be complete without the equal and active participation of women. And no economy can truly become strong until women are | [More on P6](#)

Refrain from commenting on religious issues: CM Omar advises politicians

Backs Rahul Gandhi's role as LoP; says can't tell people not to build houses

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Aug 21: Asking politicians to leave religious issues for clerics and priests, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday asked leaders in Jammu and Kashmir to refrain from commenting on religious matters and focus on issues concerning common people.

CM Omar, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), while responding to recent remarks of the Leader of Opposition (LoP) and BJP senior leader Sunil Sharma cautioned politicians against playing with public sentiments. "People should not play with people's emotions," he said.

Referring to Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi staging a sit-in to get a FIR registered in use of pellet guns during protests in New Delhi, CM Omar



said, "He (Rahul) is doing what is expected of an Opposition leader by questioning the government and seeking to make it answerable."

"He is the Leader of the Opposition. He is not the leader of the religion. Leave religious issues to the religious leaders. Keep your issues to the politicians. I would like him to continue doing that, because this is the job of the Opposition," he added.

The Chief Minister said an Opposition leader should not

be criticised for questioning the government. "If the Opposition leader does not oppose, then what is the use of it?" he said.

"I have not heard you ask the Opposition leader of Jammu and Kashmir why you ask questions again and again in vain. When he does it, you enjoy it. When Rahul Gandhi does it, you say, why is he doing it?" CM Omar said. CAN'T TELL PEOPLE NOT TO BUILD HOUSES

Asked about the shrinking green spaces in Kashmir, Omar said the | [More on P6](#)

CM Omar felicitates J&K's four NEET toppers



KT News Desk

Srinagar, Aug 21: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday felicitated four outstanding NEET achievers from Jammu and Kashmir, recognising their exceptional performance in the country's premier medical entrance examination.

The four toppers—Hadiya

Nisar, Zaidan Wani, Aarav Gupta and Maleeha Ajaz—were felicitated by the Chief Minister with a cash prize of 1 lakh each, a tablet and a certificate of appreciation in recognition of their remarkable achievement.

Congratulating the students on their success, the Chief Minister appreciated their hard work. | [More on P6](#)

J&K India's integral part, says MEA; snubs Pak's protest

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Aug 21: India on Friday dismissed Pakistan's objections to remarks by US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor on Jammu and Kashmir, with the Ministry of External Affairs asserting that Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh are an "integral and indivisible" parts of the country.

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) while addressing ministry's weekly media briefing here said, "New Delhi sees no reason to comment on Pakistan's frustration over the US envoy's recent statement during his visit to Srinagar."

"I will repeat, Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh are integral and indivisible parts of India. They were, they are, and



they will remain so," Jaiswal said.

"I see no reason to comment on Pakistan's frustration. This is what I have to say," he reiterated.

The remarks came two days after Pakistan summoned the US Charge d'Affaires in Islamabad and lodged a protest

over Gor's comments on Jammu and Kashmir.

Pakistan had termed the ambassador's remarks "factually incorrect", maintaining that they were inconsistent with what it described as Washington's longstanding position on the Kashmir issue.

Gor, who was in Srinagar on Wednesday for his maiden visit to Jammu and Kashmir, had described the Union Territory as an "important part of India" after meeting Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

The visit assumed significance as it came nearly seven years after the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019 and followed the deadly Pahalgam terror attack in April 2025.

Speaking to reporters after his meeting with CM Omar, the US envoy also praised the security measures | [More on P6](#)

Community solidarity vital in eliminating terrorism, substance abuse: LG Sinha

KT News Desk

Jammu, Aug 21: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday laid the foundation stone of the Amritheshwar Sarovar under the Jan Sanchay Jan Bhagidari initiative at Dharpur, Sunderbani, in Rajouri district.

During his visit, the Lieutenant Governor paid obeisance at the Shri Amritheshwar Shiv Temple, and prayed for the peace, prosperity, and well-being of one and all.

Addressing a public gathering, the Lieutenant Governor commended the local community and the Shri Amritheshwar Shiv Mandir Vikas Samiti for their collective efforts in establishing and developing the



sacred site.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted the vital role of community solidarity in eliminating terrorism, substance abuse and corruption, while driving economic development and a spiritual renaissance in UT of Jammu Kashmir.

"India is going through a

great spiritual revival. This cultural wave is felt across Jammu Kashmir, bringing people closer together and strengthening our community bonds," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor urged the people to remain vigilant against the nefarious designs of anti-national elements, report suspicious activities,

and completely isolate terror sympathizers.

"Security forces alone cannot defeat terrorism. Eradicating this threat demands a whole-of-society approach. United societal effort is required along with police and security agencies to dismantle the illicit financial and logistical webs of narco-terror networks.

A concerted security and societal effort, driven by army, security forces, J&K Police, local administration and residents of Jammu Kashmir have significantly degraded terrorism and transformed the region's security landscape.

It was once grimly predicted that the Tricolour would find no

Citing convention, BJP stakes claim for Dy Speaker's chair

Sat Sharma says NC must uphold tradition of allotting position to largest opp party

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Aug 21: Ahead of the upcoming autumn session of the Legislative Assembly, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) State President Sat Pal Sharma on Friday said the post of Deputy Speaker should be allotted to the party, citing the convention of the position being given to the largest opposition party.

Talking to news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Sharma said that when the BJP was in power, the post of Deputy Speaker was given to the NC.

"As per convention, the post of Deputy Speaker is allotted to the opposition," he said.

Sharma added that the Chief Minister should have given the post of Deputy Speaker to the BJP at the time of the election of the Speaker. "He should look into the matter to uphold the tradition and convention," he remarked.

During the PDP-BJP government, Nazir Gurezi of the National Conference served as Deputy Speaker, while Sartaj Madni of the PDP held the post during the NC-Congress rule.

The key statutory post of Deputy Speaker | [More on P6](#)

Man, 42, found dead in Sgr's Dughwan Forest

KNO Correspondent

Srinagar, Aug 21: The body of a 42-year-old man was recovered from the Dughwan forest area on the outskirts of Srinagar early Friday morning, officials said.

An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the man's body was found in the Dughwan forest area and was taken to PHC Harwan, where doctors declared him brought dead.

He said the body was later shifted to SMHS Hospital for further medical examination. The deceased was identified as Mohammad Lateef (42), son of Mohammad Aalam, a resident of Thugla in Rajouri district.

Meanwhile, | [More on P6](#)

Woman rider killed, pillion critical in Ramban tanker crash

KNO Correspondent

Ramban, Aug 21: A lady riding a scooter was killed while her pillion rider was injured after their two-wheeler was hit by an unidentified tanker on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway in Ramban district on Friday.

An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the accident took place in the Seri area when the tanker, travelling from Srinagar towards Jammu, allegedly hit the scooter after its driver lost control of the vehicle.

He said the duo | [More on P6](#)

Waste to Wonder Garden showcases, creativity, adds rustic cues in natural settings: Omar Abdullah

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Aug 21: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday inaugurated the Waste to Wonder—Flower Garden and Floriculture Mela at Floriculture Park, Polo View, Srinagar, describing the innovative garden as an effort to demonstrate how discarded materials can be given a new life through creativity, reuse and recycling.

The Chief Minister first inaugurated the Floriculture Mela and visited the exhibition



showcasing a wide range of floral varieties and products associated with floriculture.

He inspected stalls put up by flower growers and farmers from across the districts of Kashmir, featuring ornamental nurseries, interior herbal plants, pots and terrariums, floral décor and gifts, event management services, cut flowers and machinery and products of J&K Agros, among other items.

Interacting with the stall owners, the Chief Minister appreciated their innovative business models and encouraged them to continue expanding their | [More on P6](#)

Teenager drowns in Kangan's Nallah Sindh

KNO Correspondent

Kangan, Aug 21: An 18-year-old youth drowned in Nallah Sindh near Kangan in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district while taking a bath on Friday, officials said.

An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the youth drowned in Nallah Sindh near Dumping Park in the Kijpara area of Kangan.

He said that soon after the incident, police, along with local residents and the SDRF, rushed to the spot and launched a search operation to trace the missing youth. | [More on P6](#)

Model Recruitment Rules for GMCs to be notified by 30th September

Sakeena Itoo reviews progress on formulation of MRRs



KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 21: The Model Recruitment Rules (MRRs) for Non-Gazetted cadre in all GMCs of Jammu and Kashmir will be notified by the 30th September, 2026.

This decision was taken during a meeting chaired by Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo on Friday at Civil Secretariat here in the backdrop of protests by employees of newly established Government Medical Colleges (GMCs) of Jammu and Kashmir regarding non-availability of recruitment rules.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Commissioner Secretary ARI and Trainings, Shabnam Kamili; Special Secretary, ARI, Narinder Khajuria; Director Health, Riyaz Ahmad; Additional Secretary, Health and Medical Education, Anil Kumar; Deputy Secretary Health and Medical Education, Dr. Murtaza Rashid, as well as representatives of the protesting employees from GMCs of Anantnag and Baramulla.

The meeting held detailed discussions on the proposed

recruitment framework aimed at ensuring a transparent, uniform and streamlined mechanism for filling various Non-Gazetted positions required for the effective functioning of the newly established medical colleges and their associated institutions.

Addressing the officers during the meeting, the Minister emphasised that the recruitment rules should be comprehensive, practical and aligned with the functional requirements of the newly established GMCs. She called for close coordination among the concerned departments and directed that the exercise be completed within a stipulated timeframe so that the recruitment process for the required Non-Gazetted manpower can be taken forward without unnecessary delay.

The Minister directed the ARI Trainings and health department to notify the recruitment rules by 30th September to ensure career progression of employees working in these prestigious medical institutions.

She stressed the need to maintain uniformity across institutions while ensuring that the rules adequately address the specific

manpower requirements of different departments and services.

Sakeena Itoo directed the concerned officers to undertake a thorough examination of the existing recruitment rules and relevant provisions before finalising the Model Recruitment Rules. She called for incorporating clear provisions regarding eligibility criteria, qualifications, experience, recruitment methodology, promotional avenues and other service-related matters.

The Minister underscored that a well-defined recruitment framework is essential for strengthening institutional capacity and ensuring availability of adequate human resources in the newly established medical colleges. She called for expediting the process while maintaining due diligence and adherence to prescribed procedures.

"Recruitment rules must be clear, transparent and responsive to the actual requirements of our institutions. The newly established GMCs need a robust human-resource framework so that they can function efficiently and deliver quality services to students and patients," the Minister said. She further directed the officers to examine all aspects comprehensively and prepare the draft rules in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, ensuring that there is no ambiguity or scope for procedural delays at the implementation stage.

Later, the Minister also requested the protesting employees of all GMCs to immediately call off the strike, as they are the pillar of strength of the healthcare care system of Jammu and Kashmir. She assured them that their other concerning issues will also be redressed on priority.

Handicrafts Dept urges artisans to enroll kin in Craft MBA course at CDI

Dept to reimburse entire tuition fee



KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 21: The Department of Handicrafts & Handloom, Kashmir, has urged the artisans and weavers to encourage their wards to apply for admission in two-year MBA course in the Craft Management & Entrepreneurship Programme at Craft Development Institute (CDI), Srinagar, affiliated with the University of Kashmir.

The Department, as per an official statement, stated that the specialised postgraduate programme aims to create a new generation of professionally trained craft entrepreneurs capable of taking Kashmir's world-famous handicrafts and handloom traditions to the national and international markets. The course integrates craft, design, technology, management and entrepreneurship, providing students with a comprehensive understanding of the craft economy and its emerging opportunities.

In a press statement issued here, a spokesman of the Department stated that the programme would provide a strong edifice for craft entrepreneurship and enterprise development in Jammu & Kashmir. "We particularly urge the children and wards of artisans and weavers to avail this programme. Our traditional crafts possess enormous economic and export potential and a professionally

trained young generation can play a decisive role in converting this heritage into sustainable enterprises, creating employment opportunities and globally competitive brands," the spokesman added.

The spokesman further stated that the Government shall reimburse the tuition fee of the two-year PG course as per the prescribed eligibility criteria. "Interested artisans and weavers shall have to produce an Income Certificate issued by the concerned competent authority to establish eligibility for reimbursement of the tuition fee," he stated.

Highlighting CDI's contribution to the handicrafts sector, the spokesman said the Institute has played a pivotal role in promoting professionalism, innovation and entrepreneurship, with its alumni venturing into businesses related to the traditional crafts of Kashmir. The Institute's integrated approach to design, technology and management equips students with skills in product development, branding, marketing and enterprise management.

The spokesman further stated that the Department is working towards creating a 'startup launch pad' for students successfully completing the MBA programme, enabling them to convert their professional knowledge into viable craft enterprises and employment opportunities.

Secretary DLSA inspects Prison Legal Aid Clinic at District Jail Udhampur

KT News Desk

UDHAMPUR, AUGUST 21: Sub-Judge/Secretary District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Udhampur Sumati Sharma Friday conducted the monthly inspection of the Prison Legal Aid Clinic and a comprehensive jail visit at the District Jail, Udhampur.

During the visit, the Secretary, as per an official statement, held direct discussions with inmates across different barracks to assess their access to legal assistance, medical care and other necessities. She examined case files and clinic records to verify that eligible prisoners are being identified and provided free legal aid, legal awareness sessions and timely representation as guaranteed under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.

The Secretary gave special attention to women prisoners and met female inmates separately to hear grievances relating to legal aid, delays in pending cases, lack of representation or welfare concerns. She also sought feedback from inmates on the quality and frequency of legal awareness outreach and the responsiveness of the prison's legal aid arrangements.

The inspection included a thorough review of the jail's living conditions and essential services. She evaluated cleanliness and sanitation standards in the barracks, the hygiene of kitchen and food preparation areas, the adequacy and nutritional quality of meals and the general maintenance of facilities. She reviewed the availability and delivery of health-care services, including access to medical staff, procedures for emergency care and provision of medicines. She also observed infrastructure such as the condition of cells, bedding, ventilation, water supply and sanitary facilities.

The visit reinforced the DLSA's continued commitment to protecting the constitutional and legal rights and dignity of persons in custody. By monitoring the functioning of the Prison Legal Aid Clinic and the overall custodial environment, the District Legal Services Authority, Udhampur aims to ensure effective, timely and humane legal aid services in correctional institutions and to remedy shortcomings that impede inmates' access to justice

SWD organises awareness camp for senior citizens in Bhaderwah

KT News Desk

BHADERWAH, AUGUST 21: The Social Welfare Department, in collaboration with the Health Department, organised an awareness camp for senior citizens on the eve of Senior Citizens Day at Panchayat Ghar, Drudhu, Bhaderwah. The programme aimed to sensitise the elderly about their rights, welfare entitlements, health, dignity and overall well-being.

A large number of senior citizens, as per an official statement, participated, along with officials and representatives of the Social Welfare and Health

Departments. Ex-Sarpanch Ashok Kumar Sharma was the chief guest.

Welcoming the chief guest, senior citizens and other participants, Tehsil Social Welfare Officer Bhaderwah Shah Nawaz Ahmad highlighted various welfare schemes and benefits available to senior citizens through the Social Welfare Department. He also elaborated on the key provisions of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, with particular emphasis on the rights, dignity, protection, maintenance and welfare of senior citizens, and the mechanisms available for

addressing their concerns.

The chief guest appreciated the initiative of the Social Welfare Department and expressed gratitude for taking welfare and awareness activities to the grassroots level. He lauded the efforts of the TSWO for reaching out to senior citizens, listening patiently to their concerns and providing them an opportunity to interact directly with the departments concerned.

Resource Person from the Health Department Dr Sandeep delivered an informative session on healthy ageing and sensitised participants about the importance of maintaining

an active and healthy lifestyle in old age. He explained various measures relating to physical fitness, healthy habits, preventive healthcare and protection against common and age-related health problems.

The programme also provided an interactive platform for senior citizens to raise queries and concerns regarding pensions, welfare schemes, entitlements and other issues.

The TSWO responded to the queries patiently and apprised participants of the relevant provisions, procedures and avenues available for availing various welfare benefits.

GOVERNMENT OF (U.T) JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER JAL SHAKTI (PHE) DEPTT. Ground Water Division Srinagar Baghi-Ali-Mardan,NowsharaSrinagar.

E-mail:-hakeemmushtaq.75316@jk.gov.in Tel./FaxNo:-0194-2411285

Re-Tender Notice/ Corrigendum 2nd.

Subject: Augmentation of Water Supply Scheme Chatterhama by way of construction of Additional Bore Well.
Reference:1. This office Extension Notice 4th issued vide endorsement No: JS-PHE/GWDS/26- 27/Camp/2363-76, dated: 11-05-2026. Of Re-Tender Corrigendum 1st vide endorsement No: JS-PHE/GWDS/26-27/ Camp/ 2867-2881,Dated: 19-06-2026, Bearing Tender ID No.

2026_PHE_307393_2.
2. This office e-NIT No. 03/JS-PHE/GWDS/Mech. of 2026-27, issued vide endorsement No: JS-PHE/GWDS/26-27/Camp/64-76, dated: 03-04-2026. Bearing Tender ID No. 2026_PHE_307393_1.

Due to "NO Response" for the above mentioned work advertised vide e-NIT No. and Tender ID No under reference. Which was scheduled to be downloaded till 20-08-2026 Up-to 11:00 AM.

S.No.	Item	Fresh Date
1.	Bid Submission Start date & Time	21-08-2026 Up-to 02:00 PM
2.	Last date & Time of submission of bids	11-09-2026 Up-to 11:00 AM
3.	Date & Time of opening of tenders	12-09-2026 11.00 AM

NOTE:

All other terms and conditions shall remain same as laid down in the aforesaid e-NIT issued vide above referred endstt: nos.

DIPK-4856/26
DATED: 21-08-2026

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Jal Shakti (PHE) Deptt.
Ground Water Division Srinagar.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir (U T) OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER Machinery Division Kashmir, Mechanical & Hospital Engineering Department, Kashmir.

| Fax No: 0194-2497093 | email – xenmds-kmr@jk.gov.in|

Corrigendum for Date Extension

.Name of work:-

- 1) Restoring functionality through repairs / maintenance of Bore Well No. 14 and 16 of Department of Agriculture in District Pulwama under implementation of National Mission of Saffron (under Culuster-1)
- 2) Restoring functionality through repairs / maintenance of Bore Well No. 102 of department of Agriculture in District Pulwama under implementation of National Mission of Saffron (under Culuster-1).
- 3) Restoring Functionality through Repairs / Maintenance of Bore well Schemes No. 72 (under RR-1) (Cluster-1) of Department of Agriculture in district Pulwama, under implementation of National Mission on Saffron command area 23.52 Ha.
- 4) Restoring Functionality through Repairs / Maintenance of Bore well Schemes No. 24 (under RR-1) (Cluster-1) of Department of Agriculture in district Pulwama, under Implementation of National Mission on Saffron command area 23.52 Ha.
- 5) Restoring Functionality through Repairs / Maintenance of Bore well Schemes No. 101 (under PR-1) (Cluster-1) of Department of Agriculture in district Pulwama, under Implementation of National Mission on Saffron Command area 23.52 Ha/MDSK/TS/2025-26/16 Dated 03/07/2025
- 6) Restoring functionality through repairs / maintenance of Bore Well No. 103 and 42 of department of Agriculture in District Pulwama under implementation of National Mission of Saffron (under Culuster-1).
- 7) Restoring functionality through repairs / maintenance of 8 No.Bore Wells (17,19,54,58,60,61,91 and 96 (under priority-11 Culuster-2) of department of Agriculture in District Pulwama under implementation of National Mission of Saffron
- 8) SITC of Multistage Horizontal Pumping Unit and allied works for Bore well no 120 in District Pulwama under Implementation of National Mission on Saffron.

Due to no response, the critical dates of the following e-NIT's are extended as under: -

S.No.	e-Nit no., Date and tender Id.	Extension No.	Description	Previous Dates	New Dates.
01	MDSK/TS /2025-26/10 Date:25-06-2025 1)2025_PWDJK_279744_3 2)2025_PWDJK_279744_4	26	Last date of downloading/ submission of bids Date of opening of bids online	20-08-2026 upto 06:55PM 21-08-2026 upto 2:00PM	14-09-2026 upto 06:55PM 15-09-2026 upto 2:00PM
02	MDSK/TS /2025-26/11 Date:27-06-2025 Tender Id: - 2025_PWD-JK_279966_1	29	Last date of downloading/ submission of bids Date of opening of bids online	20-08-2026 upto 06:55PM 21-08-2026 upto 2:00PM	14-09-2026 upto 06:55PM 15-09-2026 upto 2:00PM
03	MDSK/TS /2025-26/14 Date:02-07-2025 Tender Id: - 2025_PWD-JK_280311_3	25	Last date of downloading/ submission of bids Date of opening of bids online	20-08-2026 upto 06:55PM 21-08-2026 upto 2:00PM	14-09-2026 upto 06:55PM 15-09-2026 upto 2:00PM
04	MDSK/TS /2025-26/15 Date:02-07-2025 Tender Id: - 2025_PWD-JK_280324_3	19	Last date of downloading/ submission of bids Date of opening of bids online	20-08-2026 upto 06:55PM 21-08-2026 upto 2:00PM	14-09-2026 upto 06:55PM 15-09-2026 upto 2:00PM
05	MDSK/TS /2025-26/16 Date:03-07-20252 2025 Tender Id: / 2025_PWD-JK_280428_3	23	Last date of downloading/ submission of bids Date of opening of bids online	20-08-2026 upto 06:55PM 21-08-2026 upto 2:00PM	14-09-2026 upto 06:55PM 15-09-2026 upto 2:00PM
06	MDSK/TS /2025-26/20 Date:16-07-2025 1)2025_PWDJK_281548_3 2)2025_PWDJK_281548_4	23	Last date of downloading/ submission of bids Date of opening of bids online	20-08-2026 upto 06:55PM 21-08-2026 upto 2:00PM	14-09-2026 upto 06:55PM 15-09-2026 upto 2:00PM
07	MDSK/TS /2025-26/54 Date:29-10-2025 2025 Tender Id: - 2025_PWD-JK_293574_1	19	Last date of downloading/ submission of bids Date of opening of bids online	20-08-2026 upto 06:55PM 21-08-2026 upto 2:00PM	14-09-2026 upto 06:55PM 15-09-2026 upto 2:00PM
08	MDSK/TS /2025-26/95 Date:05-02-2026 (Tender ID: 2026_PWD-JK_302394_1)	11	Last date of downloading/ submission of bids Date of opening of bids online	20-08-2026 upto 06:55PM 21-08-2026 upto 2:00PM	14-09-2026 upto 06:55PM 15-09-2026 upto 2:00PM

All other terms, conditions and specifications as stipulated in the e-NIT's shall remain unchanged.

DIPK-4845/26
DATED: 21-08-2026

No: MDSK/TS/2098-2100 Date: 21-08-2026.

Sd/
Executive Engineer
Machinery Division, Kashmir.

Doodhpathri reopens for tourists after temporary closure

Naveed Ul Haq Ganaie

Budgam, Aug 21: Authorities on Friday reopened Doodhpathri, one of the major tourist spots in Central Kashmir's Budgam district, for visitors. The destination temporarily closed due to inclement weather conditions and the risk of flash floods and landslides last month.

Local traders, pony operators, cab drivers, food stall owners and other stakeholders welcomed the decision, saying the reopening will help them resume their livelihoods after the temporary closure.

"We are happy that Doodhpathri has reopened. Tourism is our main source of livelihood, and the return of visitors will provide much-needed relief to local families," locals said.

The authorities had earlier ordered the temporary closure of Doodhpathri in view of continuous rainfall and the possibility of flash floods and landslides, particularly along the approach roads.

With weather conditions improving, the destination has now been opened for tourists, bringing relief to the local tourism community and businesses dependent on visitor footfall—(KNO)



Govt aims to turn children's passion into profession: Satish Sharma



KT News Desk

Bandipora, Aug 21: Minister for Youth Services and Sports, Satish Sharma on Friday said that the Omar Abdullah-led government is committed to create a robust sporting ecosystem where the children and young people can transform their passion for sports into a viable profession.

Satish Sharma was speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the SKB Football Championship at Sports Stadium Naidkhai, organised by Kashmir Hunks

and Thundrr FC. He said the government's responsibility is to provide talented youngsters with the right platforms, facilities and opportunities to pursue sports seriously and build a future around their sporting abilities.

"We want to ensure that children's passion for sports does not remain confined to the playground. Our aim is to provide them opportunities so that they can make sports their profession," Sharma said.

The championship commenced amid an enthusiastic response from the public, with

a large gathering witnessing the opening encounter. The tournament provided young footballers with an important platform to showcase their talent, gain competitive exposure and interact with the wider sporting community.

The Minister said grass-roots-level sporting events are vital for identifying, nurturing and promoting emerging talent. He emphasised the need to further strengthen sports infrastructure, expand access to quality training and ensure that talented sportspersons from every part of Jammu and Kashmir receive adequate opportunities to excel.

Satish Sharma said the government would continue to support initiatives that encourage greater participation of children and youth in sports, adding that sporting activities also contribute significantly towards discipline, teamwork, confidence and overall personality development.

The Minister appreciated the organisers, players and the local community for their efforts in promoting football at the grass-roots level. He expressed hope that the championship would help identify promising footballing talent from the area.

MLA Sonawari Hilal Akbar Lone, MLA Bandipora Nizamuddin Bhat, officials of the Sports Council and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Javid Dar reviews arrangements for Kisan Mela

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Aug 21: Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperatives and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar on Friday chaired a meeting of Heads of Departments (HoDs) of Agriculture and allied departments to review and finalise arrangements for the upcoming Kisan Mela and foundation stone laying ceremony of the Mandi at Wusan Bangil, Tangmarg in Baramulla district.

MLA Gulmarg, Farooq Ahmad Shah, HoDs of Agriculture, Horticulture and concerned officers were present in the meeting.

The Minister had detailed deliberations on preparations being put in place by different departments for the mega kisan mela.

He instructed all the concerned HoDs to ensure seamless inter-departmental coordination, meticulous planning and timely completion of all arrangements for successful conduct of the programme. He stressed that every department should contribute its best towards making the event impactful, well-organised and beneficial for the farming community. The meeting also discussed the detailed programme schedule and participation of various Agriculture and allied departments in the event.

Javid Dar directed the departments to establish informative and professionally designed stalls showcasing their schemes, flagship programmes, achievements, innovative initiatives, modern technologies and farmer-centric interventions. He emphasised that the Kisan Mela should provide farmers with a meaningful platform to interact directly with the departmental officers, agricultural scientists, technical experts and other stakeholders. The event will help in familiarising the farmers with modern agricultural practices, government schemes and available support mechanisms.

The Minister advocated for effective dissemination of information regarding various farmer-oriented initiatives. He directed the departments to ensure that the stalls remain



adequately staffed and equipped to address the queries of farmers and visitors.

Javid Dar underscored that the event should reflect the Government's commitment towards strengthening the agricultural economy, improving market infrastructure, enhancing farmers' income and providing better market linkages and facilities to the farming community.

He directed all the officers to personally monitor the preparations, maintain close coordination and ensure that every component of the programme is executed with professionalism and precision.

Regarding the foundation laying ceremony for the Mandi at Wusan Bangil, the Minister was informed that 50 kanals of land has been transferred to the Horticulture Planning and Marketing Department for its establishment and that the department has taken possession of the land.

NC-Cong biggest enemies of local self-government: MLA Pathania



Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Aug 21: Terming National Conference (NC) and Congress as the "biggest enemies of local self-government" in Jammu and Kashmir, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA from Udhampur East, Ranbir Singh Pathania, on Friday accused the CM Omar Ied government of deliberately delaying Panchayat and Urban Local Body polls in the Union Territory.

Pathania said Jammu and Kashmir needs stronger local self-government.

Slamming the Congress and National Conference over the delay in local body elections, he said the two parties should explain their position. "Today, Ladakh has announced its local body elections. What has stopped Jammu and Kashmir? What is the obstacle?" he asked.

"The biggest enemies of local self-government in Jammu and Kashmir are the National Conference and Congress. They want people to suffer for a small drain, lane, pipe or road and come to them," Pathania alleged.

He said the delay in Panchayat and ULB polls will be a major issue for the BJP in the upcoming session.

Launching a broader attack, Pathania said, "This is a government which has no commitment, no direction, no development philosophy. We will expose it and oppose it."

He accused Chief Minister Omar Abdullah of being invisible on the ground. "We accept and acknowledge that Omar Abdullah is the elected Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. But on the ground, he is not visible. His government is fragmented," he said.

Pathania accused the government of failing to fulfil its electoral promises.

"The government is not living up to its commitments made in its manifesto to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and commitments made on the floor of the Assembly," he said.

On jobs, Pathania alleged, "They had promised one lakh jobs. Let us say they gave 25000, but the irony and duplicity is that they gave them through the back door to their own people and favourites. In the name of outsourcing, they have placed their workers, their people and their supporters in different departments."

He accused the government of running a "transfer industry". "If you look at transfers in the PWD and other departments, there is no rhyme or reason. People are transferred within two months, while those who have completed eight years are left untouched. There is no unanimity, no common policy on transfers," he alleged.

Pathania also criticised the government for keeping MLAs out of the loop on programmes organised in their constituencies. "There have been repeated complaints. It started from Jammu and then in Jammu North and other areas, where the Deputy Chief Minister inaugurated works without involving the local MLA.

An MLA is the elected voice of the people. Involving the elected representative is respecting the mandate of the people. If you do not involve him, it means the government is disrespecting and insulting the mandate," he said, referring to such incidents in Handwara and his own constituency—(KNO)

SDH Qaimoh reopens, but waterlogged, powerless

Umaisar Gull Ganie

Qaimoh, Aug 21: Water accumulation, poor sanitation and a recent power outage have raised questions over basic infrastructure and maintenance at the newly inaugurated 50-bed Sub-District Hospital (SDH) at Qaimoh, a facility that took nearly two decades to materialise.

Pertinently, Minister for Health and Medical Education Sakeena Itoo inaugurated the new hospital here in South Kashmir on August 9, 2026 and dedicated it to the public.

The SDH Qaimoh project was sanctioned during 2008-09 under the Prime Minister's Development Programme (PMDP). Constructed by the R&B Division Kulgam at an estimated cost of Rs 19.33 crore, the facility has 50 inpatient beds besides OPDs, IPDs and diagnostic laboratories.

However, days after its reopening, concerns have emerged over water accumulation, sanitation and electricity supply at the facility.

According to officials, water accumulated on the hospital floor after plastic got stuck in the drainage system, blocking the outlet. The water was drained out the following morning.

An official said the incident was linked to the clogged drainage pipeline. The R&B Department has also raised construction-related concerns with the contractor and issued three notices, directing him to rectify deficiencies, including improper tile fixture.

Regarding the water accumulation, a health official, wishing not to be named, said the tap had remained open for several hours, leading to the incident. He, however, denied allegations of poor sanitation at the hospital. Meanwhile, sanitation at the hospital premises has also come under scrutiny, with visuals showing plastic packets and other waste scattered around parts of the facility.

A local resident said, "What is the fun of misusing money when things are not fixed? We waited for 20 years and could have waited a little longer. Why was there such a hurry? There is poor sanitation, and a power outage was also witnessed a few days ago. All this is happening just days after the reopening of the hospital."

Continued on
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New GMCs employee strike enters 5th day

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Aug 21: The indefinite strike by non-gazetted employees of five new Government Medical Colleges (GMCs) entered in J&K its fifth day on Friday, with routine healthcare services, including OPD work and hundreds of elective surgeries, being affected.

The employees are agitating against the prolonged delay in framing and notifying Service Recruitment Rules (SRRs).

The protesting employees of GMCs Anantnag, Baramulla, Doda, Kathua and Rajouri have been demanding early finalisation of the recruitment rules, which they say are essential for regulating their recruitment, promotions, seniority and other service-related matters.

Notably, the five Government Medical Colleges were established in 2019, but employees working in non-gazetted categories have continued to await a formal service framework governing their career progression and other conditions of service. More than 3,300 employees, including nursing, paramedical, clerical and multitasking staff, are understood to be affected by the issue. The employees have repeatedly approached the authorities, seeking an early resolution, but maintain that the matter has remained pending for years.

The agitation initially began at three new GMCs earlier this week before spreading to GMC Anantnag and Baramulla, bringing employees of all five institutions under the umbrella of the indefinite protest.

The employees have maintained that the strike will continue until the Service Recruitment Rules are



finalised and notified.

With a considerable number of non-gazetted employees remaining on strike, routine hospital functioning has been affected at the institutions. The OPD services have also witnessed disruptions, while hundreds of elective and routine surgeries have reportedly been delayed. However, emergency and essential procedures continue to be undertaken to ensure that patients requiring immediate medical attention do not suffer.

The protesting employees have maintained that their agitation is not intended to inconvenience patients, arguing that the prolonged administrative delay has left them with limited options.

They said the absence of notified service rules has created uncertainty regarding promotions and other career benefits, particularly for employees who have completed several years of service.

A key grievance of the employees is the lack of regular promotional avenues and the

non-constitution of Departmental Promotion Committees (DPCs). They contend that in the absence of notified rules and DPCs, many eligible employees have been unable to move to higher posts despite fulfilling the required service period. The employees have also raised concerns related to seniority, pay fixation and other service benefits associated with career progression.

The issue has assumed added importance as the five new GMCs have significantly expanded their healthcare infrastructure and services since their establishment. With new departments, wards, laboratories and other facilities becoming operational, the workload and responsibilities of employees have increased substantially, the protesters said.

They argue that while the institutions have expanded in terms of infrastructure and patient care, the service structure of a large section of their workforce remains unresolved.

Meanwhile, Health and Medical

Education Minister Sakeena Itoo on Friday acknowledged the employees' demand as genuine and said that the recruitment rules should have been framed by now.

She assured that the Service Recruitment Rules for non-gazetted employees of the five new GMCs would be framed by the end of September.

The minister's assurance has opened a possible window for resolving the ongoing stand-off. The employees, however, are expected to deliberate on the government's assurance before deciding whether to suspend, continue or modify their agitation.

Speaking to KNO, AIRNF J&K UT Committee State President Vishav Sharma said that a meeting of the employees would be held on Friday evening to discuss the assurance given by the Health Minister and decide the future course of action.

"We are holding a meeting this evening and will discuss the assurance given by the Health Minister. The future course of action will be decided after the meeting," Sharma said. The employees have sought a time-bound mechanism for framing and notifying the rules, followed by the constitution of Departmental Promotion Committees so that pending promotion cases can be taken up without further delay. They have also maintained that they are not demanding any special concession, but only a transparent and clearly defined service structure similar to that available to employees of established Government Medical Colleges—(KNO)

EDITORIAL

Govt Must Act On GMC Employees' Service Rules

For the last four days, Non-Gazetted employees of five newly established Government Medical Colleges in Jammu and Kashmir have been peacefully protesting, demanding the finalisation and notification of their Recruitment and Service Rules. Theirs is a reasonable and legitimate demand that deserves immediate attention. These

employees have served their institutions for years, playing a vital role in ensuring the smooth functioning of medical colleges and the delivery of healthcare services. Yet, despite their dedication, they continue to face uncertainty over their service conditions, promotional opportunities, and career progression. This is a matter of professional dignity and

basic fairness. When the government establishes new institutions, it has a moral and administrative obligation to ensure that the people who run those institutions are not left in a state of limbo. The failure to frame and notify service rules creates a climate of insecurity that undermines morale and affects the quality of work. Employees who are

uncertain about their future cannot be expected to perform at their best. A healthcare institution, above all, requires stability, clarity, and a motivated workforce. The government has acknowledged the demand. What is needed now is action. The process of finalising the Recruitment and Service Rules must be expedited. There is no justification for further

delay. The employees have shown remarkable patience, conducting their protests peacefully and without disrupting patient care. They have done their part. It is now the government's turn to do theirs. The Health and Medical Education Department must initiate a meaningful dialogue with the employees' representatives and bring this long-pending issue to

a swift and satisfactory conclusion. The government must recognise that resolving this issue is not an act of concession but a fulfilment of its own responsibility. Those who serve the people must themselves be served with dignity and fairness. Anything less would be a failure of governance. The government must act now. The employees have waited long enough.

India's Makhana Sector: Traditional Crop To Global Superfood

Makhana, or fox nut, has emerged as a fast-growing agri-food product in India. This is due to its nutritional value, rising health awareness, and increasing global demand. India is the world's largest producer of makhana. Bihar contributes nearly three-fourths of the country's production and around 80-85 percent of the global supply. In 2025-26, India exported 7,264.89 MT of makhana products (export value 19296.08 lakh). Domestic prices also increased significantly due to strong demand for healthy and premium snacks. Government initiatives, including the National Makhana Board and the 476.03 crore Central Sector Scheme, support research, processing, branding, exports, and farmers. With growing domestic and international demand, makhana has strong potential to increase farmer incomes. It can also generate rural employment and strengthen India's agri-food exports.

Press Information Bureau

Makhana: India's Superfood Sector on the Rise

Makhana, scientifically known as Euryale ferox, is an aquatic crop grown mainly in shallow ponds, lakes, and wetlands. The edible part of the plant is its seed. After roasting or processing, the seed is popped and consumed as a fox nut. India is the world's largest producer of makhana. This position is supported by suitable agro-climatic conditions and long-standing cultivation practices, mainly in Bihar, West Bengal, and Assam.

Over the years, makhana has evolved from a traditional food of Bihar into a widely consumed health food across the country. This transformation has been driven by rising health awareness and supportive government policies. The growth of startups producing value-added makhana products and the increasing role of Farmer-Producer Organizations (FPOs) have also contributed to the sector's expansion. In line with the sector's growing importance, the Government announced the establishment of the National Makhana Board in the Union Budget 2025-26. The Board was formally launched in Bihar on 15 September 2025. This initiative marks a significant step towards strengthening and modernizing the makhana value chain.

To further support the sector, the Government has approved a Central Sector Scheme for the Development of Makhana with a total outlay of 476.03 crore for the period from 2025-26 to 2030-31. The scheme focuses on promoting research and innovation, improving the availability of quality seeds, and strengthening farmers' skills. It also aims to upgrade harvesting and post-harvest practices, promote value addition, branding, and marketing, enhance exports, and reinforce quality control systems. Under the Central Sector Scheme for the Development of Makhana, 30 Crore was approved for 2025-26 and 90 Crore for 2026-27.

India's Makhana Boom

India continues to be the clear global leader in makhana production. Bihar accounts for nearly three-fourths of India's Makhana production and contributes around 80-85% of the global supply. Makhana cultivation is mainly concentrated in North Bihar.

It is especially prominent in the Kosi basin districts of Supaul, Saharsa, and Madhepura, as well as in nearby areas of the Mithila and Seemanchal regions. This makes the state the central hub of the makhana sector.

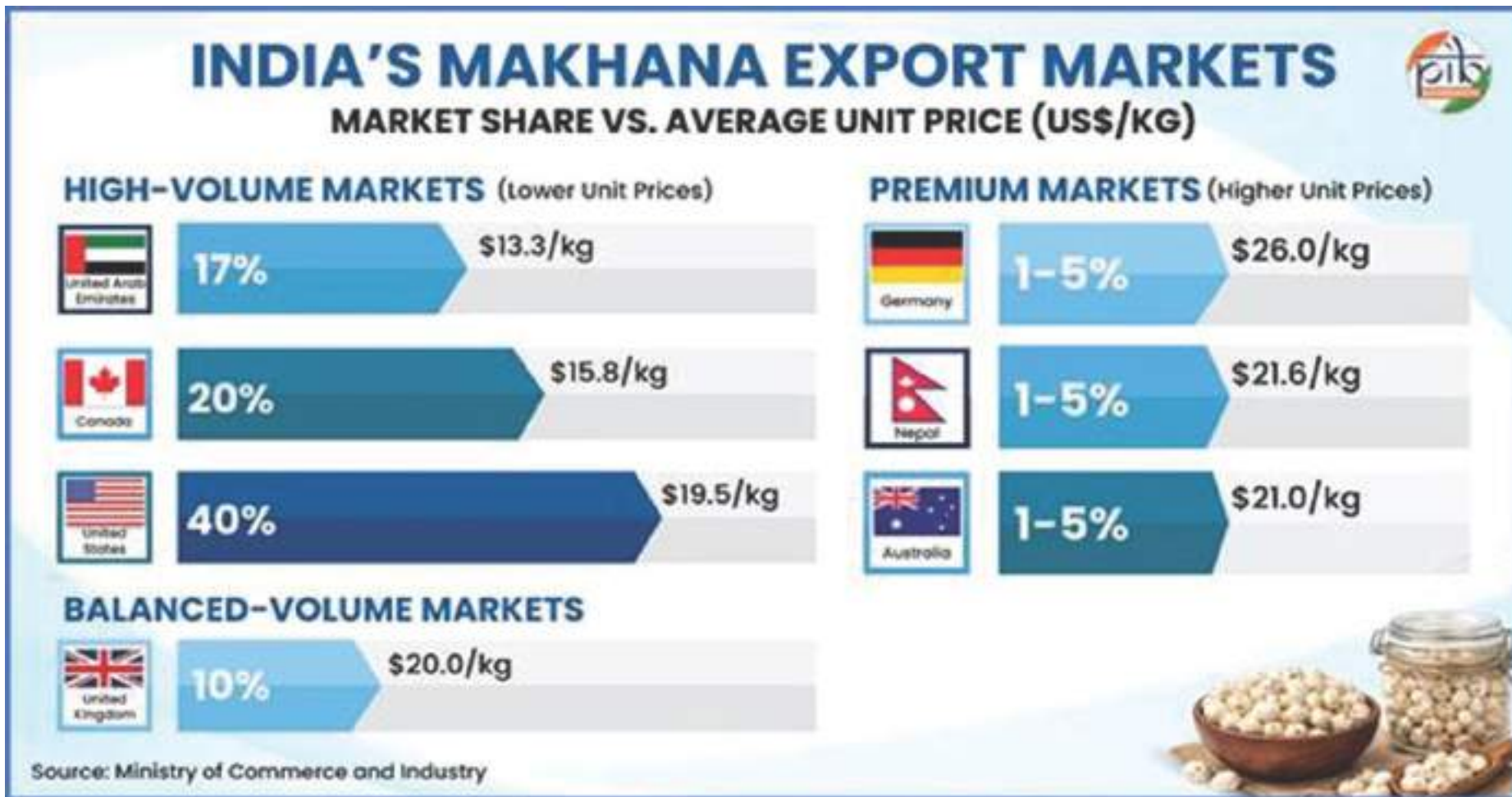
In 2024-25, as per final estimate of Horticulture Statistics Unit, DA&FW, the total production of makhana in India was 63,910 Metric Tonnes (MT), with an average productivity of 2.03 MT per hectare. As per the Second Advance Estimates (2025-26), total production of makhana in India is 80,590 MT, with an average productivity of 2.34 MT per hectare. Bihar is the leading producer of makhana in the country, with a production of 60,000 MT in 2025-26 and average productivity of 2.00 MT per hectare.

Traditionally grown in ponds, modern techniques like field-system farming and improved varieties such as Swarna Vaidehi and Sabour Makhana-1 have helped increase productivity. The growth has been driven by an increase in cultivated area, improved productivity, and reduced cultivation risks.

Text Box: Makhana-Geographical Indication (GI) Tag "Mithila Makhana" has been granted a GI tag, recognizing the unique quality, reputation, and traditional knowledge associated with makhana produced in the Mithila region of Bihar. The GI status provides legal protection, enhances market differentiation, and strengthens branding potential in domestic and international markets.

Domestic Production and Consumption Dynamics in Makhana Market

India produces more than 0.6 lakh metric tonnes of makhana each year. About 40 percent, or nearly 0.23-0.25 lakh metric tonnes, is exported, while the remaining quantity is consumed domestically. With growing



global demand for clean-label and plant-based superfoods, India's strong production base places makhana as a premium snack in international markets.

The domestic makhana market recorded annual growth of 17-18 percent between 2021-22 and 2024-25. This growth has been driven by rising health awareness, premiumization, and the expansion of branded players. Strong domestic demand has also helped shield the sector from fluctuations in export markets.

The market is expected to reach 11,000-12,000 crore by 2029-30. Production volumes increased by only 4 to 5 percent during the period from FY 2022 to 2025. Average prices increased from about 500 per kilogram during 2020-2022 to nearly 1,250 per kilogram in 2025. This increase is linked to higher demand for health-focused snacks, premium branding, and limited supply response.

Estimated Monthly Domestic Consumption (Popped)
India's monthly domestic consumption of popped makhana is estimated at 3,000-3,500 metric tonnes. During festive periods, when demand for snacks peaks, consumption rises to around 5,000 metric tonnes.

Within domestic consumption, branded Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) and organized snack players account for 1,800-2,000 metric tonnes per month. This is driven by the rapid premiumization of the category and the expansion of retail penetration. Loose and unorganized retail contributes 1,200-1,400 metric tonnes per month, remaining significant in Tier-2 and Tier-3 markets, even as packaged formats gradually gain popularity.

Local Fields Serving Global Shelves: Export Journey

Prior to 2025, makhana was classified under general Harmonized System of Nomenclature (HSN) codes. This resulted in the non-availability of product-specific export data. To address this gap, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) introduced a separate HSN code for popped makhana and other makhana products in 2025. In 2025-26, India exported 7,264.89 MT of makhana products (export value 19296.08 lakh).

India's export markets are highly concentrated. The United States (40%), Canada (20%), and the United Arab Emirates (17%) together account for 77% of total makhana exports.

However, these high-volume destinations offer relatively lower unit prices, US (\$19.5/kg), Canada (\$15.8/kg), and the UAE (\$13.3/kg). In comparison, smaller markets such as Germany (\$26.0/kg), Nepal (\$21.6/kg), and Australia (\$21.0/kg) command premium prices despite limited volumes (1-5%). The United Kingdom presents a balanced profile, with a 10 percent market share and average price realizations of \$20/kg. This indicates an opportunity to diversify beyond the US and Gulf markets by targeting premium-paying regions to enhance overall realizations.

Expanding Makhana Cultivation and Strengthening Farmer Support

Under the scheme, an additional area of 1,010 hectares has been brought under Makhana cultivation across the states, while 73 hectares have been covered under seed production programme. A total of 89 Front Line Demonstrations (FLDs) were conducted to demonstrate improved production technologies of makhana. Capacity building of farmers was undertaken through seminars, exposure visits and training programmes organized at State Agricultural Universities (SAUs), Central Agricultural Universities (CAUs), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) institutes etc. Under the Central Sector Scheme for Development of Makhana, a total of 8159 farmers in the country have benefited in 2025-26.

The Science Behind the Crunch: Makhana's Nutritional Edge

Makhana is nutrient-rich, containing carbohydrates, high-quality protein, dietary fibre, and essential micronutrients such as magnesium, potassium, phosphorus, and iron. Its low-sodium and cholesterol-free composition makes it suitable for a wide range of dietary needs.

Makhana is valued for its nutritional and health benefits and is increasingly recognized as a global superfood. It has a low glycaemic load, making it suitable for people managing diabetes. It also supports heart health, aids digestion, and is known for its anti-aging properties. Studies indicate that makhana's nutrient profile is superior to that of many commonly consumed nuts such as almonds, walnuts, and cashews.

It contains very little fat (0.33 g per 100 g), is rich in fibre, provides various essential amino acids and has about 95 percent protein digestibility. Its essential amino acid index and chemical score are comparable to those of fish.

Making of the Superfood: From Seed to Snack

Makhana production involves several stages that together form the value chain. Harvesting and seed collection take place at the farm level. Cleaning and drying are part of primary processing. Activities such as roasting or popping, grading, polishing, and packaging fall under secondary processing and value addition.

Farm-Level Production

Farm-level production includes pond preparation, seed broadcasting, crop management, and manual harvesting from water bodies. This stage is highly labor-intensive and depends on skilled manual work. Seed collection is particularly demanding as it is carried out underwater. Traditional cultivation practices continue to dominate the sector, and the level of mechanization remains limited.

Primary Processing

Primary processing of makhana is mostly carried out at the household or village level using traditional tools and methods. The process begins with drying and cleaning the raw seeds, followed by high-temperature roasting. The heated seeds are then popped, expanding into the light, crunchy form commonly consumed as a snack. After popping, the makhana is polished, sorted, and graded according to size and quality. Larger, higher-quality makhana fetch higher prices in the market.

Secondary Processing and Value Addition

The final product, which is popped makhana, is polished and packed. In recent years, secondary processing has expanded beyond traditional forms. It now includes flavoured makhana, ready-to-eat snacks, makhana flour, and other products. This segment offers strong potential for value addition and employment generation.

National Research Centre for Makhana (NRCM)

The National Research Centre for Makhana (NRCM) plays a key role in modernizing India's makhana sector through research and capacity building. It also promotes improved cultivation and processing practices across the sector. NRCM has developed high-yield makhana and thornless water chestnut varieties, introducing water-efficient and integrated farming systems, and launching Makhana-cum-fish farming. Over the years, NRCM has distributed 15,824.1 kg of high-yielding makhana seeds to farmers, Krishi

Vigyan Kendras, and various organizations. Major beneficiaries include institutions such as NABARD, State Fisheries Departments, Bihar Horticulture Development Society, and others.

Between 2012 and 2023, more than 3,000 farmers were trained in improved cultivation, processing, and marketing practices. The training focused on efficient water use, appropriate cropping systems, and balanced nutrient management. The Centre has also provided technical support to 24 enterprises, supporting rural livelihoods and the growth of makhana-based agro-industries.

Building on the capacity-building efforts, NRCM, with State Agricultural Universities and the Central Agricultural University, Bihar, has proposed a train-the-trainers approach. This approach aims to strengthen extension services across the makhana value chain. It covers cultivation, processing, grading, drying, popping, packaging, and branding.

Additionally, NRCM has developed several pieces of equipment and machinery for makhana popping and the production of value-added products. These technologies have been licensed to manufacturers for commercialization. Examples include the makhana seed washer, seed grader, primary roasting machine, popping machine, and popped makhana grader. Technologies for producing various value-added products have also been transferred for commercial use.

The Crop Connecting Nutrition, Farmers, and Global Markets

Makhana has emerged as one of India's fastest-growing agri-food sectors, driven by rising health awareness, expanding domestic demand, and strong export potential. Backed by favourable agro-climatic conditions, traditional expertise, and continuous technological advancements, India remains at the forefront of global makhana production.

The establishment of the National Makhana Board reflects a strong commitment to strengthening the sector across the entire value chain. At the same time, institutions such as the National Research Centre for Makhana are advancing research, enhancing farmer skills, and supporting value addition.

Global demand for healthy, plant-based, and premium food products continues to rise. In this context, makhana is well-positioned to contribute to higher farmer incomes, rural employment, and agricultural exports.

Div Com Kashmir reviews arrangements for 18th Harmuk Gangbal Yatra

‘Ensure advance arrangements for tents, bedding, essential facilities for pilgrims’

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 21: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, on Friday reviewed the arrangements for the 18th annual Harmuk Gangbal Yatra in a meeting here.

The three-day yatra is being organised by the Harmuk Ganga Gangbal Trust (HGGT), with around 150–200 pilgrims expected to participate.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal Jitin Kishore, SSP Traffic Rural, Chief Engineers of the Roads & Buildings (R&B) and Public Health Engineering (PHE) departments, SDM, officials from the Archaeological Survey of India, Traffic Police, Wildlife Department, Forest Health Department and KPDCI, besides HGGT General Secretary Vinod Pandit.

Pandit briefed the meeting about the religious rituals scheduled during the three-day pilgrimage, including Charni Puja at Naraan Nag Temple and Puja, Pind Daan and



Shradha at Harmuk Ganga.

Chairing the meeting, the Div Com directed the concerned departments to ensure advance arrangements for tents, bedding and other essential facilities for the pilgrims. He also called for uninterrupted electricity through gensets and adequate water supply throughout the yatra.

The meeting was informed that food and langar arrangements for the pilgrims would

be made by the HGGT.

The Divisional Commissioner directed the Health Department to deploy a medical team equipped with the necessary logistics, instruments and medicines to meet any medical requirements during the pilgrimage. He also instructed officials to earmark a entire area within the fencing of temple exclusively for yatris. The Floriculture Department

was directed to arrange flowers for puja and temple decorations while RDD was directed to provide pre-fab toilet facilities during the yatra.

Garg further directed the deployment of SDRF and Civil Defence personnel during the yatra and called upon the concerned security agencies to ensure foolproof security arrangements for the smooth and safe conduct of the pilgrimage.

DC Kulgam chairs District Level Aadhaar Monitoring Committee Meeting

KT News Desk

KULGAM, AUGUST 21: A meeting of the District Level Aadhaar Monitoring Committee (DLAMC) was held Friday under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, to review Aadhaar saturation, functioning of enrolment centres, the Mandatory Biometric Update (MBU) campaign, and pending applications on the State Verification Portal.

It was informed that overall Aadhaar saturation in the district stands at 96.87%, though saturation among children aged 0-5 years remains at 53.10%. It was further apprised that 9,865 Mandatory Biometric Update cases remain pending among students.

The Chair, as per an official statement, directed all concerned to expedite



enrolment of left-out children, operationalize non-functional Aadhaar centres, complete pending biometric updates in schools, and dispose of pending applications on the State Verification Portal at the earliest, with compliance reports to be submitted to the District Administration.

The meeting was attended

by the ADC Kulgam Vikar Ahmad Giri, ACR Kulgam Reyaz Ahmad Shah, CPO Kulgam Malik Suheel, Chief Education Officer Fayaz Ahmad Mir, District Social Welfare Officer, District Statistics and Evaluation Officer, District Lead Bank Manager, Post Master Kulgam, Project Manager UIDAI, and other concerned officers.

Mission Shakti spreads awareness on women empowerment in Shopian

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, AUGUST 21: Sankalp Hub for Empowerment of Women, Mission Shakti Shopian, under the banner of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, organised an awareness programme at Government Middle School Mashwara, Block Keller, with a special focus on girl education, empowerment, safety and protection.

During the programme, students and participants, as per an official statement, were sensitised about the importance of educating girls and ensuring equal opportunities for them to pursue their studies and build a bright, secure and dignified future.

The team emphasised that an educated girl is the foundation of an educated, empowered and progressive society. Participants were encouraged to support girls in continuing their education and to promote



a safe, positive and supportive environment where every girl can learn, grow and realise her potential.

The programme also highlighted the collective responsibility of families, schools and communities in promoting the rights, safety, education and empowerment of girls, in line with the objectives of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao.

DDC Shopian convenes review meeting to assess status of approved projects

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, AUGUST 21: District Development Commissioner (DDC), Shopian, Shishir Gupta on Friday chaired a review meeting in his office chambers to evaluate the implementation and current progress of various ongoing and approved development projects across the district.

During the meeting, as per an official statement, threadbare discussions were held on the progress and issuance of necessary approvals for projects pertaining to Urban Development, Tourism, Health, Culture and other sectors.

The DDC stressed upon the concerned officers to ensure timely completion of all requisite formalities, speedy execution of works and strict adherence to prescribed timelines.

Emphasizing the importance of timely delivery of developmental works, the DDC called for focused efforts,



effective monitoring and accountability at every level to ensure that the benefits of various projects reach the people at the earliest. He directed the Additional District Development Commissioner to closely monitor the progress of all projects, ensure regular follow-up with the concerned departments and

facilitate timely completion of the works.

Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC), Dr. Nasir Ahmad Lone, Chief Executive Officer, Shopian Dubjan Peer Ki Gali Development Authority, Assistant Executive Engineers (AEEs) and other concerned were present.

DC Ramban inspects Dalwas-Sowani Road, directs PMGSY to expedite restoration

KT News Desk

RAMBAN, AUGUST 21: Deputy Commissioner Ramban Mohammad Alyas Khan Friday inspected the damaged stretches of Dalwas-Sowani Road affected by mudslides triggered by recent heavy rainfall.

During the inspection, the Deputy Commissioner directed the Executive Engineer PMGSY Ramban and NHAI engineers present at the site to immediately initiate restoration works and ensure that road connectivity is restored at the earliest.

The Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, directed NHAI to take up construction of a crate wall along the National Highway to protect the Dalwas-Sowani Road at the take-off point. He also instructed the Executive Engineer PMGSY to expedite restoration works at other affected locations.

The engineers concerned apprised the Deputy



Commissioner of the extent of damage and the measures being undertaken for early restoration of the affected stretches. The Dalwas-Sowani Road provides vital connectivity to Dalwas, Karma and Sowani villages, and its restoration is essential for the smooth movement of residents and timely access to essential supplies and services.

The DC directed the executing agencies to deploy adequate manpower and machinery and expedite the restoration work, particularly at the stretches affected by heavy rainfall and mudslides. He stressed that all necessary measures be taken on priority to restore connectivity while ensuring the quality and durability of the works.

PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan Training programme held in Udhampur

KT News Desk

UDHAMPUR, AUGUST 21: Consultants from the Industries and Commerce Department held a district-level training-cum-demonstration programme on the implementation of the PM Gati Shakti-National Master Plan in district Udhampur.

Among those present was Chief Planning Officer Udhampur Uttam Singh, along with officers and officials from various departments.

During the training session, participants, as per an official

statement, received hands-on demonstrations of the key features and functionalities of the PM Gati Shakti platform. The consultants explained in detail the role of the digital platform in facilitating integrated infrastructure planning, enabling seamless sharing of departmental data and strengthening coordination among various departments.

Technical Experts Santosh Kumar and Yudhishter Seth briefed participants on the importance of effective utilisation of the PM Gati Shakti portal for

informed decision-making, co-ordinated planning and expediting developmental projects.

The participants were encouraged to make optimum use of the digital platform to ensure seamless inter-departmental coordination and efficient implementation of various infrastructure and development initiatives.

The training also provided an opportunity for the officers and officials concerned to clarify their queries and gain practical understanding of the portal and its applications in departmental planning.

Census-2027: Second-day training programme for population enumeration held in Bhadarwah

KT News Desk

BHADARWAH, AUGUST 21: The second-day sub district-level training programme for Population Enumeration (PE) under Phase-II of Census-2027 was held Friday at the Community Hall Bhadarwah, under the overall supervision and guidance of Deputy Commissioner Doda Krishan Lal, who is also the Principal Census Officer of the district.

The programme, as



per an official statement, was held under the guidance of Additional Deputy Commissioner Sunil Kumar Bhutyal, who is also the Sub

Divisional Census Officer. The session was conducted by experienced District Master Trainers Dr Yunus Rasheed and Dr Bharat Singh, Event

Manager Arif Rana and census staff members, who provided detailed guidelines on population enumeration procedures.

The training programme was organised to equip the officers and officials with the requisite knowledge, technical know-how and operational skills for the smooth, coordinated and effective conduct of Population Enumeration under Phase-II of Census-2027, particularly in the snow-bound areas of the Sub Division.

Mission Aatmanirbharta

DDC chairs District Steering Committee on Pulses in Udhampur

KT News Desk

UDHAMPUR, AUGUST 21: To promote self-reliance in pulse production and strengthen pulse cultivation in the district, the maiden meeting of the District Steering Committee on Pulses was convened Friday under the chairmanship of District Development Commissioner Udhampur Minga Sherpa.

The meeting, as per an official statement, marked the operational launch of the Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses in the district under the broader Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative, with active participation of all members of the Steering Committee concerned.

During the meeting, the Chief Agriculture Officer presented a detailed status report on pulse production, yield per hectare and existing productivity levels across the district. The report highlighted significant yield gaps among various agricultural



blocks.

The Steering Committee held detailed discussions on the proposed Annual Action Plan under the mission, with emphasis on aligning resources and interventions to systematically bridge the identified production gaps in the coming seasons.

While reviewing the block-wise data, the DDC observed considerable variations in pulse productivity across Udhampur district. He stressed the need

to address these geographical disparities to achieve the objectives of the mission and directed the Agriculture Department to accord priority to low-productivity villages.

The chair further advised the department to identify low-productivity clusters as “test villages” or “model villages” for intensive implementation of technological and scientific agricultural interventions under the mission.

To ensure a robust and data-driven approach to planning and resource allocation, the DDC directed the Agriculture Department to conduct a comprehensive census of farmers engaged in pulse cultivation across the district. The database will capture details of cultivated area, existing farming practices and specific requirements of farmers. He directed that the completed database be submitted to his office on priority.

Emphasising the importance of scientific and soil-based farming practices, the DDC highlighted the crucial role of the Soil Health Card Scheme in improving agricultural productivity. He directed the Agriculture Department to closely monitor key soil nutrient parameters across all blocks and ensure balanced use of fertilisers and appropriate soil management practices in pulse cultivation to enhance productivity per hectare.

Swachhata Sankalp programme held in Batote

KT News Desk

RAMBAN, AUGUST 21: The Directorate of Urban Local Bodies Jammu, in collaboration with the District Administration Ramban, Friday organised a “Swachhata Sankalp” programme at Batote to promote cleanliness, hygiene, responsible waste management and environmental awareness among the public.

Among those present were Tehsildar Vijay Kumar Sharma, Executive Officer Municipal Council Sudershan Singh Jamwal and Principal Model Higher Secondary School Rakesh, besides other officials, students and locals.

As part of the programme, as per an official statement, an awareness rally was taken out through Batote town, in which students, locals and officials participated enthusiastically. The rally aimed to sensitise the public about the importance of maintaining cleanliness in public places and adopting hygienic



practices in daily life.

A Swachhata pledge was also administered to all participants, who pledged to keep their surroundings clean and to spread awareness about cleanliness and environmental protection.

The programme also featured a cleanliness drive and awareness sessions, focussing on the importance of proper waste disposal, maintaining clean public spaces and collective responsibility in building a

cleaner, healthier and greener environment.

Addressing the participants, the dignitaries highlighted that cleanliness is a shared responsibility and stressed the need for active participation of citizens, particularly students and youth, in promoting sustainable sanitation practices and responsible waste management.

The event concluded with the message: “Swachhata Apnao, Swachh Jeevan Pao.”

Speaker visits Buzgoo, Nilnag; calls for faster tourism dev, improved connectivity

Assures development of Barinibal road to connect Yusmarg, Nilnag

KT News Desk

Budgam, Aug 21: Speaker, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly and Member Legislative Assembly (MLA) Charar-i-Sharief, Abdul Rahim Rather on Friday visited Buzgoo and Nilnag areas of the Charar-i-Sharief Assembly Constituency in Budgam district and interacted with the local residents to take stock of their developmental needs and concerns.

The development of Nilnag Lake was also discussed, with emphasis on developing the destination on the latest and sustainable model of tourism.

The Speaker stressed for adequate tourist facilities and related infrastructure so as to make Nilnag an attractive destination for the visitors while also benefiting the local population. He said that the region has

immense potential to emerge as a major tourist destination and a source of sustainable livelihood and income generation for the local population.

He said that an amount of Rs 71 lakh is proposed to be spent during the current year for creation of tourism-related infrastructure, including parks, fencing, gates and walkways. The proposed works are aimed at improving the overall infrastructure and visitor experience in the area, he added.

The Speaker said that efforts would be made to improve the connectivity between prominent tourist destinations, including through the development of the Barinibal Road connecting Yusmarg and Nilnag, enabling the tourists to conveniently visit and enjoy both destinations.

He said that a comprehensive development plan would



be pursued for Nilnag and the entire adjoining tourism belt to ensure planned infrastructure development and enhanced facilities for the visitors.

The closure of tourist destinations, including Yusmarg, Doodhpathri and Tosamaidan, was highlighted as having an adverse impact on the local

economy.

The Speaker asked the concerned authorities to review the decision in the larger public interest, keeping in view its impact on tourism-related activities, livelihoods and the local economy.

The Speaker added that Bamilbal –Yusmarg and Dobal–Yusmarg roads shall also be explored on public demand, with a view to improve the connectivity and facilitate hassle-free movement of local residents as well as visitors to the area.

Rather said that Maharaja Road has been projected for development at an estimated cost of Rs 12 crore. The proposed development is expected to improve road connectivity and provide better access to the concerned areas. The macadamisation of the Nagam–Nilnag road shall be taken up shortly, with

the work scheduled to commence within the stipulated timeframe. He directed that the concerned agency shall ensure early completion of the work so that the road is made traffic-worthy at the earliest.

The Speaker emphasized that link roads of Buzgoo shall be macadamised to facilitate hassle-free movement of residents and improve connectivity within the area. Priority shall be accorded to roads requiring immediate attention, he added.

The Speaker also said that an amount of Rs 30 lakh has been provided for construction of a wall around the High School, with the work to be taken up on priority so as to provide a secure and suitable environment for students and staff.

Interacting with the local residents, Rather assured them that necessary facilities and

infrastructure, particularly in the sectors of road connectivity, drinking water supply and tourism infrastructure, would be strengthened.

On drinking water facilities, he assured the residents that efforts would be made to provide an adequate and reliable drinking water supply under the Kalnag scheme, benefiting a large number of households in the area.

The Speaker informed that the balance work of water supply scheme will be started tomorrow and completed within one month.

The Speaker was accompanied by CEO, Yusmarg Development Authority, Riyaz Ahmad Beigh; SE, Jal Shakti Department, Shazia Majid; Executive Engineer, PHE Chadoora, Mohammad Younis, and other officers of line departments from Chadoora and Charar-i-Sharief Sub-Divisions.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

J&K youth creating

equal partners in it. I do not just want to see women present in enterprises; I want to see enterprises led by women. You must support those Self-Help Groups and Farmer Producer Organizations that gain equal access to finance, technology, and markets. Support such women through your research and innovation who start their own businesses and then, through those same businesses, create employment opportunities for other women," the Lieutenant Governor said.

AGRICULTURE, ALLIED SECTORS REPRESENT NEXT MAJOR FRONTIER

He also addressed the launch of the Startup Outreach Programme under JKCIP. The event brought together the researchers, innovators, young entrepreneurs and farmers from across the Jammu division.

The Lieutenant Governor drew attention to global examples of technology-driven agriculture, from a dairy innovation hub in the Netherlands that brings together scientists, companies and farmers on AI-based nutrition and animal health solutions, to Israel's integration of data and smart management across agriculture and dairy, New Zealand's digital push in animal husbandry, and a Brazilian irrigation startup that turned a farmer's everyday problem into a scalable solution. The message from these examples, the Lieutenant Governor said, is that agriculture and allied sectors represent the next major frontier for innovation worldwide.

At the same time, the Lieutenant Governor cautioned the youth of Jammu Kashmir against simply replicating foreign models, urging them instead to study their own fields, farmers, climate and local challenges, and to build solutions suited to the region's specific needs.

"Today, there are startups worldwide continuously exploring new possibilities in agriculture and allied sectors. The biggest message from these startups and new innovations is that agriculture and allied sectors themselves are the next big frontier for innovation.

You must understand your own fields, farmers, climate, and local problems to prepare your next solution, and customize those models in your own way wherever appropriate. I believe that different countries have innovated for their own problems, and now it is time for Jammu Kashmir to innovate for its own questions and challenges," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He also spoke at length about diversifying beyond traditional farming activities, encouraging young and progressive farmers to explore cold chains, grading and packaging units, regional branding, and digital marketplaces that could connect Jammu Kashmir's produce with markets in Delhi, Dubai and beyond.

REAL SUCCESS OF SKUAST-JAMMU WILL BE MEASURED BY NEW IDEAS

On the Startup Outreach Programme, the Lieutenant Governor noted its focus on reaching farmers and youth in villages who may have had no prior exposure to concepts such as incubation, mentoring or venture capital. He said the most useful solutions to farmers' problems are often conceived by those who have lived those problems firsthand.

The Lieutenant Governor stated that SKUAST-Jammu has so far selected more than 150 students for idea incubation and supported 56 promising startups, while extending its outreach to remote parts of the Jammu region. Calling this a commendable beginning, the Lieutenant Governor urged the SKUAST-Jammu to multiply these numbers and evolve into a genuine bridge between laboratories and markets, scientists and farmers, and technology and ground-level needs.

"Real success of SKUAST-Jammu will not be measured only by how many students graduate from here, but the success of this campus will be measured by how many new ideas were born here, how many solutions to problems were developed here, how many enterprises were established here, and how many farming families' lives were positively changed by those enterprises," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor called upon students to ask four questions every day during their time on campus- what problem can I solve, what enterprise can I build, what value can I add to agriculture and how many families can benefit from my idea?

"If these four questions keep troubling your mind continuously, then no one can stop you from finding the purpose of your career," the

Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor observed that Jammu Kashmir would increasingly be recognised for innovation, agricultural entrepreneurship and youth leadership in the years ahead.

"Do not make your dreams small. Do not let your circumstances become the limits of your future. Draw strength from your roots, direction from knowledge, speed from technology, and create new paths with your resolve. I am confident that in the coming years, Jammu Kashmir will also be recognized for innovation, agricultural entrepreneurship, science, technology, and youth leadership," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor also felicitated eight startups, FPOs and cooperative/rural enterprises for their contributions to agriculture, allied sectors, value addition and rural enterprise development.

Four publications including "Policy Document for Promoting Medicinal and Aromatic Plants in J&K", "Chronicle of Innovation & Startups under RKVY-RAFTAAR, SKUAST-Jammu", "Value on the Vine: Economic and Market Dynamics of Vegetables" and "Student's Rural Exploration Programme (SRPE)", were also released.

Shailendra Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary, Finance Department; Prof. B.N. Tripathi, Vice Chancellor, SKUAST-Jammu; Dr. Amrish Vaid, Director Extension; Dr. Anil Kumar, Registrar and faculty of SKUAST Jammu; senior officials, students, scientists, entrepreneurs, representatives of startups, FPOs, cooperatives and other stakeholders were present. (KNO)

Refrain from

government could not stop people from building houses but stressed the need to minimise the land used for construction. "We cannot tell people not to build houses. But we tell people to use as little land as possible," he said.

CM Omar said land, once lost to construction, could not be restored and therefore development has to be balanced with environmental protection.

"Once the land is gone, we cannot bring it back. We can generate more electricity, we can make water, we can do many things. But once the land is gone, we cannot bring it back. So we need balanced development," he said.

CM Omar said people should be able to construct homes while making every possible effort to preserve green spaces.

WASTE TO WONDER-FLOWER GARDEN INITIATIVE

Speaking about the newly inaugurated 'Waste to Wonder-Flower Garden', CM Omar said the initiative was intended not only as an attraction but also to spread awareness about recycling and reuse.

He said the garden should encourage people to rethink their everyday use of plastic, particularly plastic bags.

"If there is a possibility of recycling and reuse, then we should take the message from this garden that we should reuse the bags as much as possible," he said.

Omar questioned the practice of taking a new plastic bag every time people visit a shop when they could carry reusable bags from home.

"Is it a compulsion that every time we go to the shop, we take a new plastic bag from the shopkeeper? If we already know that we are going to the shop to buy things, then we should take a plastic bag from home so that we do not have to take the plastic bag from the shop and throw it in the drain," he said.

"This is the purpose behind this garden. I hope that people will come and enjoy this garden," the Chief Minister added.

CM Omar said the concept could also have tourism potential and asked officials of the Floriculture Department to explore whether a similar waste-themed garden could be recreated elsewhere.

"I would like our Department of Floriculture officers to go to Chandigarh and see if we can recreate the waste garden there," he said.

"I believe that this will also be a great attraction for tourism," he added.

Asked whether the new attractions could help attract more tourists to Kashmir, CM Omar referred to the development of the Chrysanthemum Garden, saying it had evolved considerably since its initial phase.

"This year will be its second season. I hope that we will use the lessons learned from last year and will do the best in this garden," he said.

Recalling the garden's early days, CM Omar said it had initially been small but expanded gradually with the addition of new features.

"I remember that it was a very small garden in the first year. It took so many years to reach here. Every year something or the other was added to it," he said.

"Water channels were added. New levels were created. In the same way, we will add" to the Chrysanthemum Garden, he said.

'VERY SAD SITUATION'

Asked about the situation in Kishtwar following the death of a schoolgirl, CM Omar described the matter as a "very sad situation" and said he hoped the administration and law-and-order authorities would complete their investigation at the earliest.

"I know that this is a very sad situation. We hope that the administration, especially the law-and-order authorities, will take action as soon as possible," he said.

"They should complete their investigation as soon as possible," the Chief Minister added. (KNO)

Poland backs

in a turbulent global environment marked by several disruptive forces.

He said stronger cooperation between the two countries could create an "axis of stability" and offer a positive model for international cooperation.

The Polish envoy also responded to questions about reports that Polish-made drones were used against Pakistani infrastructure during the initial phase of 'Operation Sindoor.' "There were reports from both Indian and Pakistani sides about the use of such drones," he said, adding, "According to experts I spoke to, some of the Polish-made drones may have been used as decoys or training platforms."

Switalski said he was surprised by attempts to link Poland to the conflict and suggested that "a kind of foreign agenda" could sometimes be behind such narratives.

Beyond security cooperation, the ambassador called for closer defence and economic ties between Poland and India.

He said Poland was undertaking major defence procurement and viewed India as an attractive partner because of its capabilities in certain areas of defence production and the scale of its industrial base.

Polish companies, he said, were also interested in expanding their presence in India, while Indian businesses could view Poland as a gateway to the European Union's large market.

Switalski also highlighted the longstanding historical and emotional ties between the two countries, recalling the role played by Indian royalty in providing shelter to Polish refugees during World War II.

He particularly referred to Maharaja Digvijaysinhji Ranjitsinhji Jadeja of Nawanagar, who sheltered Polish children fleeing the war and is remembered in Poland as the "Good Maharaja".

He also mentioned the Polish refugee settlement at Valivade near Kolhapur, where thousands of displaced Polish people found shelter between 1942 and 1948.

The ambassador said the historical relationship provided a strong foundation for expanding present-day cooperation between India and Poland, including in defence, trade and other strategic sectors. (KNO)

J&K India's

taken by the Centre and the Jammu and Kashmir administration, saying significant steps had been taken to make the region safer.

He indicated that Washington could review its travel advisory for Jammu and Kashmir, which currently places the region under its highest Level 4 warning, advising US citizens not to travel there.

Gor said the US periodically reassesses its travel advisories and suggested that the warning for Jammu and Kashmir could be downgraded following improvements in the security situation.

"I cannot make any big announcements here today, but it is something that we are going to look at," he said.

The envoy also said Jammu and Kashmir offered considerable tourism potential and that more Americans could visit the region if the security assessment improved.

It's in place to mention here that after Pakistan summoned US diplomat over ambassador Gor's remarks in Srinagar, CM Omar had said that it was an issue between Islamabad

and Washington and did not concern his administration.

Gor's comments have drawn attention in the region, particularly against the backdrop of continued differences between India and Pakistan over Jammu and Kashmir.

India has consistently maintained that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of the country and that matters concerning the Union Territory are internal to India. (KNO)

CM Omar felicitates

dedication and perseverance, and commended their parents and teachers for the support and guidance extended to them in their academic journey.

He said the achievement of these four students was a matter of pride for Jammu and Kashmir and would inspire other young students to pursue excellence through dedication and sustained effort.

On the occasion, Minister for Education Sakina Itoo, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Director School Education Kashmir Naseer Ahmed Wani, ZEOs, CEOs, principals of several schools, students and the proud parents of the achievers were present.

An interactive session was also held during the felicitation programme, providing students, educators and parents an opportunity to share their suggestions and feedback with the Chief Minister on various aspects of education and student welfare.

The Chief Minister listened to the suggestions and assured the participants that the issues and recommendations raised during the interaction would be considered.

Community solidarity

hands to carry it in Jammu Kashmir. Today, it is held high with pride on countless resolute shoulders," the Lieutenant Governor said.

Responding to the demands, the Lieutenant Governor assured that sincere efforts would be made by the administration to address public grievances and local infrastructure needs.

Thakur Randhir Singh, Member of Legislative Assembly from Kalakote-Sunderbani; Satyapal Sharma, President, Amriteshwar Shiv Mandir Vikas Samiti and Chelda Biradari; Rajesh Gupta, President Vishva Hindu Parishad, J&K; Bhim Sen Tuti, IGP Jammu; Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; Sandeep Wazir, DIG, Rajouri-Poonch Range; Shiv Kumar Sharma, DIG Udhampur Reasi Range; Abhishek Sharma, Deputy Commissioner Rajouri; Dr Bharat Bhushan, General Secretary and other members of Shri Amriteshwar Shiv Mandir Vikas Samiti, senior officials, and prominent citizens from different walks of life were present.

Citing convention,

has remained vacant for nearly two years, with the ruling National Conference showing no inclination to fill the position.

As per the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the House, the election of the Deputy Speaker is conducted under the supervision of the Speaker, who fixes the date for the election. (KNO)

Man, 42, found

an investigation has been initiated and further proceedings in the matter are underway. (KNO)

Teenager drowns

The deceased was later identified as Danish (18), a resident of Rangpora Soura, Srinagar.

Meanwhile, an investigation has been initiated, while the rescue operation is underway. (KNO)

Waste to Wonder Garden

activities in the floriculture sector. He also wished the growers and entrepreneurs success in their endeavours.

The Floriculture Mela provides flower growers, nursery owners and floriculture enthusiasts from various districts of Kashmir a platform to showcase their floral produce, exchange best practices and explore commercial opportunities in the sector.

Later, the Chief Minister inaugurated the Waste to Wonder-Flower Garden and took a tour of the thematic garden, which features a range of attractive installations created from discarded and scrapped materials. These include a vintage Ambassador car, classic Kashmiri tonga, floral boat, floral scooter,

heritage jeep, floral tractor, old tyres and other reclaimed items, which have been creatively transformed into garden features.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said the garden was a wonderful initiative of the Department of Floriculture aimed at demonstrating that discarded objects could be reused with thought and imagination.

"This is an effort by the Department of Floriculture to show people that almost anything can be reused if you have the thought and imagination to do so," he said.

Pointing towards the installations, the Chief Minister said the garden contained several unusual objects that one would not normally imagine being used in a garden, including a tractor, scooter, old jeep, Ambassador car and even a refrigerator in which plants had been placed and decorated.

He said the initiative carries an important message for society to think about reuse and recycling before throwing things away, particularly at a time when solid waste and plastic waste management has emerged as a major challenge in cities and villages.

"Before throwing anything away, we should stop and think whether it can be reused or recycled. Of course, we cannot use every piece of waste as a decorative item, but wherever there is a possibility of recycling or reuse, we should make the effort," the Chief Minister said.

Emphasising the importance of reducing plastic waste, he said people could adopt simple habits such as carrying reusable bags from home while going shopping instead of taking new plastic bags from shops and subsequently discarding them.

"That is the message behind this garden, and I hope people will come here, enjoy it and also take this message back with them," he said.

The garden has been conceived as a thematic model landscape based on the principles of Reduce, Recycle and Reuse (RRR). Nearly 90 per cent of the materials used in its construction have been sourced through recycling and refurbishment rather than fresh procurement, making the project an example of resource-efficient and sustainable landscaping.

Designed as an all-season garden, the Waste to Wonder-Flower Garden has been planned to offer continuous bloom from spring through late autumn. Plant selection and bloom-succession scheduling are aimed at keeping the site visually vibrant and florally active across changing seasons.

The Chief Minister also spoke about the scope for further developing the Chrysanthemum Garden, noting that its first season had provided valuable lessons that could be used to improve it during its second season.

Drawing a parallel with the evolution of the Tulip Garden, he said the iconic garden had also started on a much smaller scale and was developed progressively over the years through the addition of features such as fountains, water channels and new levels. "In the same way, we will continue to add to and improve the Chrysanthemum Garden," he said.

Regarding the Waste to Wonder Garden, the Chief Minister suggested that the Department of Floriculture should visit Chandigarh to study similar initiatives and explore possibilities of recreating and further developing the concept in Jammu and Kashmir.

"If we can recreate a similar Waste to Wonder concept here, it could become a great attraction for tourism," he said.

Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, MLA Bani Dr Rameshwar Singh, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, Principal Secretary Culture Brij Mohan Sharma, Commissioner Secretary Floriculture, Gardens & Parks Zubair Ahmad, Director Floriculture, Gardens & Parks Kashmir Ms. Mathora Masoom and other concerned officers were present on the occasion.

Woman rider

was shifted to District Hospital Ramban for treatment, where the lady was declared brought dead, while the other rider is undergoing treatment.

The deceased scooter rider was identified as Shakeela Banoor (24), wife of Sameer Tantary and a resident of Boli Bazar, Ramban, while the injured pillion rider was identified as Rafiya Farooq (26), daughter of Farooq Ahmed Wani and a resident of Kundi Karol.

Meanwhile, an investigation has been initiated and efforts are underway to trace and identify the vehicle and its driver. (KNO)

PM Modi assures support to space startups, urges them to develop solutions for everyday needs

PTI

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday assured full support of the government to young space entrepreneurs and urged them to explore how space technology can be used in agriculture, livestock management, dairy, environment and other areas that affect people's everyday lives.

Interacting with CEOs and founders of 20 space startups here, Modi also hailed them for showing remarkable courage by entering a new and demanding domain of space startups as they have taken risks, trusted the reform process and remained consistent in their efforts.

He assured them of the government's full support and called for greater collaboration between space companies and organisations in other sectors to expand the use of their technologies.

"I assured the space startups that government of India will continue to stand with them as they build India's capabilities for the future. India can offer the world a strong, innovative and commercially viable model in the space sector," he said.

Modi also urged the startups to explore how space technology could contribute to "agriculture, livestock management, dairy, environment and many other areas that touch everyday lives".

The prime minister suggested, "Companies working on space debris could work with environmental organisations to scale up



their technologies. Space technology companies working with the agriculture sector could collaborate with agricultural universities and departments to help farmers make better informed decisions and maximise their output."

The prime minister said the startups made insightful presentations on their work and appreciated the government's space reforms and the opportunities they had created for the industry to grow.

"It was wonderful to meet the Yuva Urja of India's space sector... young entrepreneurs and innovators who have shown remarkable courage by entering a new and demanding domain. They have taken risks, trusted the reform process and remained consistent in their efforts. Due to this, India has achieved a lot in the space sector in the last few years," he said.

He said India's private space ecosystem could become a major force for the country and the world and called for an ecosystem in which the world looks to India when thinking about the space sector.

India's space sector can act as a magnet to attract global talent, companies and investment to the country, Modi said, urging industry players to rapidly strengthen India's position globally.

The prime minister also encouraged space startups to engage with Atal Tinkering Labs, saying they could spark curiosity among schoolchildren and inspire the next generation to participate in the space sector.

He recalled that opening the space sector to private participation had generated significant enthusiasm and created new opportunities for industry. The prime minister

said many countries either could not invest in the space sector or did not wish to do so, presenting India with a major opportunity to rapidly strengthen its position in the global space industry.

He also encouraged space companies to explore new applications of their technologies and focus on how these could make people's lives easier, while calling for greater collaboration between space-sector firms and companies working in other areas.

The CEOs of leading companies in the space sector working in diverse fields ranging from building rockets and reusable semi-cryogenic launch vehicles, avionics, satellites, advanced propulsion system, space and defence intelligence, removing space debris, AI-powered hyperlocal weather and climate intelligence, among others, participated in the interaction.

The prime minister said the confidence shown by the private space sector had strengthened the vision behind opening the industry to private participation.

The CEOs highlighted the rapid progress being made by India's private space industry and shared their vision for its future.

They said their companies had invested significant time and effort in building capabilities and developing the required technologies indigenously in the country, while expressing gratitude for the support received from the Prime Minister.

Shah accuses Mamata govt of blocking new criminal laws to protect 'syndicate raj'



PTI

Siliguri, Aug 21: Launching a fresh salvo at the erstwhile Mamata Banerjee-led TMC government in West Bengal, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday accused the previous dispensation of not notifying the new criminal laws passed by Parliament, alleging that it wanted to protect the "syndicate, cut-money and extortion regime".

Addressing a gathering at the Kawakhali Maidan in Siliguri where he inaugurated an exhibition on the three new criminal laws -- the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam -- Shah asserted that the laws, now

implemented by the Suvedu Adhikari-led BJP government, have taken a decisive step to replace the prevailing environment of fear (bhoy) with that of trust (bharosa). "While the entire country had begun implementing the new criminal laws, Banerjee never notified them. She knew that the laws would sound the death knell for her syndicate, cut-money and extortion regime," Shah said. Asserting that the BJP government has imposed the rule of law in the state, Shah said the new criminal laws will fast-track justice delivery mechanism and allow zero FIRs to be lodged at any police station.

Reiterating his resolve to curb cross-border infiltration, Shah said, "I

reiterate my firm stand to unearth every single infiltrator in this state and throw them out of the country using the detect-delete-deport mechanism."

"Banerjee had tried to stop the implementation of CAA in Bengal, even made fun of it. But now people have removed her and her government from power," the home minister said.

The new laws came into force on July 1, 2024, replacing the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, and the Indian Evidence Act. The exhibition, titled 'Five Pillars: Transformed Justice System', will be held till August 26 to familiarise people with the new criminal justice framework, officials said.

Delhi records over 1,700 swine flu cases as Centre reviews preparedness



PTI

New Delhi, Aug 21: Delhi has registered more than 1,700 cases of swine flu this year, health department officials said on Friday, as the national capital sees a surge in seasonal influenza cases during monsoon.

Union health minister J. P. Nadda on Friday reviewed the prevailing H1N1 influenza situation and preparedness measures in the country with a particular focus on the national capital, and stressed the need for continued vigilance and robust surveillance.

Delhi health minister Pankaj Kumar Singh also attended the meeting.

Nadda reviewed the national surveillance and epidemiological situation, trends in influenza-like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infections (SARI), testing and laboratory surveillance, and preparedness of healthcare facilities to manage seasonal influenza cases, the ministry said. He emphasised the need for close monitoring of influenza trends and proactive preparedness to ensure early detection and timely clinical management of cases.

"A report is being prepared to assess the number of cases and the overall situation. Everything is under control. There is no need for general panic. All government hospitals have been directed to ensure adequate treatment facilities," Singh told PTI.

Healthcare institutions and concerned officials have been told to keep a close watch on infection patterns, affected areas and potential hotspots, the minister said, adding that separate wards are being set up for swine flu patients.

Doctors in Delhi said they are seeing a noticeable surge in number of patients with influenza and influenza-like symptoms, though most cases are mild to moderate.

Dr Rishikesh Desai, consultant physician in the department of internal medicine at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, said the hospital is witnessing a rise in seasonal influenza cases. "Most healthy individuals recover well, but influenza can become serious in older adults, pregnant women, young children and people with chronic diseases," he said.

Dr Neha Rastogi Panda, senior consultant in the department of infectious diseases at Fortis Hospital, Gurugram, also recounted a similar situation. "There has been a sudden increase in patients with influenza and influenza-like illnesses," she said. "Most patients have mild to moderate illness and recover well with appropriate supportive care, so there is no reason to panic." Rastogi further said doctors were seeing more prolonged cough and greater intensity of fever this season, possibly due to reactive inflammation of the lungs due to air pollution, particularly from particulate pollutants.

According to medical practitioners, H1N1 infection -- commonly known as swine flu -- usually presents fever, cough, sore throat, headache, body aches and fatigue. Those with persistent high fever, breathing difficulty, chest pain, confusion or worsening symptoms are advised to seek medical attention promptly.

"Vaccination, hand hygiene, avoiding close contact while ill and staying home during the infection period are key to limiting transmission," Dr Desai said.

Rashtrapati Bhavan withdraws communique announcing rehearsal for Bangladesh PM visit

PTI

New Delhi, Aug 21: A Rashtrapati Bhavan communique on Friday announcing the cancellation of Saturday's Change of Guard ceremony to accommodate the full rehearsal of Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's ceremonial welcome was withdrawn, adding a fresh layer of confusion to the status of the high-profile visit.

The withdrawal highlighted the ongoing diplomatic friction between New Delhi and Dhaka ahead of the upcoming BRICS summit on September 12-13. Relations have been strained over Bangladesh's recent demand for the extradition of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

A fresh communique from the Rashtrapati Bhavan said "press release issued on the subject 'No Change of Guard Ceremony this Saturday', which was issued on August 21, 2026, stands withdrawn."

This communique came an hour



after the President's house had announced that it was cancelling the weekly ceremony for the full rehearsal of the welcome planned for the visiting Bangladesh Prime Minister.

"The Change of Guard Ceremony at the Forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan will not take place this Saturday (August 22, 2026) due to the full rehearsal for the ceremonial welcome of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh," the withdrawn communique read.

The development led to further diplomatic uncertainty surrounding Rahman's proposed visit to New Delhi

for the upcoming BRICS summit following recent tensions between the two neighbours over Dhaka's demand for Hasina's extradition.

On Tuesday, Indian High Commissioner Dinesh Trivedi sought to ease bilateral friction during a reception in Dhaka for Bangladeshi business leaders and a visiting Indian delegation during which he said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi desired to make Rahman's trip "memorable".

"Prime Minister Modi just mentioned one thing. We need to meet," Trivedi had said.

However, signals emerging from the diplomatic corridors of Dhaka remained cautious and during an interview with the state-run BSS news agency published on Thursday, Bangladesh Foreign Affairs Adviser Humaiun Kobir stated that the likelihood of Rahman's summit visit "remained slim" unless an atmosphere built on "mutual trust" and a "dignified invitation" from New Delhi were available.

Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles to hike prices by up to Rs 25K from Sep 1

PTI

New Delhi, Aug 21: Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd (TMPV) will hike vehicle prices by up to Rs 25,000 across its portfolio from September 1, citing higher input costs and sustained inflationary pressures. The price increase will cover both internal combustion engine (ICE) and electric vehicles (EVs), with the quantum varying across models and variants, the company said in a statement on Friday.

"This price revision is being undertaken to partially offset the impact of rising input costs and sustained inflationary

pressures," the company said.

TMPV said it will continue to absorb a significant portion of the increase in costs, while passing on part of the impact to customers through the price revision.

The company said the extent of the hike will differ across models and variants, while the overall value proposition of its vehicles will be maintained.

TMPV currently sells a range of conventional engine and electric vehicles, from the entry-level Tiago to premium SUVs such as the Safari and Harrier EV. Its vehicle portfolio is priced at around Rs 4.7 lakh to Rs 31 lakh.

India orders removal of Google Firebase accounts used in online scams targeting bank customers

REUTERS

New Delhi, Aug 21: India has directed Google to shut down hundreds of accounts on its Firebase web development platform after finding a pattern of criminals misusing the service to impersonate major banks and defraud people, according to government notices and a source familiar with the matter.

Online scams have become one of India's most pressing law enforcement challenges, with Indians losing nearly \$2.4 billion in alleged cyber fraud in 2025, according to government data. For years, the government has gone after scammers by ordering their websites removed.

Of late, however, Indian officials have



noticed a "pattern" that scammers are using the Google's app and website development tool Firebase, which has millions of users the world over, according to the source with direct knowledge of the matter.

The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) has directed at least 57 websites and databases that were hosted

on Firebase be taken down in August alone, saying they were being used to distribute malware and steal sensitive financial information from victims' phones, according to three notices sent to Google and reviewed by Reuters.

There was no suggestion in the notices that Google or Firebase were in any way responsible. However, Google can be held liable for the named links if they are not taken down within three hours of the notice being issued.

"Android-based malware programs are masquerading as legitimate banking services, specifically targeting Android users with credit cards. Scammers lure victims by promoting offers such as new credit cards, reward redemptions, or credit limit upgrades," I4C said in an August 17 notice to Google, directing the

removals.

The source added the total number of notices sent to Google over Firebase ran into dozens in recent months, without sharing an exact number.

Alphabet-owned Google said in a statement the company has "strict policies prohibiting the use of our services for phishing, malware, or financial fraud" and works with law enforcement, including I4C, to evaluate and act on notices.

Representatives for India's home (interior) ministry, which controls the I4C, did not respond to questions.

Booming digital use
Firebase is used by millions of developers worldwide to build apps and host websites. It is part of Google's cloud business, which generated nearly \$25 billion in revenue in the most recent quarter.

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