



Jobs now come by merit, not recommendation: LG Sinha

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Sep 18: Commending the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission (JKPSC) for establishing a new legacy of employment through merit since 2019, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday asked newly appointed police officers to serve the people with courage, integrity and compassion.

Speaking at a function here after handing over appointment letters to 29 newly selected officers of the Jammu and Kashmir Police (Gazetted) Service at Lok Bhavan here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) congratulated the newly appointed officers and lauded their perseverance in overcoming an intense and transparent selection process conducted by the Jammu Kashmir Public Service Commission (JKPSC).

"You have faced tough competition. You have gone through



such a difficult process, which has not only tested your intelligence, but also your patience, character, discipline and strength to withstand adverse situations," he said.

LG Sinha lauded the JKPSC for upholding fairness, impartiality, and credibility and establishing a new legacy of employment through merit since 2019.

LG Sinha recalled how, for the first time, even children of ordinary families such as

vegetable vendors, labourers, were able to secure government jobs purely on the basis of talent and hard work. "The recruitment system has helped create an environment where government employment could be secured through qualifications, hard work and talent rather than recommendations. I do not need to tell you what used to happen here. How did you get a job? A complete book can be written on it. The people

sitting here know more about that book than I do," LG Sinha said.

Recalling the 2022 Jammu and Kashmir Employment Festival, LG Sinha said people had begun to believe that children from ordinary families could also rise to government positions on the strength of their merit. "At that time, for the first time, people said that the son of a vegetable vendor can also be a KAS officer. This

- Lauds JKPSC for new legacy of merit-based recruitment since 2019
- Says complete book can be written on how jobs were given earlier
- Advises new JKP officers to serve with courage, integrity, compassion

CM in Delhi for Viksit Bharat Finance Conference

'Opportunity to explore clear financial pathways for J&K'

KT News Desk

New Delhi, Sep 18: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday attended the two-day conference on "Financing India's Journey towards Viksit Bharat", organised by the Ministry of Finance, Government of India, in New Delhi.

Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman attended the inaugural session of the conference of State Finance Ministers and Finance Secretaries of States and Union Territories with Legislature.

The two-day conference provides a platform for deliberations on financing



challenges and policy priorities shaping India's development journey towards Viksit Bharat, while exploring policy complementarities between the Centre and the States through a combination of academic rigour and practical policy perspectives.

Chief Ministers, Deputy Chief Ministers, Finance Ministers | [More on P6](#)

J&K Assembly business

Daily-wagers' regularisation among 7 resolutions selected

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Sep 18: A resolution seeking the regularisation of daily-wage workers has been listed among seven Private Members' Resolutions drawn for consideration in the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly on September 25, the day reserved for Private Members' business.

The Assembly Secretariat, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), on Friday conducted balloting to select the seven resolutions for the upcoming autumn session. Among them is a resolution submitted by BJP MLA Pawan Kumar Gupta, urging the Government to frame and

notify, within a fixed time-frame, a comprehensive and uniform policy for the regularisation of Daily Rated, Casual, NYC, Mid-Day Meal and similarly placed workers across departments and agencies.

Other resolutions include BJP MLA Yudhvir Sethi's call for a time-bound Master Plan for parking facilities in Jammu East, and NC MLA Salman Sagar's proposal to denotify Phaak and Rural Block Harwan from the Srinagar Master Plan to ease restrictions on residents.

In his resolution, NC MLA Qaysar Jamshaid Lone has pressed for expediting construction of the Lolab-Bandipora | [More on P6](#)

LG Sinha flags off Harmukh-Gangbal Yatra

'Pilgrimage bridge between India's glorious past & vibrant present'

Raja Syed Rather

Ganderbal, Sep 18: Describing Harmukh-Gangbal Yatra as a "living expression of immortal faith" Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday flagged off the pilgrimage from Naranag to the sacred Gangbal Lake in the upper reaches of Ganderbal district.

Speaking on the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "The sacred Yatra represents a bridge between India's glorious past and vibrant present."

LG Sinha said Jammu and Kashmir has, for millennia, been nourished by an unbroken stream of faith, with its land carrying deep spiritual



significance, as highlighted by Kalhana in the Rajatarangini.

Referring to the Nilamata

Purana, he said Mount Harmukh, also known as Harmukut, is | [More on P6](#)

Uniform carries responsibility, risks: DGP to new police officers

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Sep 18: Jammu and Kashmir Police Director General of Police (DGP) Nalin Prabhat on Friday congratulated the newly selected candidates for the Jammu and Kashmir Police (Gazetted) Services, saying that wearing the police uniform carries immense responsibility and comes with challenges, including risks to life.

Addressing the newly selected candidates on the sidelines of a function at Lok Bhavan in Srinagar, DGP Prabhat, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said the occasion was a moment of happiness for the candidates and their families.

"Today is a day of happiness for you and your families. You



must also realise that wearing the uniform is not easy. It comes with responsibility," the DGP said.

He said the candidates would face several challenges during their service and may encounter situations where their lives could be at risk. "There will be challenges with this responsibility and there | [More on P6](#)

Report online fraud via 1930: SSP Crime



Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Sep 18: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Crime Yaseen Kichloo on Friday said that Jammu and Kashmir Police have rolled out a dedicated cybercrime mechanism to expedite complaint handling and enable quicker action to freeze suspected fraudulent funds.

Talking to reporters here, SSP Kichloo, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said the system, established under the Jammu and Kashmir Cyber Coordination Centre (JK4C) and JK1C, will function through specialised wings dealing with cyber investigation, cyber operations and online crimes against children and women.

He urged victims of cyber fraud to immediately report incidents through the 1930 helpline or the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP), saying prompt reporting increases the chances of stopping or freezing the money before it is transferred further.

The SSP said complaints involving suspicious transactions are examined in coordination with banks and other concerned agencies for necessary action. | [More on P6](#)

NHM employees defer strike after govt assurance

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Sep 18: The Jammu and Kashmir National Health Mission Employees Association (JKNHMEA) has decided to defer its strike following a written assurance from the Health and Medical Education Department on the long-pending demands of NHM employees.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the decision came after a meeting of the JKNHMEA Joint Coordination Committee with Health and Medical Education Minister Sakeena Itoo at the Civil Secretariat in Srinagar on

Friday, in the presence of the Mission Director, NHM, and other senior officers.

According to the association, the government has constituted a committee vide order No. PS/HME/058/156 dated September 17, 2026, to examine the issues raised by NHM employees and work out a comprehensive roadmap for addressing their demands.

The association said the process of finalising the roadmap has already commenced, describing the development as a significant step towards resolving the issues that have remained pending for a considerable period.

NHM | [More on P6](#)

'Rising temps threaten apple yields in Kashmir, mangoes in Jammu'

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Sep 18: Rising temperatures and increasingly erratic weather are putting Jammu and Kashmir's major fruit economies under growing pressure. Apple yields in Kashmir are declining sharply, with summer warming and mango arrivals in Jammu falling substantially after recent heatwaves and hailstorms.

A study, published in the International Journal of Creative and Open Research in Engineering and Management, examined climate change-related agricultural losses in Jammu and Kashmir, focusing on the region's apple and



mango economies. It found that apple yields in Kashmir decline by about 6.10 per cent for every 1-degree Celsius rise in summer temperature.

The impact was significantly higher in Baramulla district, where the study estimated a 19.16 per cent decline in apple yield for | [More on P6](#)

Education, awareness, compassion our strongest weapons: LG Sinha

Launches 'Nasha Mukht Bharat' Documentary, Collage Exhibition at Jammu University

KT News Desk

Jammu, Sep 18: The Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha today launched a documentary and collage exhibition on the Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan, marking a significant step in raising awareness against drug abuse. The Lieutenant Governor commended the University of Jammu for its efforts in reflecting the challenges faced by the youth of Jammu Kashmir and the collective resolve to overcome them.

In his address, the Lieutenant Governor emphasized that the beginning of any social change lies in acknowledging



its reality. Drug abuse has long posed a grave challenge to the social fabric of Jammu Kashmir, devastating families and threatening the future of the younger generation. He

highlighted the link between drug smuggling and narco-terrorism, underscoring the importance of dismantling these networks to ensure peace, security and drug-free Jammu

Kashmir.

The Lieutenant Governor recalled the launch of the Nasha Mukht Jammu Kashmir campaign in 2020. He said building on that momentum, a comprehensive 100-day Nasha Mukht Jammu Kashmir Abhiyan was initiated earlier this year in April, extending beyond formal events to villages, schools, universities, and families. Through Padyatra, awareness drives, and administrative action, the campaign became a people's movement. Women, youth clubs, teachers, doctors, civil society groups, and religious leaders played pivotal roles in spreading awareness and

supporting rehabilitation.

Highlighting the three-pronged approach of dismantling supply chains, creating awareness, and rehabilitation, the Lieutenant Governor noted the introduction of the Rehabilitation and Socio-Economic Reintegration Scheme for Drug Abuse Victims, 2026. This scheme aims to reintegrate affected youth into mainstream society, ensuring they lead healthy and responsible lives.

"I am happy that, in this direction, the University of Jammu has stepped forward and is playing its role through today's | [More on P6](#)

Youth found dead at Budgam home

Naveed Ul Haq Ganaie

Budgam, Sep 18: A 21-year-old youth was found dead at his residence in the Qadi Pora area of Budgam in the intervening night of Thursday and Friday, officials said.

An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the youth was found unconscious at his residence in Qadi Pora, following which police were informed.

He said police reached the spot and took the body into custody. The deceased was identified as Shafat Hussain (21), a resident of Qadi Pora, Budgam.

Meanwhile, the body will be handed over to the family after completion of the necessary formalities for | [More on P6](#)

Man killed as car slips into gorge in Rajouri

KNO Correspondent

Rajouri, Sep 18: A man was killed while another was injured after the car they were travelling in skidded off the road and fell into a gorge along the Kandi-Jamola Road in Rajouri district on Friday, officials said.

An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that a car bearing registration number JK11F-2248 was travelling along the Kandi-Jamola Road when it skidded off the road and fell into a deep gorge. He said that | [More on P6](#)

Cluster University Srinagar signs MoU with NIELIT for NSQF-aligned skill programmes

Partnership will facilitate courses in Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, Cyber Security, Cloud Computing

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 18: Cluster University of Srinagar (CUS) signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology (NIELIT) J&K for National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQ F)-aligned skill development for a period of three years.

The MoU, as per an official statement, will strengthen digital skilling, employability and emerging technology readiness among learners.

The collaboration will use the NIELIT Digital University Platform for technology-enabled education. It will support online, blended and other mutually agreed learning modes.

The MoU was signed on 15 September 2026 at Cluster University of Srinagar. Registrar Prof (Dr) Wilayat Hussain Rizvi, in presence of the Vice Chancellor Prof Mohammed Mobin, signed for the university and Ashaq Hussain Dar, Director NIELIT, signed for the Institute. Controller Examinations, Prof Khurshid Ahmad Mir and PS to Vice Chancellor Dr Ubaid Sidique, besides Senior representatives from both organisations witnessed the signing ceremony.

The partnership will facilitate courses in Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, Cyber Security and Cloud Computing.



Other areas include Internet of Things, Blockchain, AR and VR, semiconductor technologies and digital governance. The collaboration also covers electronics, information technology and other emerging technology domains. Students, faculty, staff, professionals and eligible learners may benefit from these programmes. Credit transfer and academic integration will follow applicable institutional and regulatory norms.

The NIELIT platform provides learning management, digital content and virtual laboratory facilities. It also supports artificial intelligence enabled learning, learner analytics and online assessments.

The partners will jointly develop course content, assignments and

laboratory manuals. They will also facilitate faculty development, internships, project work, research and industry engagement. Workshops, seminars, webinars, bootcamps and hackathons will be organised under the partnership.

The MoU further provides for training of trainers and institutional coordinators. It includes capacity building for administrators supporting platform based academic programmes. NIELIT will support course delivery, assessments, certification and learner progress reporting. The Cluster University will identify learners, facilitate enrolment and obtain necessary academic approvals.

SKUAST-K study links 'Hen and Chicken' disorder in Sahebi grape to poor pollination

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 18: A study conducted at the Division of Fruit Sciences, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-K), Shalimar, has confirmed that Sahebi is a functionally female grape cultivar, providing a scientific explanation for the frequent occurrence of the "Hen and Chicken" disorder in the variety.

The disorder, as per an official statement, is characterised by bunches carrying a mix of normal-sized berries and numerous small, underdeveloped berries, resulting in reduced marketable yield and quality. Around 70-80 percent of Sahebi grapes are reported to be affected by the disorder in Kashmir.

Grape cultivation has considerable potential in the region, with Ganderbal accounting for around 206 hectares under grapes and producing about 1,385 metric tonnes. Sahebi constitutes 54.42 percent of the district's grape cultivation, followed by Hussaini at 35.20 percent. During the 2025-26 research season, floral morphology and pollen characteristics of nine grape cultivars were studied under Kashmir's temperate conditions. The research was undertaken by Raksha under the mentorship of Dr Aroosa Khalil and Dr A.H. Pandit, Head, Division of Fruit Breeding, Technology and Innovation.

The study found that Sahebi has reflexed stamens and non-functional pollen, confirming its functional female nature and dependence on pollen from a compatible cultivar for effective fertilisation and fruit set.

The findings indicate that inadequate pollination in vineyards without a suitable pollinizer may contribute to poor berry development and uneven bunches.

Additional Secretary RDD&PR undertakes tour of Machil Block, inspects development works



KT News Desk

KUPWARA, SEPTEMBER 18: Additional Secretary, Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (RDD&PR), Waseem Raja, undertook a tour of Machil Block in Kupwara district and inspected various ongoing development works being executed under different schemes.

During the visit, he reviewed the progress of works on the ground and stressed upon timely completion, quality execution and effective monitoring, particularly in view of the approaching winter.

The visit, as per an official statement, provided an opportunity to assess the implementation of rural development initiatives in the challenging border and hilly terrain of Machil valley and to identify areas requiring focused intervention.

He also interacted with local residents in villages close to the Line of Control (LoC) and listened to their concerns and developmental needs.

During the visit, emphasis was laid on timely completion, quality execution and effective monitoring of works, particularly in view of the approaching winter.

Additional Secretary appreciated the innovative approach adopted for the implementation of VB-GRAM G at Malik Bela, the last village close to the Line of Control (LoC). He also inspected the geotagged PMAY-G houses and interacted with the beneficiaries.

The Additional Secretary further inspected the playground at Machil, constructed under MGN-REGA, and reviewed the ongoing flood-protection crate works aimed at safeguarding the area from flood-related damage. Earlier, on reaching Machil, the Additional Secretary chaired a meeting of officers and field functionaries of the Machil Block to review block wise progress on various ongoing development works, payments made to labourers and other progress indicators under VBGRAM G, PMAY-G and district Capex.

DC Kupwara reviews progress under HADP, JKCIP



KT News Desk

KUPWARA, SEPTEMBER 18: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, Friday chaired a meeting to review the functioning of Kisan Khidmat Ghars (KKGs) in the district and assess the progress achieved under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) and the Jammu and Kashmir Competitiveness Improvement Project (JKCIP).

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, reviewed the operational status of KKG centres, with particular focus on their onboarding with Common Service Centres (CSCs), capacity building of Krishi Udyamis (KUs), delivery of services and revenue generation.

A detailed assessment was also made of the district's performance against the prescribed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) under HADP and JKCIP. The review covered course completion by enrolled farmers, establishment of approved units, tracking of established units through the OTA application, utilisation of released funds, farmer and farm registration under KKG Level-2, completion of e-KYC under KKG Level-3, daily reporting by Krishi Udyamis, credit disbursement against sanctioned cases, sanctioning of credit applications,

JKCIP coverage in selected blocks and approvals under the project.

The Deputy Commissioner directed all concerned departments to adopt a coordinated and result-oriented approach to achieve the prescribed targets under each performance parameter. He instructed the officers to expedite farmer and farm registration, ensure the timely completion of e-KYC for all eligible beneficiaries, improve daily reporting compliance by Krishi Udyamis and strengthen credit linkages.

The meeting also reviewed the implementation status of various interventions being undertaken under the two flagship programmes. Stressing the importance of convergence among the implementing departments, the Deputy Commissioner directed the officers to ensure the timely execution of approved interventions, undertake regular field-level monitoring and maximise outreach so that the intended benefits reach the farming community in a transparent and time-bound manner.

The meeting was attended by the Chief Planning Officer, Lead District Manager, Chief Horticulture Officer, Chief Agriculture Officer, District Sheep Husbandry Officer, Assistant Director Fisheries and other concerned officers.

DC Budgam stresses speedy, quality execution of developmental projects in Chadoora

KT News Desk

BUDGAM, SEPTEMBER 18: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan, Friday conducted an extensive tour of Chadoora and reviewed various ongoing and proposed development projects.

Among other projects, the Deputy Commissioner inspected New Bus Stand, New Bus stand shopping complex, main bridge, new footbridge and planned Revenue Complex having SDM Office and Tehsil Office.

During inspection of New Bus Stand, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed the facilities available for the public. He also inspected the New Bus Stand Shopping Complex and reviewed the progress of the ongoing work.

During tour, the Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, also visited the Main Bridge and reviewed the repair works being carried out there. He also inspected the new footbridge and took stock of its progress. He directed the concerned departments to ensure timely completion and proper quality of works.

The Deputy Commissioner also inspected the site of the new planned Revenue Complex, which will house the SDM Office and Tehsil Office. He directed the concerned officers to take necessary steps for early execution of the project.

The Deputy Commissioner also took serious note of illegal mining in Nallah Doodhganga and directed the District Mineral Officer to intensify monitoring and take strict action against violations.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner interacted with local people and delegations and heard their issues and demands. He assured that genuine issues would be examined for necessary redressal.

He directed all concerned officers to closely monitor the works and ensure their timely completion.

The Deputy Commissioner was accompanied by SDM Chadoora, Joint Director Planning Budgam, Tehsildar, Executive Engineer R&B Division Chadoora, Executive Engineer Irrigation, ARTO Budgam, Executive Officer MC Chadoora and other concerned officers.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (R&B) DIVISION TANGMARG.

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER (CIVIL WORKS)

NIT No. 77/R&B of 2026-27

Dated:-18-09-2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, UT J&K, e-tenders (In single cover system) are invited on Percentage basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K Govt. CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:-

S. No	Name of Work	Adv. Cost (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (In Rupees)	Earnest money (In Rupees)	Time of completion	M.H of Account	Class of Contractor	Project Authority	Tender call
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Development of Playfield with Fencing, Filling, Leveling, Flood Lights, Changing Rooms and Washrooms at Block Lalpora.	137.04	2600/-	274080/-	180 days	U.T Capex 2026-27	AAY	District Youth Service and Sports Officer Baramulla	1 st

Position Of AAA:

Accorded

Position of TS:

Accorded

Position of funds:

Assured

1. The Bidding documents Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be viewed/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:-

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	18-09-2026
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	19-09-2026
3	Bid submission Start Date	19-09-2026
4	Bid Submission End Date	29-09-2026 4:00 PM
5	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	30-09-2026 11:00 AM

Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of Treasury Challan (Dated between bid submission start date and bid submission end date) with NIT No. , Serial No. / name of work to be deposited in M.H. 0059 in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Tangmarg (tender inviting authority)

3. All the bidders must upload Earnest money Deposit to 2% of advertised cost in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Tangmarg (tender receiving authority) (The Date of earnest money Deposit should be between the Bid Submission start date and Bid submission End date, otherwise bids shall be rejected).

4. The Successful bidder will have to provide performance security within 03 days @ 5% of contract value in the form of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Tangmarg (tender receiving authority) as per rule-171 (I) of GFR 2017. The earnest money Deposit @2% shall be released to the successful bidder only on receipt of Performance Security @ 5% of Contract value which shall be released after successful completion of DLP /maintenance period.

5. Laws Governing the Contract:-The contract shall be governed by Law of the land.

6. Court's Jurisdiction:-In case of a disputes/differences between contractor and Department the jurisdiction shall be J&K.

7. Time Extension:-

i. The work is to be completed within the time limit specified in the NIT and the time of completion will also increase / decrease in proportion with additional / deleted quantum of work depending upon the actual quantum of work.

ii. Request for extension of time shall be made by the contractor in writing not later than fifteen days of happening of the event causing delay. The contractor shall also indicate in such a request the period for which extension is desired.

iii. Abnormal /bad weather or Serious loss or damage by fire or Civil commotion, strike or lockout (other than among the labour engaged by the contractor) affecting any or the trades employed on the work, or Non availability of departmental stores. Any other cause which in the absolute discretion of the accepting authority is beyond the contractor's desire.

iv. On contractor's representation based on the grounds as detailed above the time for completion of the work may be extended by a period considered reasonable by the Department.

v. Extension of time shall be also admissible in the event of temporary suspension of work.

37. The tender / bid is liable rejection if it does not fulfill the requirements as laid down in NIT.

38. All other terms conditions are as per PWD Form 25(Double agreement Form), NIT, GFR 2017 & JK PWD Engineering Manual 2020.

39. Any Typographical error in units or items shall be corrected and paid as per SSR of 2022 or as per Technical sanction.

40. As per the Circular No. 01 (Adm) FD of 2025 Dated: 08-07-2025 issued by Finance Department of UT J&K "Every participating supplier/contractor to mandatorily disclose the bank account number which is linked with their GSTIN at the time of bid submission. No payments shall be released by the Government Department/Agency to any other bank account except the one linked with the GST registered number of the successful bidder".

No: Rsob/Qzd/26-27/3441-43
Dated: 16/09/26

DIPK-5864/26

DATED: 18-09-2026

Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Qazigund

No: R&B / Divn./ Tang/5295-5305
Dated: 18-09-2026

sdl/-
Draftsman

sdl/-
Technical Officer

DIPK-5871/26

DATED: 18-09-2026

Sdl/-
Executive Engineer
R&B Division Tangmarg.

Walnut farming profitable, faces productivity, labour challenges in Kashmir: Study

‘Orchards yielded gross returns of Rs 5.31 lakh per hectare’

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Sep 18 : A study has revealed that walnut cultivation in Kashmir can generate substantial returns for growers but remains highly dependent on labour and faces several productivity and market-related challenges.

Based on data collected from 240 walnut growers in four south Kashmir districts, examined the economics and profitability of walnut production during the agricultural season.

It found that walnut cultivation generated Rs 5.35 in returns for every rupee spent, indicating a cost-benefit ratio of 1:5.35.

For orchards with about 80 walnut trees per hectare, the researchers estimated production at 3,560 kg and the total cost of cultivation at Rs 83,825 per hectare.

The corresponding gross return was estimated at Rs 5.31 lakh per hectare, while the net return stood at about Rs 4.48 lakh, the study said.

However, labour emerged as the largest component of production costs, accounting for nearly 80 per cent of the total expenditure.

The researchers found that activities such as harvesting, picking



and guarding orchards required substantial labour inputs during the production cycle.

The study also found considerable variation in walnut prices, with

growers receiving between Rs 100 and Rs 165 per kg depending on factors such as shell hardness, kernel colour, taste and dryness.

Productivity was influenced by

several factors, including the use of farmyard manure and chemical fertilisers, labour availability, tree density, women's participation and farmers' access to agricultural

information, it said.

Despite the high economic returns, walnut growers reported a number of constraints, including inadequate access to extension services, credit facilities and technical training.

The researchers called for stronger agricultural extension programmes and better access to institutional credit and training to improve productivity and strengthen the walnut sector.

They also recommended greater dissemination of scientific information among growers to help them adopt improved cultivation practices.

The study was conducted in Anantnag, Pulwama, Kulgam and Shopian districts and was based on field data from the 2018-19 production period.

The researchers cautioned that improving productivity and addressing constraints faced by growers would be important for sustaining the economic potential of walnut cultivation in the region.

The findings provide an assessment of the economics of walnut production based on the study-period costs and returns and do not represent current 2026 market prices or farm incomes—(KNO)

LG Sinha meets CII delegation, discusses industry policy reforms, employment



KT News Desk

Srinagar Sep 18: A delegation from the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Northern Region, led by its Chairman Puneet Kaura, called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, on Friday.

The delegation, comprised of Iqram Ali Shafiee, Chairman, CII J&K UT Council; Sidhant Choudhary, Vice Chairman, CII J&K UT Council; Ms Rachna Jindal, Regional Director,

CII Northern Region, and Khurshid Dar, Director, CII J&K UT Council, shared CII's perspectives on strengthening industry participation in skill development initiatives and supporting measures to enhance employment opportunities and promote industrial development in the Union Territory.

They also discussed several important matters pertaining to industry policy reforms, and enhanced industry-government engagement.

J&K banking sector reviewed as RBI deputy governor calls for credit growth

KT News Desk

Srinagar Sep 18: Deputy Governor, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Rohit Jain, convened a meeting with the Zonal Heads of major banks operating in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir on Friday.

The Deputy Governor, in his opening remarks, highlighted the important role played by the banks in supporting the economic activity and strengthening the financial inclusion in J&K.

Rohit Jain emphasised the need for banks to maintain adequate banking infrastructure, improve credit delivery and ensure greater outreach of banking services to priority sectors, particularly to underserved sections. He also underscored the importance of coordinated efforts by the banks towards meeting the evolving credit requirements of the UT. He underlined that banks should remain responsive to customer needs in view of importance of customer services and grievance redress. He stressed on the need for greater digitalisation of banking

services while highlighting the growing concern around digital frauds.

The Deputy Governor also emphasised the need for banks to increase loan processing through Unified Lending Interface (ULI). He highlighted its potential to transform the credit delivery in a manner similar to the transformation brought about by UPI in digital payments.

Regional Director, RBI, Jammu presented a broad overview of the financial landscape of the UT of J&K, elucidating its economic potential across agriculture, MSMEs, tourism, handicrafts and services. Subsequently, the financial landscape of the UT of J&K, was presented by the Zonal Heads of major banks present in the region. It included banking network, Credit-Deposit ratio, credit flow and Priority Sector Lending besides the progress on onboarding of banks on the Unified Lending Interface (ULI), re-KYC coverage and settlement of unclaimed deposits including special initiatives undertaken by their respective banks for the UT of J&K.

Man found dead in Samba field



KNO CORRESPONDENT

Samba, Sep 18 : The body of a 29-year-old man was found in a field in Maharajpur village of Ramgarh area in Samba district on Friday, officials said.

Locals noticed the body lying in the field and informed the police.

He said a police team reached the spot and initiated an investigation into the incident. The deceased was identified as Vicky Choudhary (29), a resident of Maharajpur.

Meanwhile, police have taken up the investigation and further details are awaited—(KNO)

You're joining institution with proud legacy: GAD Secy to new JKP officers

Praises merit-based recruitment; calls for modern, professional, tech-enabled, citizen-centric policing

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Sep 18 : Commissioner/Secretary, General Administration Department (GAD), M Raju on Friday praised the Jammu and Kashmir Police for its "proud legacy", saying the newly appointed officers had both an opportunity and responsibility to contribute to its transformation into a modern, professional and citizen-centric force.

Addressing a function at Lok Bhavan Srinagar where Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha handed over appointment letters to 29 newly selected officers of the Jammu and Kashmir Police (Gazetted) Service, Raju said the officers were beginning a career marked by responsibility, discipline, courage and public service.

"You are joining an institution with a proud legacy. You now have the opportunity and the responsibility to



contribute to its continuing transformation into a modern, professional, technology-enabled and citizen-centric force," he said.

Raju said the appointment ceremony represented more than the formal conferment of appointment orders and reflected the administration's commitment to transparent governance, institutional integrity, merit-based recruitment and meaningful opportunities for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir.

"Today's ceremony

represents more than a formal conferment of appointment orders. It is a reflection of our continued commitment to institutional excellence, administrative efficiency and transparent public recruitment," he said.

The Commissioner/Secretary appreciated the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission (JKPSC) and all offices and institutions associated with the recruitment process for ensuring a rigorous and merit-based selection mechanism.

"I also place on record our appreciation for the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission and all offices and institutions associated with the recruitment process for ensuring a rigorous and merit-based selection mechanism," he said.

Raju said the government had, over the past few years, taken the initiative of referring vacancies for competitive

services to the JKPSC on a yearly basis to provide opportunities to the youth and bring greater efficiency and vibrancy to both the police and civil administration.

He said the responsibilities of modern law enforcement were rapidly evolving and the police were now required to respond to a wide range of challenges beyond conventional security threats. "Alongside the conventional challenges being faced, the Police Department today is required to respond to organised crime, economic offences, narco-terrorism, as well as the growing complexity of cyber-crime," Raju said.

"With the rapid expansion of digital governance and technology-enabled criminal activity, protecting citizens in cyberspace has also emerged as an important institutional priority," he added.

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

Protest held over lack of healthcare facilities at SDH Tral

Protesters allege shortage of doctors, specialists, essential staff

Jahangeer Ganaie

Pulwama, Sep 18: A protest was held in Tral on Friday morning against the alleged lack of adequate healthcare facilities and manpower at Sub-District Hospital (SDH) Tral, with protesters demanding immediate intervention by the concerned authorities to improve patient care and ensure accountability in the functioning of the hospital.

The protest was attended by people cutting across political affiliations and several residents. They carried placards and banners with messages such as "Healthcare for All, Justice for All" and "No

Politics Over People's Lives", while raising concerns over what they described as inadequate staffing, shortage of specialist services and deficiencies in hospital infrastructure and facilities.

Speaking during the protest, youth activist Junaid Mir questioned the present functioning of SDH Tral, alleging that the hospital was effectively providing services at the level of a Community Health Centre (CHC) despite being designated as a Sub-District Hospital.

He questioned the duty schedule and responsibilities of the Block Medical Officer (BMO), seeking greater accountability from the concerned authorities

regarding the day-to-day functioning and supervision of the health institution.

"We are not protesting against any individual. Our concern is the healthcare of the people of Tral. When a hospital is designated as an SDH, people naturally expect facilities and services accordingly. Patients should not have to travel outside the area for services that should be available here," Mir said.

Citizen Council Tral chairman Farooq Trali said healthcare facilities should not be viewed through political or constituency-based considerations, asserting that

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

Police recover 658 gold-like biscuits during naka checking in Qazigund

'3 persons apprehended; material found to be copper plated with gold colour'

Umair Gull Ganie

Qazigund, Sep 18 : Police on Friday said that it recovered 658 gold-like biscuits/coins during naka checking on the National Highway near Vessu, Qazigund in South Kashmir's Kulgam district.

A vehicle (No. MP09CS0451) was intercepted by the naka party during checking. "Three persons travelling in the vehicle were apprehended for questioning. During the search, 658 gold-like biscuits/coins, each weighing approximately 0.98 grams, were recovered from the possession of the occupants under suspicious circumstances. The material was seized for

examination and analysis," the officer said.

He said that on testing, the recovered material was found to be copper plates coated/plated with gold colour and not pure gold.

"In this connection, a preliminary inquiry has been initiated at Police Station Qazigund vide DD Report No. 16 dated 17/09/2026 and Order No. SDPO/Q/PE/8230 dated 18/09/2026, to ascertain the circumstances, source and intended use of the gold-plated copper material and the role of the persons involved," the officer said.

"Further investigation/inquiry is going on," he added—(KNO)

KU concludes national conference focusing on GI, tourism and destination branding

KT News Desk

Srinagar Sep 18: The Department of Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure Studies (DTHLS), University of Kashmir (KU), successfully concluded a two-day national conference on "From Heritage to Hospitality: Geographical Indications, Tourism and Destination Identity" at the Main Campus.

Organised in collaboration with Property Pro Legal and Hastin Research, the conference aimed to examine the role of Geographical Indications (GIs), traditional products and cultural heritage in strengthening tourism, supporting local livelihoods and shaping distinctive destination identities.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice-Chancellor KU Prof. Nilofer Khan said, "Our heritage and traditional products are not only part of our cultural identity but also have the potential to create opportunities for local communities and



strengthen sustainable tourism."

She emphasised the need for greater academic and industry engagement to understand how heritage resources and GI-tagged products can be effectively connected with tourism and local economic development.

Dean Academic Affairs KU, Prof. Shariefuddin Pirzada said that the conference provided an important platform for discussing the relationship between heritage, tourism and regional development.

Dean, School of Business Studies KU, Prof. Mushtaq A. Darzi, highlighted the economic and entrepreneurial dimensions of GI products and the need to connect traditional knowledge and local products with contemporary markets.

Sanjay Bafna, Collaborating Partner and Founder & Director, Property Pro Legal and Hastin Research, noted the importance of protecting, promoting and effectively communicating the identity and value of geographically

distinctive products.

Earlier, in his welcome address, Head, DTHLS KU, Dr. Reyaz Ahmad Qureshi, said that the conference sought to bring together academic, industry and field perspectives on the ways in which heritage and GI products can contribute to tourism development and destination identity. The two-day conference featured plenary sessions, panel discussions, technical sessions and research paper presentations covering various aspects of Geographical Indications, heritage tourism, destination branding, traditional products, community participation and sustainable tourism. It also included field visit tracks to the Pampore Saffron Fields, Kanihama Village for Kani Shawl heritage, the Downtown Craft Heritage Trail and Dal Lake, allowing participants to engage directly with the region's cultural and tourism resources.

Dr. Shah Nawaz Ahmad Dar, faculty, DTHLS KU, proposed the formal vote of thanks.

EDITORIAL

Time To Balance Development With Environmental Conservation

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha's call to redefine development models is a timely intervention that deserves serious attention from policymakers, scientists, and citizens alike. Climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution are not separate crises moving on parallel tracks; they are three faces of a deeper, interconnected problem. The Earth's natural systems are finite and deeply linked.

Population growth, economic expansion, and the ever-increasing demand for food, energy, water, and other resources are equally interconnected. Yet government departments continue to address water, forests, and climate in isolation. This fragmented approach must end. The challenges of our time demand integrated solutions, not departmental silos. Equally urgent is the need to bridge the gap between

science and policy. There is no shortage of data or technological tools. What is missing is the institutional will to translate scientific knowledge into timely action. The sooner this distance is bridged, the sooner we can confront the climate crisis with the urgency it demands. Scientists must be encouraged to think beyond disciplinary boundaries, and policymakers must be trained to understand the language

of science and act on it. Development must establish a relationship in which use is accompanied by responsibility, progress by conservation, and rights by duties. The destruction of infrastructure and development assets by natural disasters in Jammu and Kashmir and across India is a stark reminder that conventional development approaches are no longer viable. If India is to become a developed nation,

we must redefine what development means. Climate-resilient and inclusive models are not optional; they are essential. The real work begins now. The dialogue must reach universities, institutions, and policymaking processes. It must ultimately reach the people. Only then can we hope to balance development with environmental conservation and build a future that is both prosperous and sustainable.

India Building Semiconductor Future Emerging Capabilities Across Design, Manufacturing, Packaging, Materials And Talent

Press Information Bureau

Building on the successful implementation of Semicon 1.0, the Union Cabinet approved Semicon 2.0 on 15 July 2026 with an outlay of Rs 1,27,500 crore. While the first phase laid the foundation for India's semiconductor manufacturing ecosystem, Semicon 2.0 advances the next phase through six strategic pillars. These include research and development, chip design, machines and materials, setting up more fabs, talent development, and further strengthening the ATMP/OSAT industry. It will position India as a trusted global semiconductor hub and advance the vision of Viksit Bharat.

Setting the Context
Semiconductors are the building blocks of modern technology and a foundation of economic power. They power Artificial Intelligence (AI), telecommunications, electric mobility, defence and advanced manufacturing. Technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), 5G/6G, data centres and autonomous vehicles are further driving chip demand. Their availability and technological capabilities will increasingly shape innovation, competitiveness and national technological strength.

This growing importance is reflected in the rapid expansion of the global semiconductor market. The global semiconductor market grew at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.5 per cent between 2014 and 2024. It is projected to grow at 8.5 per cent over the next 5-10 years. However, recent disruptions have exposed vulnerabilities in the interconnected global semiconductor value chain. Geopolitical tensions have further highlighted the risks of supply dependence. Major economies are therefore strengthening domestic semiconductor capabilities to secure their technological and economic interests.

India is also witnessing rapidly rising semiconductor demand. It is projected to reach USD 110 billion by FY2030 and exceed USD 200 billion by FY2035, while domestic manufacturing remains at a nascent stage. India spent almost USD 150 billion on semiconductor product imports during FY17-FY25. Imports grew at a CAGR of 23 per cent during this period. If this trend continues, annual imports could reach USD 240 billion by 2035. Building a comprehensive semiconductor ecosystem is therefore an urgent national priority. The Government of India is strengthening this ecosystem to advance self-reliance, security, skills and technological competitiveness.

SEMICON 2026: Catalyzing India's Semiconductor Ecosystem

Semiconductors form the core of modern electronic systems. Building a strong semiconductor ecosystem is therefore essential for technological resilience, economic security and national self-reliance. Recognising this strategic importance, the Government of India is strengthening the semiconductor ecosystem through policy support, infrastructure and global partnerships. In this endeavour, SEMICON India 2026, themed "Silicon to Systems: Building the Ecosystem," was inaugurated by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at Yashobhoomi, New Delhi, on 17 September 2026. Being held from 17 to 19 September 2026, the SEMICON 2026 brings together global industry leaders, policymakers, investors, academia and start-ups. It provides a platform to advance India's semiconductor ambitions and strengthen the ecosystem across the entire value chain. Click To Explore Agenda

What is a Semiconductor?

A semiconductor is a material whose electrical conductivity can be controlled. Conductors such as copper allow current to flow easily, while insulators strongly resist it. Semiconductor materials can be engineered to switch, amplify, sense or control electrical signals. A transistor is a microscopic electronic switch. Modern integrated circuits place millions or billions of transistors and other components on a small chip. Their coordinated switching makes computing,



communications, sensing, memory and power management possible.

Most modern electronic devices depend on semiconductors. Smartphones, computers, medical equipment, automobiles, defence systems, satellites and data centres use semiconductor-based components. In simple terms, semiconductors are the building blocks of modern electronics.

From Silicon to a Semiconductor Chip
Silicon is the most widely used semiconductor material. It is obtained from silica, which occurs abundantly in sand. Chip manufacturing begins with highly purified silicon, which is formed into cylindrical ingots. These ingots are sliced into thin wafers and polished. Inside fabrication plants, wafers undergo hundreds of carefully controlled processes. These include deposition, photolithography, etching and ion implantation.

Together, these processes create the intricate structures that form billions of transistors and other components. During photolithography, patterns are transferred onto the wafer using light. These patterns define structures that ultimately form transistors, interconnects and other parts of a chip. Transistors are the microscopic electronic switches on the chip that control the flow of electrical current. The process is repeated across multiple layers to build complex integrated circuits.

Finished semiconductor devices then undergo Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging (ATMP) or Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT) processes. Packaging protects the chip and enables it to connect with other electronic components. Testing ensures that the finished devices meet required performance and quality standards.

Understanding Semiconductor Node

A semiconductor node identifies a generation of manufacturing technology. Historically, labels such as 90 nm, 45 nm and 28 nm tracked particular physical dimensions. Today, node names function mainly as shorthand for a process generation. A smaller node can enable higher transistor density, better performance or lower energy use, but the result also depends on circuit design, materials, packaging and the intended application. Advanced nodes attract attention because they support high-performance computing and leading-edge processors. Mature nodes remain essential for automobiles, industrial electronics, telecommunications, power systems and many consumer products. India is now building capabilities that extend from established nodes towards more advanced semiconductor technologies.

Why Semiconductors: A Strategic Perspective
Semiconductors have emerged as a

strategic resource for economic growth, technological leadership and national security. Today, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, China and the United States dominate global semiconductor manufacturing. Taiwan alone accounts for over 60% of global chip production and nearly 90% of advanced chips. This concentration has highlighted the need for secure, diversified and resilient semiconductor supply chains. For India, domestic semiconductor capabilities are more than an industrial opportunity. They are essential for reducing import dependence, strengthening national security and creating high-value employment. They can also deepen technological self-reliance and reduce vulnerabilities across strategic sectors. No single country controls the complete semiconductor value chain. Different economies lead in chip design, fabrication, equipment, materials, memory and packaging. This specialisation has improved efficiency, but it also creates concentration risk. India's policy therefore focuses on trusted partnerships alongside stronger domestic capacity.

Semiconductors Power India's Strategic Missions

Semiconductor Laboratory (SCL), Mohali develops flight-grade chips for satellites and launch vehicles, designed to withstand extreme space conditions.

Chandrayaan-3's lander carried an Indian-made camera chip, supporting the lander's imaging systems.

SCL's Vikram processor is used in satellite launch vehicles and rockets.

Aditya-L1, India's mission to study the Sun, uses radiation-hardened ADC chips developed by SCL.

India's Emerging Semiconductor Ecosystem

India's semiconductor journey has evolved from building strategic capabilities to creating a broader domestic ecosystem. Early institutions such as the Semiconductor Laboratory (SCL) laid the groundwork, while recent policy interventions have accelerated investment, innovation and talent development. These efforts are positioning India to participate across the semiconductor value chain.

Semicon 1.0: Laying the foundation

The Government of India approved Semicon 1.0 in December 2021, with an outlay of 76,000 crore. It aimed to establish a domestic semiconductor and display manufacturing ecosystem. The programme introduced dedicated Schemes for setting up Semiconductor Fabs and Display Fabs. It also introduced the Scheme for setting up Compound Semiconductors, Silicon Photonics, Sensors and Semiconductor ATMP/OSAT facilities. Additionally, the Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme strengthened India's semiconductor design capabilities. Together, these schemes

established the foundation across chip design, fabrication, packaging and related technologies.

Semicon 1.0: Key Achievements

Twelve semiconductor manufacturing units approved, carrying cumulative investment of over Rs 1.64 lakh crore.

These include one silicon fab, one silicon carbide fab, one Gallium Nitride Micro LED Display Fab and nine ATMP/OSAT units.

Units are located in Gujarat, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh. Five units have commenced commercial production.

Twenty-four chip design projects approved, with a total value of about Rs 900 crore.

More than 1 lakh engineers from 500 organizations across the country, including 400 academic institutions and 100 start-ups have been provided access to advanced chip-design tools.

Together, our organizations have developed more than 300 chip designs.

India has established semiconductor cooperation with partners including the United States, Japan, the European Union, Singapore and the Netherlands.

India signed a Joint Declaration of Intent on an India-Germany Semiconductor Ecosystem Partnership during the German Chancellor's visit from 12 to 13 January 2026, and joined Pax Silica at the India AI Impact Summit in February 2026.

India hosts about 7% of the world's Global Capability Centres (GCCs) of Semiconductor domain and employs nearly 20% of the global semiconductor chip design workforce.

Semicon 2.0: Building the Complete Ecosystem

Building on the foundation laid by Semicon 1.0, the Government of India approved Semicon 2.0 in July 2026 with a total outlay of 1,27,500 crore. The programme seeks to provide sustained and long-term support to India's semiconductor sector. It aims to deepen the capabilities created under Semicon 1.0 and accelerate the growth of a globally competitive semiconductor ecosystem. Semicon 1.0 concentrated mainly on fabs and ATMP/OSAT plants. Semicon 2.0 adds machines and materials, design, research and talent to the mission. Together, the two phases span the chain from raw materials to finished chips.

Semicon 2.0 rests on six pillars: design, machines and materials, setting up new fabs, further advanced packaging, research and talent development. Its purpose is to build the complete chip value chain within the country, and not merely its closing stages. This effort carries India towards supply chain resilience, strategic autonomy and high-value employment in a technology that now underpins every modern industry. Key Supporting Policy Ecosystem

India's semiconductor ambitions are supported by a progressive policy ecosystem spanning manufacturing, infrastructure, investment, research and talent development. These measures have steadily strengthened the electronics value chain and created a foundation for semiconductor self-reliance.

National Policy on Electronics (NPE) 2019 – Established the overarching framework for Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM), including core components such as chipsets.

Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electronic Components and Semiconductors (SPECS) (2020) – Provides capital expenditure linked incentive for domestic manufacturing of components, sub-assemblies and semiconductors in order to strengthen the electronics manufacturing ecosystem in the country

Modified Electronics Manufacturing Clusters Scheme (EMC 2.0) (2020) – Supports world-class infrastructure, common facilities and plug-and-play facilities for electronics manufacturing.

Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing (2020) – Provides production link incentive to boost domestic manufacturing and attract large investments in mobile phones and components manufacturing.

Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme 2.0 for Information Technology (IT) Hardware (2023) – To boost domestic manufacturing of IT Hardware and attract large investments in its value chain. It promotes domestic manufacturing of laptops, tablets, All-in-One Personal Computers and servers.

Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme (2025) – With an enhanced outlay of 40,000 crore (Budget 2026-27), to develop robust component manufacturing ecosystem by attracting investments across the value chain, leading to increase in Domestic Value Addition (DVA).

Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (2026) – Aims to increase global competitiveness by further enhancing the scale, deepening the mobile manufacturing supply chain through higher domestic value addition (DVA) and stronger domestic manufacturing capabilities, and supporting Indian mobile brands.

Research, Development and Innovation Scheme – Supports eligible research projects under Semicon 2.0 and strengthens domestic semiconductor innovation.

100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Policy for Electronics Manufacturing – Facilitates global investment and technology partnerships while integrating India with global electronics and semiconductor value chains.

These initiatives are creating the industrial base, market demand and investment environment needed for a resilient semiconductor ecosystem. They complement flagship semiconductor initiatives and advance India's goal of becoming a global electronics and semiconductor hub.

Towards an Advanced & Self-Reliant India
India's semiconductor story has advanced rapidly in a short period. In 2021, the country had no commercial chip plant. By 2026, twelve units stand approved, and five are in production. Students across hundreds of colleges are now designing chips. Semicon 2.0 is the natural next chapter in this account. It does not begin afresh. It takes a functioning ecosystem and completes it. Machines, materials, design, research and talent now join fabs and packaging. The road ahead is demanding. Chip manufacturing ranks among the most complex industries in the world. It requires patience, precision and steady policy support. Semicon 2.0 provides that support for the long term. For citizens, the gain will be quiet but real. Devices will be manufactured more fully within India. Critical systems will depend less upon distant supply chains. Young engineers will find high-value work closer to home. A small chip carries a large promise. India has resolved to build it at home.

The views expressed by contributors on this page are their own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of the newspaper

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73rd BoM Meeting

SKUAST-K sets sights on global recognition after achieving national goals: VC Prof Nazir Ahmad Ganai

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 18: Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-K) held its 73rd Meeting of the Board of Management (BoM) at the VC Secretariat, SKUAST-K, with Vice-Chancellor Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai chairing the meeting.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Prof. B.N. Tripathi, Vice-Chancellor, SKUAST-Jammu; Dr. Rajbir Singh, Deputy Director General, Agricultural Extension, ICAR; Dr. Cherukamulli Srinivasa Rao, Director, ICAR-IARI; representatives from Director General, Codes; Special Secretary, Agriculture Production; Special Secretary, Planning and Monitoring; Director Extension, SKUAST-K; Dean, Faculty of Forestry; officers of the university; and a progressive farmer, among others.

During the meeting, Vice-Chancellor Prof. Nazir Ahmad



Ganai presented the University's progress report, outlining institutional developments and the roadmap for its next phase of transformation.

In his address, Prof. Ganai said SKUAST-K has achieved the goal set in 2022 of moving from 'Local to National' and is now repositioning its goalpost from 'National to Global'. He said the next phase of transformation would focus on six key pillars: student diversity, faculty diversity, curriculum transformation, research and innovation, world-class infrastructure, and financial sustainability.

Outlining the University's 2030 roadmap, he identified targets including raising international student enrolment to 5 percent and the share of students from other States and Union Territories to 35 percent. He also set targets of expanding the University's intellectual property rights (IPR) portfolio to over 250, taking its H-index to 250-plus, and attracting more than 50 faculty members from outside the Union Territory, including Professors of Practice and Adjunct Faculty, to strengthen faculty diversity.

Among the major decisions, the Board approved the establishment of the Centre for Faculty Training and Pedagogy Research (CFTPR) under the Centre for Quality Education, along with the Centre for Quality Plant Material Discipline and Certification (CQPMDC).

As part of academic restructuring, the Board approved the renaming of several divisions. The Division of Floriculture and Landscaping was renamed the Division of Floriculture,

Ornamental Breeding and Landscaping Innovation. The Division of Fruit Sciences was renamed the Division of Fruit Breeding, Technology and Innovation, while the Division of Vegetable Sciences was renamed the Division of Vegetable Breeding, Technology and Innovation.

On the recommendations of the Selection Committee, the Board approved the appointment of Deans and Directors in various academic and administrative positions, including Education, Research, Planning and Monitoring, Students Welfare, Faculty of Agriculture, Horticulture, Veterinary Sciences and Fisheries. The Board also approved direct appointments of Associate Professors and Professors across 14 departments, along with Career Advancement Scheme (CAS) promotions of Associate Professors and Professors in 31 disciplines.

The Board also approved select recommendations of the Academic Council and considered matters related to statutory amendments.

Strengthening Skill Development

Cluster University Srinagar, Rapture Biotech join hands



KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 18: Cluster University of Srinagar signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Rapture Biotech to strengthen industry-academia linkages across biotechnology and allied life sciences.

The agreement, as per an official statement, will create pathways for student skill development, research, training and career advancement. Both institutions will align academic learning with current industry requirements. The initiative supports employability, innovation and applied research within the region.

The MoU was signed on 14 September 2026 at Cluster University of Srinagar. Registrar Prof (Dr) Wilayat Hussain Rizvi in presence of Vice Chancellor, Prof Mohammed Mobin, signed for the university and Ambika Slathia, Director of Rapture Biotech, signed

for the company. Controller Examinations, Prof Khurshid Ahmad Mir and PS to Vice Chancellor, Dr. Ubaid Sidique, besides Senior representatives from both organisations witnessed the signing ceremony.

The agreement covers biotechnology, botany, chemistry, biochemistry, microbiology, geography, geology, pharmaceutical chemistry and zoology. It also includes other life-science disciplines. Activities will include student and faculty exchanges, joint academic initiatives and hands-on laboratory training.

Project and dissertation support will be extended to undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral students. Internships, workshops and technical skill exchange will be delivered through structured programmes. Placement support, startup incubation and mentorship will be offered to aspiring student entrepreneurs.

Dr Ashfaq Ahmad Kailam assumes Charge as Director AHD Kashmir

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 18: Dr. Ashfaq Ahmad Kailam Friday officially assumed charge as the Director of Animal Husbandry Department (AHD), Kashmir, at the departmental headquarters GawKadal, Srinagar. Upon his arrival at the Directorate, Dr.Kailam was warmly received by the senior officers, technical experts, and administrative staff from across the division. The officers extended their congratulations and expressed full cooperation in driving the department's developmental goals forward.

Immediately after taking over the operational responsibilities, the incoming Director, as per an official statement, chaired an introductory meeting with key departmental heads. During the interaction, Dr.Kailam outlined his core priorities including strengthening healthcare infrastructure, administrative efficiency, besides farmer welfare and livestock productivity. Dr. Kailam emphasized team collaboration, urging all staff members to work with dedication, transparency, and accountability to strengthen the rural economy dependent on animal husbandry.

Capacity Development Workshop on accounting issues, pension Adalat held at GDC Uri



KT News Desk

BARAMULLA, SEPTEMBER 18: A Capacity Development Workshop on accounting-related issues and Pension Adalat was Friday organised at Government Degree College (GDC) Uri to create awareness among DDOs, Treasury Officers, pensioners and other stakeholders regarding accounting procedures and pension-related matters.

The workshop, as per an official statement, was presided over by Principal Accountant General (A&E), Jammu & Kashmir, Jay Prakash Narayan Singh; Deputy Accountant General (Pension), Mukesh Kumar Bramhane; Sub-Divisional Magistrate Uri, Prince Kumar; Principal Government Degree College Uri, Prof. Ab. Majeed Chalkoo; District Treasury Officer, Parvaiz Ahmad Sheikh, and Accounts Officer to DC Office Baramulla, Ilka

Hassan, besides DDOs, pensioners and other participants, attended the programme.

The workshop focused on strengthening the quality of accounts being rendered to the Accountant General's office and ensuring speedy disposal of pension and family pension cases.

As part of the Pension Adalat, pensioners were provided an opportunity for one-on-one interaction with the concerned officers, enabling them to present their individual pension-related grievances and seek clarification on various issues. The officers heard their concerns and provided necessary guidance for timely resolution.

The programme also facilitated interaction between DDOs, Treasury Officers and other stakeholders on accounting-related issues, with emphasis on smooth and timely processing of pension and family pension cases.

Udhampur hosting 21.5-km half marathon on September 27

KT News Desk

UDHAMPUR, SEPTEMBER 18: District Administration Udhampur is hosting 21.5 Km half marathon- UDHM 2026 on September 27, 2026.

For its smooth and successful conduct, Additional Deputy Commissioner Prem Singh Friday convened a meeting of officers from the line departments to review and finalize the arrangements.

Threadbare discussions were held on various aspects of the preparations, including security, sanitation, healthcare, traffic management, drinking water supply and route management.

The ADC emphasized the importance of seamless coordination and close collaboration among all concerned



departments to complete necessary arrangements well in advance.

Executive Engineer Jal Shakti Department was directed to make available adequate drinking water supply along the marathon route. The Chief Executive Officer Municipal Council was asked to deploy civic workers to carry out proper cleanliness and sanitation along the

entire marathon route, while the Chief Medical Officer was asked to deploy a team of doctors along with an ambulance to provide first aid and immediate medical assistance in case of medical emergency.

District and Traffic Police were directed to deploy adequate personnel to ensure foolproof security and smooth regulation of traffic during the event.

Swachhata Hi Seva campaign launched in Samba



KT News Desk

SAMBA, SEPTEMBER 18: The fortnightly Swachhata Hi Seva campaign was launched in District Samba with a renewed focus on cleanliness, sanitation and active public participation.

The launch programme was organised by Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner Ayushi Sudan. ADDC Champa Devi chaired the event attended by ACP Rafiq Ahmed Jaral; PO ICDS, District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO) and all Block Development Officers (BDOs) of District Samba.

On the occasion, participants were sensitised to the importance of cleanliness, sanitation and hygienic surroundings. A detailed PowerPoint presentation was also delivered, highlighting the objectives of the Swachhata Hi Seva campaign and outlining the key activities and events scheduled during the campaign period.

As part of the campaign, the ADDC flagged off a Swachhata Van to undertake awareness activities across both rural and urban areas, encouraging citizens to adopt responsible sanitation practices and actively participate in the Swachhata Hi Seva initiative.

Census-2027

ADC flags off Van to generate public awareness about population enumeration

KT News Desk

UDHAMPUR, SEPTEMBER 18: District Census Officer (Additional Deputy Commissioner) Prem Singh

Friday flagged off a publicity awareness Van to generate awareness among the general public regarding the Phase-II Population Enumeration of Census-2027 in the district.

The LED mounted Publicity Van will disseminate information regarding the Census-2027 exercise and encourage maximum public participation in the Population

Enumeration being conducted in different Charges of the district. The public will be sensitized about the importance of providing complete and accurate information during

Population Enumeration. Additional District Census Officer DSEO Darshan Kumar and District Coordinator for Census 2027, Ajit Raj were present on the occasion.

One District One Product

DC Poonch reviews implementation of initiative

KT News Desk

POONCH, SEPTEMBER 18: Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Ashok Kumar Sharma, Friday chaired a meeting to review the implementation of the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative in District Poonch.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Tahir Mustafa Malik; General Manager DIC Naheem Un Nissa Bhatti and district officers from District Industries Centre, Agriculture, Horticulture, Handicrafts/Handloom, Fisheries, Employment, J&K Bank, SICOP, NRLM and other concerned departments.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on promoting Rajma as the identified ODOP product of the District Poonch, with particular focus on strengthening its cultivation, production, processing, branding, packaging and market linkages.

The meeting also discussed the potential of Rajma cultivation in various areas of the district, particularly Mandi, Loran, Sankot, Buffliaz and other Rajma-producing pockets, with emphasis on identifying local production clusters and improving the livelihood opportunities of farmers associated with the crop.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned officers to work towards developing a comprehensive roadmap for strengthening the Rajma value chain, from production to processing and marketing, so that the unique agricultural produce of Poonch gains wider recognition and provides enhanced economic benefits to local farmers and entrepreneurs.

Youth empowerment programme implementation reviewed in Ramban

KT News Desk

RAMBAN, SEPTEMBER 18: Additional Deputy Commissioner Ramban Varunjeet Singh Charak Friday chaired a meeting to review the implementation of the Youth Empowerment Programme (YEP) in the district. He is the Chairperson of the District Level Committee for the Program.

The programme envisages a comprehensive framework for empowering youth in the age group of 15 to 35 years by bringing the services and initiatives of more than 18 Government departments onto a single platform. It seeks to ensure convergence, transparency, efficiency and targeted outreach through coordinated youth-centric interventions.

The meeting was attended by the Chief Planning Officer, General Manager District Industries Centre, Chief Agriculture Officer, District Social Welfare Officer, Assistant Labour Commissioner, Tehsildar

Headquarters, Principal Government Polytechnic, Block development Officers, besides officers and officials of concerned departments.

The ADC directed the stakeholder departments including Education, Higher Education, Technical Education, Youth Services & Sports and other departments, to upload their respective action plans on the portal and ensure registration of eligible youth within the prescribed timeline.

"Engagement plans shall focus on sports, entrepreneurship in agriculture and allied sectors, skill development, employment generation, volunteerism and social development, the ADC stressed.

The Assistant Director Employment, the Nodal Officer for Youth Engagement was asked to personally monitor the progress of all stakeholder departments, ensure achievement of targets and facilitate strategic interventions for effective youth participation.

Jammu Expo 2026 commences at Gole Market-Gandhi Nagar

KT News Desk

JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 18: Jammu Expo 2026 - A Celebration of Craft, Culture & Cuisine commenced Friday at Gole Market, Gandhi Nagar, Jammu, providing a vibrant platform to local entrepreneurs, artisans, MSMEs, women-led enterprises, startups and businesses to showcase their products and connect directly with consumers and wider markets.

The three-day exhibition, organised by the Jammu & Kashmir Trade Promotion Organisation (JKTPO), under the aegis of the Department of Industries & Commerce, Government of Jammu & Kashmir will continue till September 20, 2026.



The first edition of Jammu Expo provides a vibrant platform for local entrepreneurs, artisans, MSMEs, women-led enterprises, startups and businesses to showcase their products, engage directly with consumers and explore new market opportunities. The Expo is

being organized under the tagline "Discover Local, Experience Dogri Cuisine, Connect with Markets"-highlighting the rich cultural heritage, local products and entrepreneurial potential of Jammu.

The Jammu Expo follows the recently concluded Kashmir Expo 2026, organised by JKTPO at Zabarwan Park, Srinagar, from September 11 - 13, which brought together artisans, entrepreneurs, businesses and other stakeholders to showcase Kashmir's products, craftsmanship and cultural heritage. Together, the two initiatives reflect JKTPO's efforts to create regular, market-oriented platforms across Jammu

and Kashmir for promoting local enterprises and connecting them with consumers and wider markets.

A key attraction of the Expo is the dedicated "Taste of Jammu" Food Corner, showcasing traditional and popular local cuisines, snacks, beverages and value-added food products. Cultural Evenings featuring local cultural performances will further enhance the visitor experience and celebrate Jammu's rich cultural heritage.

The exhibition also provides dedicated space for ODOP and local-product showcases, participation by rural women Self-Help Groups, startups and emerging enterprises, along with branded exhibition stalls and opportunities for direct consumer interaction, networking and market exposure.

The event took off in presence of Managing Director JKTPO Sudershan Kumar; Director Handicrafts and Handloom Jammu Mr. Mohammad Nazir Sheikh; Managing Director, J&K Handicrafts and Handloom Corporation Pradeep Singh Manhas.

The Managing Director informed that the Jammu Expo has been designed as a consumer-oriented and experience-driven platform combining enterprise promotion with Jammu's cultural and culinary heritage. "JKTPO remains committed to organising regular editions of such exhibitions across Jammu and Kashmir to strengthen market linkages, promote local brands and provide our entrepreneurs, artisans and emerging enterprises greater opportunities to connect with consumers, buyers and markets," he add.,

Sakeena Itoo reviews HRM issues in School Education Dept

‘21,323 seniority cases finalised; 869 placements made on higher posts; recruitment, promotions, regularisation reviewed’

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Sep 18: Minister for Education, Social Welfare, Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo on Friday reviewed the overall status of Human Resource Management (HRM) matters in the School Education Department, with particular focus on seniority finalisation, promotions, placements against higher posts, regularisation, recruitment and revision of service rules.

Chairing a high-level meeting at the Civil Secretariat here, the Minister took detailed stock of the progress achieved in disposal of HRM-related cases and directed the senior officers to maintain focused attention on all pending matters. She called for time-bound action, effective monitoring and close coordination among all concerned authorities to ensure that eligible



employees do not face avoidable delays in service-related matters.

Sakeena Itoo stressed that an efficient and transparent HR management system is fundamental to the smooth functioning of the School Education Department and has a direct bearing on the academic and administrative efficiency of educational institutions. She directed the officers to ensure

that all cases relating to seniority, promotion, regularisation and recruitment are processed strictly in accordance with the applicable rules and established procedures.

The Minister further called for expediting all pending cases while maintaining transparency and procedural fairness. She directed the officers to prepare clear timelines for disposal of the remaining cases and ensure

regular monitoring at the appropriate level so that bottlenecks, wherever identified, are addressed promptly.

The meeting was attended by senior officers of the School Education Department, including Directors of School Education Jammu and Kashmir, Special Secretary and Additional Secretary. Officers stationed outside Srinagar participated in the meeting through virtual mode.

During the detailed review, the Minister was apprised of the significant progress achieved in finalisation of seniority lists. It was informed that final seniority lists of 21,323 PG Masters/PG Teachers across 32 disciplines have been issued during the last one year. Seniority lists pertaining to four remaining disciplines are under formulation. Besides, the final seniority list of 3,509 Headmasters/equivalent posts has also been issued.

Sports Minister calls for sustained push to football talent in J&K

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Sep 18: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs (FS&CA), Information Technology (IT), Youth Services & Sports, and Science & Technology, Satish Sharma on Friday attended the concluding league-stage match of the Khyber Cement Kashmir Super League 2026, powered by Athwas Retail and Athwas Hyundai, and reiterated the government's commitment to providing Jammu & Kashmir's young sporting talent with greater opportunities to compete, excel and build careers in sports.

The Minister was the Chief Guest at the final league-stage fixture between Swift Strikers Rainawari FC and Sanctorum North United FC, witnessing an impressive display of football. Swift Strikers Rainawari FC registered a comprehensive 6-0 victory, thereby securing the fourth and final berth in the play-offs.

With the completion of the league stage, Athwas India XI emerged as the league winners, while the successful teams now advance to the play-off stage to compete for the

coveted championship title.

During the event, Satish Sharma interacted with players, team officials and organisers and appreciated their efforts in creating a competitive platform for footballers from Jammu & Kashmir. He said that leagues such as the Kashmir Super League are important in providing young players with sustained match exposure and an opportunity to demonstrate their skills in a competitive environment.

The Minister said that Jammu & Kashmir possesses considerable sporting talent and that the focus of the Youth Services & Sports Department is increasingly on identifying talent at the grassroots level, providing regular competitive exposure and creating pathways for promising sportspersons to progress to higher levels.

He stressed that sporting development cannot be confined to infrastructure alone and must also include regular tournaments, professional coaching, quality competition, talent identification and opportunities for players to gain experience.

Satish Sharma said that football enjoys a particularly strong following among the youth of Jammu & Kashmir, and tournaments of this nature can play an important role in converting that enthusiasm into structured sporting participation and competitive achievement.

He appreciated the participation of local players in the league and said that giving them opportunities to compete before home crowds can contribute significantly to their confidence and development. He also underscored the importance of encouraging youngsters to take up sports as a disciplined pursuit and, wherever their talent permits, as a potential career.

The Minister also acknowledged the contribution of coaches, referees, technical officials, team managements, organisers, sponsors and football supporters towards making the tournament successful. He said that a vibrant sporting ecosystem requires the collective participation of government institutions, sporting bodies, private partners, coaches, athletes and the community.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Jobs now come

the faith of the whole of Jammu and Kashmir” and represented a commitment towards safeguarding the security, dignity and future of the people.

He said the appointment letters were not merely government documents but embodied the trust of the people and marked the beginning of a new journey of service.

“I do not consider it just an appointment letter, but I see it as an invitation to service. This invitation is a call to accept the responsibility of the security of Jammu and Kashmir. It is also a promise that their security, their honour and their future will be in a position of honesty and duty,” he said.

LG Sinha reminded them that receiving the appointment letter was “not the end of your journey” but the beginning of a new one, where their responsibility would be to protect citizens, serve the people and uphold the rule of law.

“You are about to embark on a new journey. Now you have to enter that struggle, whose purpose is not to achieve success for yourself, but to fulfil the responsibility of protecting others, to serve the people and to protect the rule of law in Jammu and Kashmir,” LG Sinha said.

“UNIFORM SYMBOL OF SERVICE, NOT POWER”

LG Sinha told the officers that their responsibility after training would be more than a conventional career and would constitute a mission of public service.

He said their training at the Sher-i-Kashmir Police Academy (SKPA), Udhampur, would expose them to the discipline, hard work and leadership required to discharge their responsibilities. “The badge on your uniform is not a symbol of power on the people of Jammu and Kashmir, but a symbol of the service and responsibility of the people,” he said.

The Lieutenant Governor said the officers, after completing their training, would have to act as a protective shield between terrorist forces and ordinary citizens.

“When you wear the khaki uniform, you will become a strong wall between the terrorist forces, terrorist organisations and ordinary citizens. You will protect the dreams of every citizen, and this is not a small responsibility,” he said.

“I believe that protecting every citizen is one of the biggest responsibilities that any democracy can entrust to its officers. My expectation of you is that you will ensure a fear-free environment for every citizen,” LG Sinha added.

FLAGS CHANGING SECURITY CHALLENGES

The Lieutenant Governor said the security challenges confronting Jammu and Kashmir were evolving, with terrorism no longer confined to traditional methods. “Today's Jammu and Kashmir is facing such challenges that the police officers of a decade ago may not have been able to imagine,” he said.

“The form of terrorism is changing and the war is not only being fought with traditional weapons. The virtual world has faced many challenges. Radicalisation is also leaving a strong and deep impact,” LG Sinha said.

He said terror financing methods had also changed, with cryptocurrencies, money laundering and other emerging mechanisms creating new challenges for security agencies.

“The means of financing for terrorism have also changed. Instead of the traditional methods, cryptocurrencies, money laundering and these new

methods have emerged,” he said.

LG Sinha said the newly inducted officers would consequently have an important role in the security of Jammu and Kashmir as well as national security.

‘RESPONSIBILITIES NOT LIMITED TO FIGHTING TERRORISM ONLY’

The Lieutenant Governor stressed that the officers’ responsibilities would extend beyond counter-terrorism and include upholding the law, maintaining social harmony and protecting citizens’ rights.

“Always keep in mind that your responsibility is not limited to fighting terrorism. You have to keep the law in place. You have to establish the rule of law. You have to establish social harmony. And you have to play a very important role in protecting the rights of every citizen,” he said.

LG Sinha said the real test of democracy was its ability to protect its weakest citizens and urged the officers to combine authority with compassion. “The real condition of democracy is that it ensures the protection of its weakest citizen and its prosperity. After training, you will have power and you will have to add the values of compassion to that power so that there is human compassion in all your actions,” he said.

Highlighting the ethos of the J&K Police, he said its personnel had demonstrated duty, dedication and sacrifice over decades and urged the new officers to learn from their seniors.

He also reminded them of the force's guiding principle: “Do not touch the innocent and do not leave the culprit.”

‘CHOOSE INTEGRITY AND DUTY, WHATEVER THE CIRCUMSTANCES’

LG Sinha called upon the newly appointed officers to make a commitment to uphold truth, integrity and duty irrespective of the circumstances.

“No matter how difficult the situation is, you will always choose truthfulness and duty on the basis of priority. Always remember that the uniform is respected only because of the honesty, courage and determination of the officers who wear the uniform,” he said.

“Only the uniform is not respected. So move forward with honesty, courage and humility,” he added.

LG Sinha said the appointment letters also carried the hopes, dreams and faith of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and urged the officers to use their authority in the cause of justice.

The Lieutenant Governor also thanked the parents and relatives of the newly appointed officers for supporting them throughout their journey. “All of you have prepared your children for the service of Jammu and Kashmir. You have supported them in their struggle. You have lived their dreams as your own dreams,” he said.

“India and Jammu and Kashmir will always be grateful to you for this contribution,” LG Sinha added.

Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, DGP Nalin Prabhat, Principal Secretary Home Department Chandraker Bharti, Commissioner Secretary General Administration Department M Raju, and senior officers of the civil and police administration attended the ceremony. (KNO)

CM in Delhi for

and senior representatives from several States and Union Territories are participating in the conference.

The deliberations are also providing an opportunity to explore clear financial pathways for Jammu & Kashmir, with a focus on macroeconomic growth, agricultural transformation and renewable energy, aimed

at advancing sustainable and inclusive development.

Uniform carries

will be a risk to your lives. But I hope that during your training, you will be made strong enough to face every situation,” Prabhat said.

The DGP said the training would equip the newly selected officers with the skills and confidence required to meet the demands of police service and discharge their duties with dedication. “When you come to the academy, I will speak to you in detail and interact with you personally,” he said.

DGP Prabhat congratulated the newly selected officers and wished them success as they embark on their careers in the Jammu and Kashmir Police. (KNO)

LG Sinha flags off

revered as the abode of Lord Shiva, while Gangbal Lake, situated at an altitude of around 14,500 feet, is regarded as the sacred presence of Mother Ganga.

He said that despite difficult terrain and historical upheavals, devotees have preserved their spiritual bond with the pilgrimage site, which is also associated with paying homage to ancestors and is considered comparable in sanctity to Haridwar.

“I firmly believe that the Harmukh-Gangbal pilgrimage is a living expression of this immortal faith. On the pilgrimage, no one is superior or inferior. All are seekers of truth, united in spirituality. This is the strength of our eternal culture,” the Lieutenant Governor said.

LG Sinha said Himalayan pilgrimages teach humility before nature and inspire noble thoughts, while fostering social harmony.

He also urged pilgrims to pledge to protect nature, particularly in view of climate change and growing environmental challenges.

“I often say that Himalayan pilgrimages teach us two important lessons. First, I am not the master of nature but its custodian. Second, noble and beneficial thoughts should come to us from all directions so that we may make society more prosperous,” he said.

“Pilgrimage gives us that strength and self-confidence. At the same time, it brings us closer to nature. During the journey, we realise that nature is our heritage and that we have a responsibility towards it,” he added.

The Lieutenant Governor said spiritual journeys such as Harmukh-Gangbal strengthen the nation's soul and collective consciousness and provide an opportunity to pass the values of the eternal culture to younger generations.

“The Harmukh-Gangbal pilgrimage is also giving us an opportunity to tell our younger generation that our eternal culture represents not only the consciousness of the present but also the direction of the future,” LG Sinha said.

The Lieutenant Governor also referred to the ongoing Seva Sankalp Abhiyan, dedicated to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 25 years of continuous public service, and appealed to citizens and the Harmukh Ganga Gangbal Trust to actively participate in cleanliness drives, blood donation camps, health camps, tree plantation and youth-oriented programmes.

“May the snow-clad peaks of Harmukh inspire us to cultivate lofty thoughts, and may the blessings and compassion of Lord Shiva remain with all the pilgrims,” he said.

Speaking to reporters after flagging off the Yatra, LG Sinha extended his

greetings to the devotees and said a large number of pilgrims from Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of the country had arrived to undertake the annual pilgrimage.

“I extend my best wishes to all of them, and I hope that the blessings of this sacred pilgrimage always remain upon the people here. May Jammu and Kashmir continue to move forward on the path of peace and progress,” he said.

A large number of Kashmiri Pandits from different parts of the country also reached Naranag to participate in the annual pilgrimage organised by the Harmukh Ganga Gangbal Trust.

Member of Parliament Mian Altaf Ahmad, Kangan MLA Mian Mehar Ali, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor Dr Mandeep K. Bhandari, Harmukh Ganga Gangbal Trust Founder Chairman and General Secretary Vinod Pandita, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg, IGP Kashmir Sujit Kumar, Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal Jatin Kishore, Trust President Anil Bhat, religious heads, senior civil and police officers, security officials, prominent citizens and devotees were present on the occasion.

Meanwhile, the district administration and concerned departments have put in place necessary arrangements for the pilgrimage, including security measures and essential facilities along the Yatra route.

The annual pilgrimage to Gangbal Lake is considered an important religious journey for Kashmiri Pandits. (KNO)

Daily-wagers’

Tunnel, while Congress MLA Irfan Hafiz Lone has sought allotment of five marlas of State land to homeless families.

Also selected is NC MLA Mir Saifullah's resolution urging formulation of a jobs policy with measurable annual targets and transparent recruitment, and MLA Bandipora Nizam-Ud-Din Bhat's proposal to declare 2027-28 as the “year for retrieval of water resources” to restore wetlands, and water bodies across the Union Territory. (KNO)

Youth found dead

the last rites. Police have initiated an investigation into the incident. (KNO)

Man killed as

one person was killed while another sustained critical injuries in the accident. Rescue teams soon reached the spot and the injured person was shifted to a nearby health facility for medical treatment.

The deceased was identified as Mohd Arif, while the injured person was identified as Sabar Hussain.

Police have taken cognisance of the incident and initiated necessary proceedings. (KNO)

‘Rising temps threaten

every 1-degree Celsius increase in summer temperature.

The findings, accessed by the news agency - Kashmir News Observer (KNO), indicate that rising temperatures are posing a growing threat to one of Kashmir's most important horticultural sectors, with changes in temperature and weather conditions affecting crop productivity and quality.

The study also documented substantial losses caused by recurrent hailstorms during 2025 and 2026.

It said hailstorms destroyed between 50 and 90 per cent of apple

crops in several districts, resulting in estimated economic losses of Rs 6,000 crore to Rs 7,000 crore.

In Jammu, meanwhile, the mango economy suffered a major setback in 2026 following early heatwaves and hailstorms, with local mango arrivals declining by more than 70 per cent, according to the study.

The researchers said the contrasting impacts on apples and mangoes illustrate the vulnerability of both the Himalayan and subtropical agricultural systems of the Union Territory to changing climatic conditions.

The study also examined saffron production in Kashmir and found that output had fallen from 15.9 metric tonnes in 1990 to 2.6 metric tonnes in 2024-25, a decline of about 68 per cent over the period.

It attributed the broader agricultural risks to rising temperatures, heat extremes, drought, hailstorms and other forms of climate variability.

The researchers said existing crop insurance mechanisms were inadequate to fully protect farmers from climate-related losses and called for stronger financial safety nets and climate-resilient agricultural practices.

They recommended the adoption of heat-tolerant crop varieties, precision irrigation, improved weather monitoring and early-warning systems to help farmers respond to extreme weather.

The paper also called for greater investment in climate adaptation and stronger institutional support for farmers facing increasingly unpredictable growing conditions.

The researchers said protecting horticulture would be important not only for agricultural incomes but also for the wider rural economy of Jammu and Kashmir, where fruit cultivation supports a large number of farming households. (KNO)

NHM employees

employees have been pressing for several demands, including pay parity, job security and a policy for regularisation, besides social security measures such as EPF, ESI, insurance coverage and post-retirement support.

The employees had launched a UT-wide agitation earlier this month, with the prolonged protest affecting the functioning of several NHM-supported health programmes and services across Jammu and Kashmir. The agitation was subsequently extended through repeated 72-hour extensions amid demands for a concrete written commitment from the government.

Speaking after the meeting, JKNHMEA Chief Spokesperson Abdul Rauoof said the association decided to defer the proposed strike in view of the written assurance received from the Ministry of Health and Medical Education.

“The constitution of the committee vide No. PS/HME/058/156 dated 17-09-2026 and the commencement of work on the roadmap are important steps forward. We appreciate the positive intervention of the Health Minister and the officers concerned,” he said.

Rauoof said the decision to defer the strike was based on the government's written commitment and reflected the association's willingness to pursue its demands through dialogue and constructive engagement.

“Our decision to defer the strike is based on the written commitment of the Government and reflects our faith in the process initiated today. NHM employees have always preferred dialogue and constructive engagement,” he said.

Rauoof, however, said the association would continue to monitor the

process closely and hoped that the assurances made in writing would be implemented in letter and spirit.

“We sincerely hope that the assurances given in writing will be honoured in letter and spirit and that the roadmap will be finalised and implemented at the earliest,” he added.

The JKNHMEA said it would continue constructive engagement with the government while closely monitoring the progress on the committee's recommendations and the implementation roadmap.

The development comes after days of sustained protests by NHM employees across Jammu and Kashmir, during which employees had repeatedly sought a written assurance and a time-bound mechanism for addressing their long-standing demands. (KNO)

Report online

The SSP added that banks are also using artificial intelligence and pattern-based analysis to detect suspicious transactions, while police coordinate with the Department of Telecommunications, Reserve Bank of India and the banking system.

He said accounts will be unfrozen as per procedure where investigations find no sufficient grounds to continue the freeze, while serious cases will lead to registration of FIRs and further legal action. “A dedicated mechanism has also been established for online crimes against children and women, including counselling and victim-oriented assistance,” he said.

The SSP also reiterated that immediate reporting remains critical in cyber fraud cases, both for preventing further movement of funds and facilitating investigation and recovery

proceedings. (KNO)

Education, awareness,

initiatives. Under the guidance of faculty members, students have also attempted to understand various aspects of drug de-addiction. I believe this is the true power of education, because when knowledge connects with human sensitivity, it transforms into social responsibility,” he said.

The Lieutenant Governor urged students of the University of Jammu to take on the roles of messengers, participants, and guardians of Nasha-Mukt Jammu Kashmir Abhiyan. He called upon youth to engage peers, counter misconceptions, and extend support to those struggling with addiction. He emphasized that awareness, family support, timely assistance and rehabilitation are key to lasting change.

“A major goal is to make the University of Jammu campus and other educational institutions drug-free, and I want youth to work together with the administration, health institutions, civil society groups and youth organisations. I also expect that this documentary will be screened in every department of the university and shown in other institutions of the Jammu division as well so that more and more people connect with the resolve of healthy youth, empowered society, and drug-free Jammu Kashmir,” the Lieutenant Governor said.

Prof. Umesh Rai, Vice-Chancellor, University of Jammu; Prof. J.P. Singh Joorel, Dean Academic Affairs; Prof. Neelu Rohmetra, Dean Research Studies; Prof. Sangita Gupta, Dean Planning and Development; Dr. Neeraj Sharma, Registrar; Heads of Departments, faculty members and students of Jammu University attended the launch ceremony. (KNO)

Moody's raises India's FY27 growth projections to 7 pc

Flags inflation risks from crude, El Nino

PTI

New Delhi, Sep 18: Moody's Ratings on Friday sharply raised India's GDP growth forecast for the fiscal to 7 per cent -- the fastest growth rate among all G20 economies--aided by economic resilience in the face of Middle East conflict but flagged risks to inflation from elevated oil prices and El Nino.

In a statement issued after a periodic review of India's 'Baa3' sovereign rating, Moody's said the "muted" fiscal policy response to the Middle East shock reflects the government's commitment to reducing fiscal deficit to 4.3 per cent of GDP in the current fiscal, from 4.4 per cent in FY26.

"The economy's demonstrated resilience to the global shock wrought by the conflict in the Middle East has driven an upward revision to our forecast for real GDP growth in fiscal 2026-27 (year ending March 2027) to 7 per cent from 6 per cent previously," Moody's said. The 7 per cent FY27 GDP growth estimate compares with 6.7 per cent projected by the RBI, 6.6 per cent by S&P Global Ratings and 6.4 per cent by Fitch Ratings.

The Indian economy grew at



7.8 per cent in the previous fiscal (2025-26).

India's real GDP growth accelerated to 8.2 per cent year on year in the first six months of calendar year (CY) 2026, up from 7.3 per cent for the full year in CY 2025, helped by stronger private consumption, infrastructure investments, and sustained strength in the services sector.

"Although we continue to expect India to grow faster than all other G20 economies, as well as similarly rated emerging market sovereigns, risks remain," Moody's said, adding elevated energy prices could push annual average inflation beyond its 4.8 per

cent projection for the fiscal. The average inflation in FY26 was 2.4 per cent.

Also, El Nino-related disruptions could increase food price pressures, weighing on private consumption and economic activity, Moody's warned.

Since the beginning of the war in West Asia on February 28, crude oil prices have risen significantly, stoking inflation fears. Crude prices have risen over USD 100 per barrel this month, from about USD 73 level before the war.

While the increased diversification of India's crude import sources, sizeable foreign exchange reserves and strong domestic demand

provide important buffers, higher energy and fertiliser import costs, softer external demand and weaker remittance inflows from the Middle East could widen the current account deficit and weigh on growth momentum more broadly, Moody's said.

Moody's further said that the 'stable' outlook on India's rating incorporates India's gradually improving fiscal metrics and resilient growth prospects compared with peers.

The US-based rating agency also said it expects India's debt reduction to be gradual and debt affordability to be constrained by elevated global and domestic interest rates, particularly as central banks maintain a cautious policy stance amid heightened geopolitical uncertainty and persistent inflation risks.

"We continue to expect the gradual improvement in fiscal metrics to continue over the medium term, supported by strong nominal GDP growth and continued efforts to improve tax administration and revenue collection," Moody's said. In the FY27 Union Budget, the government has estimated the debt-to-GDP ratio for the current fiscal at

55.6 per cent of GDP, lower than 56.1 per cent of GDP for FY26. The government is looking to cut its debt-to-GDP ratio to 50 per cent by March 2031.

The government has projected the fiscal deficit at 4.3 per cent of GDP or Rs 16.96 lakh crore for FY27.

The Centre has set a gross borrowing target of Rs 16.09 lakh crore for FY27, and a net borrowing of Rs 11.73 lakh crore after repaying past loans and borrowing through treasury bills.

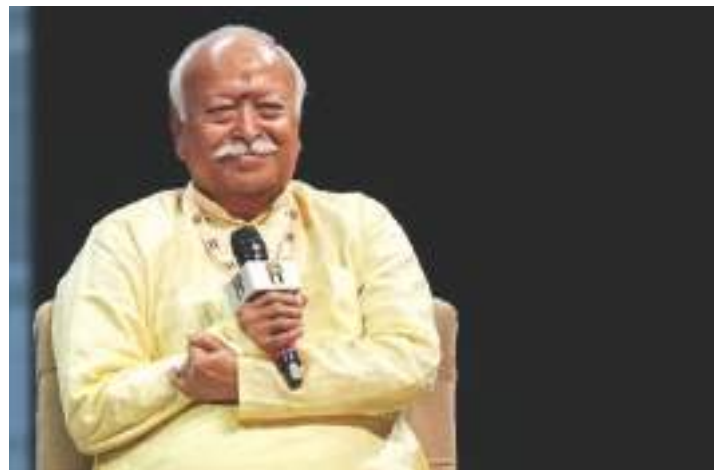
Moody's has maintained India's rating at 'Baa3' since June 2020. In September, last year, the agency had affirmed the sovereign rating.

Sovereign Credit Rating Agency said:

Earlier this month, Japanese credit rating agency JCR had upgraded India's sovereign rating to 'A-', a feat achieved after a gap of 35 years, citing solid economic growth and a strong financial system.

Two global rating agencies, S&P and Fitch, had affirmed India's investment-grade rating at 'BBB' and 'BBB-', citing a dynamic and fast-growing, robust economy with policy stability and high infrastructure investments.

India's concept of 'dharma' different from Western notion of religion: Bhagwat



PTI

Ujjain, Sep 18: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Friday said that India's understanding of the concept of 'dharma' was distinct from Western notions of religion, asserting that the country has not discriminated among different faiths and this was its understanding of secularism.

Addressing around 1,700 Gen Z participants at the 'Yuva Dharma Sansad' here, Bhagwat said he was happy to see youngsters discussing 'dharma' at a time when some considered it an old people's affair.

"Our state has always been intermingling. It does not discriminate among its people. This is the meaning of 'panth-nirpekshata' for us," he said.

Bhagwat said the Western concept of secularism emerged from conflicts between rulers and religious authorities, and therefore, did not fit the Indian context in the same manner.

He said India had traditionally viewed material and spiritual aspects of life together rather than separating them.

The RSS has stepped up its outreach to Gen Z following a massive students' protest over NEET exam paper leaks at Jantar Mantar in Delhi, which brought youth discontent to the fore and led to the resignation of then Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

Distinguishing 'dharma' and religion, Bhagwat said that the two should not be treated as synonymous.

'Dharma' is above religion, he said, adding that while the latter binds, the former liberates and leads to 'moksha' (salvation).

He noted that the English language had no exact equivalent for the Indian concept, and the word 'religion' had historically been used to explain it to Western audiences.

Bhagwat said religion could become sectarian when separated from 'dharma', which he described as being based on truth, compassion, purity and self-discipline.

"Dharma is not something to be discovered; it has to be recognised and practised," he said.

He described 'dharma' as a principle that sustains the universe, promotes the progress of all and determines duties, while taking into account the nature of every living being and object.

The RSS chief further noted that 'dharma' was reflected in human conduct and urged the young participants to shed prejudices if they wanted to understand it.

He also linked 'dharma' with environmental responsibility, saying human beings had a duty to protect nature and that destruction of forests and environmental degradation amounted to 'adharma' (unrighteousness).

He urged young people to respect other forms of worship while remaining committed to their own traditions.

Bhagwat said India's tradition sought to unite people rather than divide them and maintained that the country had historically tried to help even those who differed from it or caused it difficulties.

He also urged the youth to become successful as well as purposeful and contribute to creating a world marked by happiness and peace. Around 300 scholars, teachers, researchers and religious leaders are participating in the Yuva Dharma Sansad, organisers said.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav will attend the concluding session on September 19. The three-day event, organised by Sevagya Sansthanam, is the sixth edition of the Yuva Dharma Sansad, following events in Kashi, Ayodhya, Mathura, Haridwar and Kanchipuram. The event will be held in Dwarka next year.

Net direct tax collection rises 13 pc to Rs 12.12 lakh cr till Sep 17

PTI

New Delhi, Sep 18: The government's net direct tax collection rose 13 per cent to over Rs 12.12 lakh crore till September 17 of the current fiscal on higher advance tax mop-up, according to the latest data released on Friday.

Corporate tax mop-up grew 19.48 per cent to about Rs 5.56 lakh crore, while non-corporate tax (individuals and HUFs) mop-up increased 6 per cent to over Rs 6.16 lakh crore. Securities Transactions Tax (STT) collection grew 53 per cent to Rs 40,214 crore between April 1 and September 17.

Refund issuance jumped 29.19 per cent to over Rs 2.20 lakh crore till September 17, the data released by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) showed.

Gross direct tax collection clocked a 15 per cent growth totalling over Rs 14.32 lakh crore.

Advance Tax mop-up till September 17 increased 16.18 per cent to about Rs 5.22 lakh crore. This included an 18 per cent growth in advance corporate tax payments at over Rs 4.16 lakh crore, and a 9.24 per cent rise in non-corporate advance tax payments of Rs 1.06 lakh crore.

India-born cheetah gives birth to four cubs in Kuno National Park

PTI

Sheopur (MP), Sep 18: An India-born female cheetah has given birth to four cubs in the Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh, Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav said on Friday, a day after the cheetah reintroduction programme completed four years.

"A truly historic and joyous moment for Project Cheetah! A day after India's Cheetah Project completed four years, KGP12, an Indian-born female cheetah, has given birth to four cubs in Kuno," the minister said in a post on X.

Yadav noted the birth of cubs reflects the growing success of cheetah conservation in India, where the world's fastest land animal was officially declared extinct in 1952. "Four years, four new lives, a beautiful symbol of hope, resilience and the growing success of cheetah conservation in India. Heartiest congratulations to the entire Kuno and Project Cheetah family," said the Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change. On September 17, 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had released eight wild cheetahs brought from Namibia into special enclosures at the park in Sheopur district, marking the beginning of the animal's reintroduction programme.

FSSAI initiates legal action against Nestle India over infant nutrition products



PTI

New Delhi, Sep 18: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on Friday said it has initiated legal action against Nestle India Ltd for alleged non-compliance with food safety norms in three infant nutrition products.

According to FSSAI, it examined NAN Excella Pro Stage 1, Lactogen Pro 1, and a follow-up formula along with their promotional material available on e-commerce platforms.

In NAN Excella Pro Stage 1, the regulator flagged claims relating to "5HMOs" and "Whey Protein," while in Lactogen Pro 1, it observed a claim describing "Whey Protein" as easy to digest, the regulator said in a social media post.

FSSAI said it had sought clarifications from Nestle India on these claims.

Both the products were found to be in contravention

of Regulation 4(2) of the Food Safety and Standards (Foods for Infant Nutrition) Regulations, 2020, which restrict promotional claims or material aimed at increasing the saleability of infant foods, as well as Section 3 of the Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 1992, which bars the advertisement or promotion of such products.

Separately, a sample of a follow-up formula manufactured by Nestle India was found sub-standard for Biotin content during laboratory analysis. The sample was sent for re-analysis, and the referral laboratory also found it non-conforming with the Biotin requirement prescribed under the 2020 regulations.

In light of these findings, FSSAI has filed three separate adjudication cases against Nestle India in respect of the three products, it added.

Unfortunate people still prefer male child: HC

Refuses bail to man who killed granddaughter

PTI

Mumbai, Sep 18: The Bombay High Court has refused bail to a man arrested for killing his one-month-old granddaughter as the family did not want another girl child, noting it was unfortunate that almost 80 years since Independence, people still prefer a boy.

Justice M M Nerlikar of the HC's Nagpur bench, in an order passed on September 9, rejected the bail plea of the accused, Gopinath Janku Pradhan. The case against Pradhan was lodged in 2023 by the police in Gadchiroli district in eastern Maharashtra under the charges of murder and destruction of evidence. He was accused of drowning his one-month-old granddaughter in a tub as she was the second girl child born to his son and daughter-in-law.

The man, in his bail plea, claimed innocence and pointed out that the mother of the deceased child, who was also an accused in the case, has already been granted bail.

The bench of Justice Nerlikar, in its order, noted that it was "deeply unfortunate that even after 80 years of independence, people in our county still prefer a male child."

Panel on NEET reforms to submit first report by month-end: Centre to SC



PTI

New Delhi, Sep 18: The Centre on Friday told the Supreme Court that the Nandan Nilekani-led high-powered panel constituted to suggest structural reforms in NEET has held exhaustive consultations and is likely to submit its first interim report by the end of this month.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told a bench of Justices P S Narasimha and Alok Aradhe that all the suggestions had been placed before the panel, which held consultations with the members of an earlier committee led by former ISRO chairman K Radhakrishnan.

The bench asked the joint secretary to the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), who is assisting the Nilekani panel, to file an affidavit before the court on the steps taken so far.

It told Mehta that the most important thing in the matter is that the government should look into institutionalisation of the entire process to conduct the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET).

"You must know that permanency of the entire system is key. There should be a permanent setup, permanent staff, permanent verticals. Very less deputiation should be there. Only then a permanent structure will come up," the bench told Mehta.

Justice Narasimha said he and Justice Aradhe would like to visit the newly-upgraded facility of the National Testing Agency (NTA) to examine the system.

The education department has said that a new, upgraded system has been created.

"Permanency of the structure has been ensured. However, human resources are partially ensured at the moment," Mehta said.

On August 19, observing that there is a need to institutionalise the reforms in the NTA, the top court directed the Centre to inform it about the steps taken to implement the recommendations of the Radhakrishnan panel and the Nilekani committee.

The apex court was hearing a batch of petitions, including one filed by advocate Tanvi Dubey on behalf of the Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA).

Nitish, his son make maiden joint appearance at JD(U) function



PTI

Patna, Sep 18: JD(U) president Nitish Kumar and his son and heir apparent Nishant Kumar on Friday made their maiden appearance together at a party function where parliamentarians and legislators got a crash course on public life.

Nitish, who stepped down as Bihar chief minister in April, weeks ahead of his son's entry into politics, inaugurated the day-long orientation programme. Nishant, 44, who is a minister in the BJP-led government formed after his father's resignation, was among the handful of leaders who shared the stage with Kumar at the "Karpoori auditorium" inside the JD(U) office.

Slogans were raised by attendees in praise of the father-son duo. Nishant joined his father when Nitish was lighting a lamp.

According to JD(U) national

spokesperson Rajiv Ranjan Prasad, the orientation programme, conducted by PRS Legislative Research, is aimed at helping members of both Houses of Parliament and state legislatures take part in debates and discussions in a more effective manner.

There have been speculations in a section of the media that the meeting had been called to announce "big" decisions like renaming the party as "JD(U)-Nitish" and Nishant taking over as the national president, in place of his septuagenarian father.

However, Prasad has made it clear that there was no proposal, as of now, to replace Nitish Kumar as national president, while Deputy CM Vijay Kumar Chaudhary, a former state president of the party, said a proposal to rename the JD(U) could be moved only at the meetings of its national executive and national council.

Zelenskyy welcomes leaders from 7 countries for regional summit

AP

Kyiv, Sep 18: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy welcomed leaders and representatives from seven regional countries for talks on deepening cooperation on Friday, as overnight Russian strikes in multiple regions sparked fires and caused several deaths and injuries.

The inaugural summit of the so-called "Carpathian Eight" brings together Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Austria and Hungary, with the European Union also involved.

It comes as US-mediated efforts to end Russia's 4.5-year full-scale invasion have stalled, with the issue of territorial concessions in eastern Ukraine among the central sticking points. Ukraine is also seeking security guarantees from partners for a deal.

The summit also comes as three days of voting began in Russia's first wartime parliamentary election, which features virtually no opposition to President Vladimir Putin's party and is all but certain to secure the Kremlin's political dominance.

Some of the nations attending the meeting in western Ukraine's Ivano-Frankivsk region, such as Poland and Romania, have been staunch supporters of Ukraine. Others, such as Hungary, Serbia and Slovakia, have refused to provide Kyiv with direct military assistance.

Zelenskyy wrote on Telegram that the summit was a "significant beginning" of a movement intended to "further strengthen ties between our countries and create another strong element of cooperation at the EU level."

He added that the participating countries would work together on security, energy, logistics, cross-border economic ties and support for local communities.

European countries concerned over Russian hybrid threats

The meeting in the western Ukrainian ski resort of Bukovel came amid increasing concern among many European countries that Russia is ramping up hybrid threats including sabotage, cyberattacks, disinformation and potential drone incursions into NATO territory.

Tusk, Poland's prime minister, warned on Thursday before departing for Ukraine that Moscow is planning hybrid strikes with drones or rockets on European countries supporting Kyiv, among them Poland.

Iran says it strikes an oil tanker, and other Mideast developments

AP

Cairo, Sep 18: Iran says it has struck an oil tanker trying to transit the Strait of Hormuz, and hundreds of thousands of people rallied in Tehran in the largest showing of support for the government since the United States and Israel attacked in February.

Meanwhile, South Korea says it is considering expanding a naval operation in the Gulf of Aden off the Arabian Peninsula to protect its ships and oil routes, but it won't send troops to intervene in the Iran war. Here's a look at the latest news in the Middle East on Friday.

Iran says it struck an oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz. Iran said it struck a Togo-flagged oil tanker, the Trend, for what it called an "illegal attempt" to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, the state broadcaster reported, citing the Revolutionary Guard Corps.

The Associated Press could not immediately confirm the report.

The Guard's navy warned that unauthorized passage through the strait would result in the "destruction" of offending vessels, the broadcaster said. Tehran has asserted control over the waterway since the US and Israel launched the war on February 28. A monitor overnight reported a ship "security incident" 16 nautical



miles northeast of Khasab, Oman, which lies on the other side of the strait. The crew was safe and no environmental impact was reported, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations said.

It was not clear whether the UKMTO report was describing the attack that Iran claimed.

The US military has been guiding some commercial ships through the strait off Oman as the risk of Iranian attacks continues.

More attacks are reported in the strait

Separately, the UKMTO reported that a tanker in the strait was hit by an "unknown projectile," causing a fire that was later extinguished. The

crew was reported safe, with no immediate indication of environmental damage, it said.

The AP could not independently confirm the incident, and there was no immediate claim from Iran.

The monitor also said another tanker was struck Wednesday by an "unknown projectile" while transiting out of the strait, with the crew reported safe. It was not clear why the report came late.

Thousands in Tehran vow support for Iran. Iranians filled the streets of Tehran by the hundreds of thousands in the biggest rally since the war began in February, pledging to take up arms as "Janfaday-e Iran," or the "ones who sacrifice their lives

for Iran." Iran's government has sought to rally the people and stress national unity, even as the economy worsens under a US naval blockade of Iranian ports and new US sanctions meant to increase Tehran's economic pain. Some participants trampled flags of the US and Israel. Others chanted "Death to America" and "Death to Israel."

South Korea says it might expand naval unit in the region

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung said his government is considering expanding the operations of a naval unit deployed in the Gulf of Aden off Yemen and Somalia to protect his country's vessels and oil shipping routes.

But he stressed that South Korea would not take action that would draw it into the US-Iran conflict, pushing back against recent pressure from the Trump administration. South Korea has deployed the anti-piracy Cheonghae Unit for years.

The growing threat from Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen to shipping in the region has alarmed countries and markets, even though the rebels have said they are only targeting the assets of neighbouring Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter.

"There will be no troop deployment that involves or intervenes in the war," Lee said.

Russia begins Three-Day parliamentary vote amid tight Kremlin control



AP

Moscow, Sep 18: Russians on Friday began three days of voting in the country's first wartime parliamentary election, which features virtually no opposition and is all but certain to secure the Kremlin's political dominance.

Authorities spread the election over the weekend in a bid to boost turnout among the 111 million eligible voters and even allowed electronic balloting. Polls opened Friday and will close Sunday.

The Kremlin wants the parliamentary election -- the first since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 -- to underline public support for the war and give a veneer of legitimacy to its action. It has sought to avoid any political risks by stamping out even the slightest sign of dissent.

"Your choice and resolve will

once again demonstrate that millions of people stand behind our fighters, that we are a united people, bound by shared values, historical memory, and love for the Motherland," President Vladimir Putin told the nation before the vote.

Russian state news agencies reported Putin voted online Friday and released a video of him in front of a computer screen.

The main Kremlin party, United Russia, is all but assured to retain its overwhelming control of the lower house, the State Duma. Several smaller parties of the "systemic opposition" that vote in sync with the government on all key issues are also expected to retain their presence.

Voters cast two separate ballots, filling half of the Duma's 450 seats by selecting political parties listed on the ballot.

Govt approves ₹6.17 cr multi-purpose indoor sports hall at Ganderbal

Modern facility to boost sports infrastructure, develop local talent

KT News Desk

Srinagar Sep 18: The Jammu and Kashmir Government, headed by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, has accorded administrative approval for the construction of a modern Multi-Purpose Indoor Sports Hall (60m x 40m) at Ganderbal at an estimated cost of 6.17 crore.

The facility will be equipped with modern

sporting amenities and provide quality infrastructure for young athletes, enabling them to hone their skills and pursue sporting excellence.

The project is aimed at nurturing local sporting talent and strengthening the sports ecosystem in the district, while providing a platform for athletes to train and participate in various sporting activities.

District Jammu lifts Division-level Taekwondo championship trophy

KT News Desk

Doda Sep 18: District Jammu stamped its authority on the mat, emerging as the Overall Champion in the Inter-District Division-Level Boys' All Age Groups Taekwondo Competition 2026, organised by District Youth Services & Sports department here at the Indoor Stadium.

Delivering a commanding medal-winning performance across age categories, the Jammu contingent secured an impressive 23 medals—12 Gold, 5 Silver and 6 Bronze,



earning the coveted Overall Championship Trophy at the divisional-level championship.

The championship brought together promising Taekwondo athletes from districts across

the Jammu Division, turning the Indoor Stadium Doda into a vibrant arena of high-energy sporting action. The young athletes showcased technical precision, agility, discipline, determination and competitive spirit, producing closely contested bouts throughout the competition.

The performance of District Jammu reflected the growing competitive depth and talent in Taekwondo across the division, while the championship provided participating athletes with valuable exposure to higher-level competition.

Pulwama leads as IDPL Boys' karate championship

DIO Budgam felicitates participating players at concluding ceremony



KT News Desk

Budgam Sep 11: The Inter-District Provincial Level (IDPL) Karate Championship for Boys in all age groups concluded today at the Indoor Sports Stadium, Budgam. The championship was organised by the District Youth Services and Sports Office, Budgam. The event was conducted under the directions of Director General, Youth Services and Sports, J&K, Anuradha Gupta, and under the supervision of District Youth Services and Sports Officer Budgam, Jai Pal Singh.

District Pulwama secured the first position, followed by District Budgam in second place and District Anantnag in third place. At the concluding ceremony,

District Information Officer (DIO) Budgam, Mir Liyaqat Ali, was the Chief Guest. He felicitated the participating players and presented trophies and medals to the position-holding districts. Players were also awarded medals in recognition of their performances.

Speaking on the occasion, the DIO highlighted the important role of sports in keeping youth away from drugs and other negative influences. He urged young people to actively participate in sports and channelise their energy in a positive direction, saying that sports help inculcate discipline, confidence, teamwork and a healthy competitive spirit, thereby contributing to a stronger society.

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FOR A
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