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A Monthly Newsletter by Jammu & Kashmir Policy Institute (JKPI)

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‘J&K TOPS SEVERAL GOVERNANCE INDICES; WITNESSES IMPROVEMENT ON SEVERAL OTHERS’



JAMMU: The year 2021 witnessed tremendous improvement in the governance standards of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and testimony of the fact is the acknowledgement by different surveys that were conducted by various agencies last year.

To name a few surveys, one among these surveys is the 39th Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Urban Index-2021 by NITI Aayog, in which Srinagar city secured 61.50 points. A total of 56 urban areas on 77 SDG indicators across 46 targets of the SDG framework were ranked by the NITI Aayog in collaboration with GIZ and BMZ under the umbrella of Indo-German Development Cooperation. The ranking was done with regard to the performance in 14 SDG goals, which included no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reducing inequalities, Sustainable Cities and Communities, Responsible Consumption and Production, Climate Action, Partnerships for the Goals as the leading performer in terms of incremental performance.

Among the UTs, Delhi followed by Jammu & Kashmir had shown the best incremental performance. In incremental performance, J&K is ranked at number two with a score of 9.55. In J&K, most of the indicators are in the improved/most improved/fully achieved category as far as the Incremental Performance from the Base Year (2018-19) to Reference Year (2019-20) was concerned. According to the report, the health index comprises three domains-Health outcomes, Governance and Information, and key inputs and processes. In terms of overall health performance, the UT of J&K had moved one position up.

Further in its latest report of National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), Jammu & Kashmir has shown a record improvement over the last three years in key maternal and child health indicators. The report, while comparing the achievements in key health indicators recorded in National Family Health Survey report (NFHS-5) 2019-20 with the NFHS-4 of 2015-16, stated that J&K has recorded 22 points decrease in Neonatal Mortality Rate (NNMR) from 23.1 to 9.8, 16 points decrease in Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) from 32.4 to 16.3, and 19 points decrease in Under Five Mortality Rate (USMR) from 37.6 to 18.5. The report termed the developments as unprecedented and a reflection of the health status of the general population. It also indicated a positive change towards the girl child in J&K and recorded improvement in sex ratio at birth from 923 to 976 females per 1,000

males.

Further, the LEADS 2021 index, released by the Union Commerce Ministry, has also put J&K on the top of the list. The report had stated that among the North-eastern states and Himalayan region, Jammu and Kashmir is the top ranker followed by Sikkim and Meghalaya. According to the report, J&K and the North-eastern states were considered as a separate category for ranking due to their geographical positioning, terrain, resource base and economic activity at large, which act as natural deterrents to development of a robust logistics infrastructure and its effective management. It had revealed that J&K leads the group on account of better than average performance in the operating and regulatory and objective indicators.

Likewise, a report prepared by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) released in September last year regarding food safety puts J&K at the top among eight Union Territories in the country. The Food Safety Index is based on five significant parameters – Human Resources & Institutional data, Compliance, Food testing (infrastructure and surveillance), Training & Capacity building and Consumer empowerment. Scoring 67 points, J&K had secured the top positions among the UTs. J&K also stands third among large states/small states/UTs in India only behind Gujarat and Kerala with 72 and 70 points respectively.

In its report, the Public Affairs Centre (PAC), a not for profit research think-tank, had adjudged J&K as the second best governed Union Territory in the country. The report released in November, 2021 had stated that J&K has shown improvement in the composite ranking for governance index-2021 and bagged second position. In 2020, J&K had finished at sixth position among the UTs.

Based on government data, the Public Affairs Index (PAI) is a framework that measures the quality of governance at the sub-national level, and ranks States and UTs on the basis of their performance in the sub-national governance for the overarching sustainable development pillars of equity, growth and sustainability.

J&K's transition to UT has proved to be a boon for governance. Various reports released by different agencies in 2021 have driven home a point that J&K's transformation into Union Territory has been immensely beneficial for a common man. The benefits of Centrally Sponsored Schemes didn't trickle down to the people at grassroots level, for whom these plans were meant for. But gradually, the scenario is changing for better, changing the face of the UT for everybody to see for themselves.



300 MWS OF SOLAR POWER TO BE GENERATED BY GRID TIED ROOFTOPS IN J&K

Jammu: Rapid urbanisation and industrialization has increased the demand of electricity rapidly across Jammu and Kashmir.

To meet this requirement, the government is working tirelessly to ramp up electricity production. Contemporary problems like pollution and global climate change have pushed us to switch on to green renewable energy resources. The current budget pushes for solar and hydroelectric power generation in order to fulfil sustainable development goals.

Solar Energy

Jammu & Kashmir has a good potential of solar energy and the renewable energy capacity would help to bridge a part of its power requirement. Under the new budget in PM KUSUM Scheme, 375 number of Solar Water Pumps will be installed in 2022-23 providing electricity benefit to 47159 souls, direct agriculture benefit to 18750 souls, and indirect agriculture benefit to 160000 souls.

Under the Jammu Solar City Mission, Grid tied Rooftop Solar Power Plants of aggregate capacity of 200 MW in residential sector will be provided to 50000 households in 2022-23 benefitting a population of 2 lakh souls. Also, under the Jammu Smart City Project, grid tied Rooftop Solar Power Plants of aggregate capacity of 12 MW are to be provided to 200 number of Government buildings in 2022-23 absolving hydropower Sector of 48000 KWh.

Similarly, through the Srinagar Smart City Project, grid tied Rooftop Solar Power Plants of aggregate capacity of 4 MW will be provided to 70 number of Government buildings in 2022-23 absolving hydropower Sector of 16000 KWh. Solar power projects can be set up in a much shorter time frame when compared to conventional power projects and the cost of solar power has become more economical today. Solar power can also help meet energy requirements for both grids connected as well as off-grid applications such as solar powered agricultural pump sets.

Hydroelectric Power Projects

Jammu & Kashmir is bestowed with an estimated hydro-power potential, out of which 14,867 MW has already been identified by Central Electricity Authority. The J&K is all set to double the Hydropower Generation Capacity in next 3 years from the existing capacity of 3500 MW.

In this direction, 5 Mega Hydro-power projects viz Ratle

(824 MW), Kirthai-II (930 MW) Sawalakote (1856 MW), Dulhasti-Stage II (258 MW) and Uri-I Stage-II (240 MW) having total capacity of 4134 MW have been taken-up for execution in collaboration with NHPC. The likely investment in these projects is Rs 34882 crore and on completion will make J&K power surplus.

Transmission & Distribution Sector

The transmission capacity of Jammu and Kashmir is expected to reach 12655 MVA by March 2022 and the transmission capacity at 220/132 KV level and 132/33 KV level is expected to be increased by 520 MVA and 580 MVA respectively in 2022-23. About 160 Circuit kilometers of existing ACSR (aluminum conductor steel reinforced) is being replaced by HTLS (high temperature low sag) to increase the carrying capacity by 1.75 times besides installation of towers at various locations for ground clearance.

Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS), a new reforms-based and results-linked scheme introduced by Ministry of Power (GoI) aimed at reduction of Aggregate Technical & Commercial (AT&C) losses, 100% prepaid metering, reduction of Average cost of Service- Aggregate Revenue Realised (ACS-ARR), developing modern DISCOMs and Leveraging Artificial Intelligence besides focus on Operational Efficiency will be rolled out and made operational during 2022-23. Reliable and Quality Power supply is to be provided to consumers by way of creation/ augmentation of 11/0.33 KV critically overloaded substations and improvement/modernization of HT/LT lines.

6 lakh Smart Pre-paid meters to be installed (3 lakh each in Jammu & Kashmir Divisions) for preventing human intervention in billing/collection and subsequent reduction in Aggregate Technical & Commercial (AT&C) losses.

Our mission is to become one of the largest clean energy producing UT in the country and to reduce dependency on the conventional sources of energy and enable J&K in attaining self-sufficiency in its energy needs. The government recognizes that renewable energy can also significantly increase J&K's and the Nation's energy security. The budget 2022-23 focuses on to evolve new technologies in renewable energy generation and its application through participation of farmers, industries and public at large to boost the economy of J&K.

J&K govt receives proposals worth Rs 47,441 crore for investment

Jammu: The Jammu and Kashmir government has received 4,226 investment proposals worth Rs 47,441 crore for land allotment to set up industrial units in the Union Territory.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration in January last year announced a new industrial developmental scheme with an outlay of Rs 28,400 crore to encourage new investment and take industrial development to the block level.

The new policy, which has been applicable till 2037, also paved the way for foreigners to invest in the region.

“As many as 4,226 proposals with an investment of Rs 47,441 crore have been received through online mode for allotment of land for setting up units in the Union Territory (UT), a senior government official said. These proposals are estimated to generate 1.97 lakh employment, the official said, adding that the clearance process of these proposals has already been fast tracked.

A total of Rs 150 crore have been provisioned for the development of new industrial estates in 2022-23, and the government aims at generating employment for around 4.5 lakh people under the new policy, the official said.

He also said that Rs 1,003 crore allocated to the industries and commerce department will complement the ongoing efforts being made to take industrial development in the UT to new heights.

“Substantial amount will be spent on establishing new industrial estates in Jammu and Kashmir. The industries department will also assist 2,000 self-help groups for promoting handicrafts,” he said.

In this year’s budget, Rs 200 crore has been allocated to provide financial assistance to young aspiring entrepreneurs of J&K.

‘Maintenance, Welfare of Parents & Senior Citizens Act, 2007’

Govt sets up district committees for effective implementation of law

Srinagar: In a significant move, the Government of Jammu & Kashmir has constituted district committees for implementation of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007.

The General Administration Department (GAD) has ordered that these committees would be headed by the concerned deputy commissioners and comprise of a DDC member to be nominated by chairperson of concerned district development council, superintendent of police concerned, chief medical officer concerned, district social welfare officer concerned and two prominent senior citizens to be nominated by the concerned deputy commissioner.

The moves after the J&K government



constituted tribunals and appellate tribunals under the law which became applicable to Jammu and Kashmir from October 31, 2019 as per The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act. According to an order, a copy of which is in possession of Kashmir News

Observer (KNO), these committees will advise for effective and coordinated implementation of The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007.

These committees have been empowered to make recommendations to the Social Welfare department in this regard.

These panels can be asked to perform such other functions in relation to senior citizens at district level, as may be prescribed by the Social Welfare department from time to time.

According to the order, these committees shall meet at least once in every four months and that the tenure of non-official members in these committees shall be for a period of three years.

‘JK-NZ partnership to help in breed dev, other areas’

Jammu: Principal Secretary, Animal & Sheep Husbandry and Fisheries Department, Navin Kumar Choudhary, today had a meeting with Trade Commissioner and Counsel General New Zealand, Ralph Hays and Senior Business Development Manager, Sudha Palit.

The Trade Commissioner is on a visit to the UT in connection with the recent Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) signed between governments of Jammu & Kashmir and New Zealand regarding transformation of the sheep farming sector in the UT.

The MoC is aimed at overhauling the sheep husbandry sector in the region through transfer of technology, research and development besides value addition and marketing areas.

The visiting team expressed the desire of having a better understanding of existing trends in sheep husbandry in the region. They also emphasized exploring possibilities of collaboration of agriculture universities of J&K with those in New Zealand besides student exchange.


Interacting with the team, the Principal Secretary laid emphasis on phase wise development of the sector in J&K with breed improvement and wool processing ventures initially. During the initial couple of years, the government would focus on rapid breed development, setting up of required infrastructure and introducing technology to give a boost to the nascent sector. He assured them of sufficient fund-



ing saying that the aim of the partnership is to give expertise hand holding to the local sheep industry.

It was agreed that designated government officers from J&K would be made to take first-hand exposure of the sheep industry in New Zealand.

Principal Secretary hailed the partnership with New Zealand and said that the sheep husbandry sector is being given massive financial infusion which would eventually boost the local economy. With it, the social and financial condition of the tribal population of J&K would be greatly improved, he added.



JK Budget aimed at realizing PM's vision of doubling farmers' income: Govt

JAMMU: Stating that the recently announced budget of Central Government for Jammu-Kashmir was part of Prime Ministers vision to bring hope for agriculture sector and aimed at doubling the farmers' income in a planned manner, Jammu and Kashmir Government has said that the strategy was to focus on encouraging the cultivation of High Yield AND High Density crops, use of modern technology and laboratory tested pesticides and other measures.

"The Government of India as well as the J&K government is keen to widen the growth of agriculture as well as the horticulture sector which are vital sectors towards transforming the lives of farming communities. These sectors can transform the economy of the UT tremendously over the next decade by creating numerous job opportunities, reducing poverty and backwardness besides increasing the production to facilitate optimum economic growth in a peaceful and eco-friendly manner," a press release issued here by the government said.

In the press release issued here, the UT government maintained that the Jammu and Kashmir was predominantly agrarian with over 70 percent of the population directly or indirectly engaged in agricultural and allied sectors thus complimented with specific crop adapted to local climate and topography of the region.

An amount of Rs 23.97 crore has been sanctioned for high yielding varieties of hybrid seeds which would benefit 8.93 lakh farmers. In addition, Rs. 55.80 crore have been kept separately for providing infrastructure facilities like 3200 pump sets, 898 bore wells and 10000 drip and sprinkler irrigation systems to farmers. It will benefit around 16960 farmers and will cover over 15240 hectares area, the press release added.

The press release further said that capacity building and training was another focused area prioritized in this budget. "A total of 36000 farmers are to be trained for capacity building with a provision of Rs. 27 crore. Nearly, 22000 farmers would be benefitted with establishment of 11 big and small mandies with a provision of Rs 1.60 crore. Besides, 12800 farmers would be covered by way of formation of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) with a financial assistance of Rs 80 Lakh," the press release added.

The government maintained that budget has also laid special focus on farm mechanization which is another area instrumental in transforming the agriculture sector which will help farmers to enhance their production manifold. About 33200 farmers would be provided farm machinery worth Rs 81 crore.

"Considering the significance of organic farming in sustainable development, the budget has kept Rs 6 crore, under area expansion programme, for expansion of 756 hectares under organic farming, 45 hectares under potato and 250 hectares under spices which will benefit about 44204 farmers," the press release said.

Stating that in this budget the irrigation for 8670 hectare of

land will be restored through maintenance of Field Channels for which Rs 30 crore have been kept, the press release said that due to erratic rains and long dry seasons, need for irrigation facilities were imminent.

"Horticulture is one of the major sectors in Jammu and Kashmir which contributes significantly towards the economy of the Union Territory. The variety of horticultural products of J&K has earned worldwide fame because of its good quality and taste. The fruit crops grown here like apple, almonds, walnuts, pears, cherries and apricots in temperate areas and mango, citrus, litchi, papaya, guava etc in subtropical areas are known all over the globe," the press release added.

The press release further added that the UT's Horticulture industry is showing steep progress as the yearly pay produced by the natural product industry has gotten over Rs 10,000 crore, contributing 8% to Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). About 7.5 lakh families of around 35 lakh souls are associated with this area.

It further said that the government of J&K in collaboration with National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation (NAFED) is undertaking High Density Plantation over an area of 5500 hectare in the next five years. Accordingly, a new scheme on High Density Plantation was launched in March, 2021 which apart from apples also included other crops being grown in J&K.

While Controlled Atmosphere storage capacity of around 1.70 Lakh Metric Ton has been already established, another 30,000 Metric Ton is likely to be added by the end of the current financial year. Besides, 50, 000 Metric Ton Controlled Atmosphere storage capacity has been targeted for completion during 2022-23. The focus will be to reach a Controlled Atmosphere storage capacity of about 5 Lakh Metric Ton in next three years, the press release added.

"Keeping in view the fact that hailstorms have often destroyed fruit crops like apples and apricot, the government in this budget has kept a provision of providing subsidy on anti-hail net under PARVAZ scheme to tackle the issue of fruit crop damage. Also, the administration is providing subsidies for air transportation of identified perishable products under the PARVAZ scheme which is a market linkage support scheme essentially launched for shipment of perishable Agricultural and Horticultural products through air cargo. Under the initiative, subsidy will be provided on the air cargo charges through DBT mode," the press release said.

The budget read that expansion up to an area of 400 hectare under High Density Plantation of apples and 1000 hectare under sub-tropical fruit plants has been targeted for 2022-23. A Mega High Density Plantation nursery over an area of 800 hectare at an estimated cost of Rs 12.30 crore for sub-tropical fruit plants is being established in Government sector at Chakroi, Jammu besides 10 High Density plantation nurseries in private sector have also been targeted for establishment in 2022-23.

J&K achieving major strides through ISDS

Jammu: The Integrated Sheep Development Scheme (ISDS) launched has achieved major strides in supplementing livestock production and building entrepreneurship in this sector across Jammu and Kashmir.

The scheme aims to promote the establishment of sheep and goat units in the union territory. Sheep sector makes a valuable contribution to the economically weaker sections of the society by their multifaceted utility of producing wool, meat, skin, manure etc.

Realizing this importance of sheep, many development activities including schemes for intensive sheep development in J&K have been initiated. Under this scheme, financial assistance from the banks has been made available along with other incentives and subsidies.

ISDS is one of the schemes of the Sheep Husbandry Department aimed at not only achieving breakthroughs in wool and mutton production but also addressing the problems of unemployment across Jammu and Kashmir.

Under this scheme, for establishment of Sheep/Goat unit on participatory mode consisting of 25 ewes/does, Livestock is supplied free of cost. Retrieval of equivalent livestock from female progeny is carried out in a phased manner from 3rd year. Any individual /group of individuals/self-help group/cooperative society/farmers producer organization is eligible to apply for the scheme.

Similarly for the establishment of Sheep/Goat units (25 Sheep/goat per unit), scheme provides 50% of the unit cost as total eligible subsidy with a ceiling of Rs 1.00 lac whichever is less per unit (25 sheep/goat) and a maximum subsidy ceiling of Rs 8.00 lac for 8 Sheep/Goat units (each unit comprising of 25 sheep/goats.). Any individual /group of individuals/self-help group/cooperative society/farmers producer organization is eligible for the scheme.

The scheme also has the provision of Procurement of Shearing units (Comprising one shearing machine, one Genset& shearing accessories/spares), 50% of the unit cost as total eligible subsidy with a ceiling of Rs 75,000/unit whichever is less. Any individual (trained in MSS or intending to undergo training in MSS) is eligible for the scheme.

The scheme is majorly contributing towards achieving Prime Minister Modi's vision of doubling farmers' income as it augments the income of farmers that they generate by practising agriculture.

The Department also provides breeders with all kinds of assistance during disease outbreaks to minimize the loss. It is because of the help of the Sheep Husbandry Department that Sheep rearing has become one of the lucrative entrepreneurship

choices in J&K.

Even after having enormous potential and a conducive environment for sheep and goat farming, Jammu and Kashmir was still facing a significant gap between demand and supply of mutton.

According to the Jammu and Kashmir's Sheep Husbandry Department data, 594 sheep and goat units have been established under the scheme in the financial year 2021-22, providing employment to hundreds of people in the Union Territory.

As per the departmental statistics, under this scheme 69 units have been established in Anantnag, 93 in Baramulla, 65 in Bandipora, 60 in Budgam, 56 in Ganderbal, 58 in Kulgam, 77 in Kupwara, 47 in Pulwama, 43 in Shopian and 26 in Srinagar.

Similarly, 329 units were provided to the beneficiaries in the year 2021-22 in Jammu region by the Animal Husbandry Department under the Integrated Sheep Development Scheme. The structural changes and consolidation of different programmes for farm and non-farm population in the rural areas is nothing short of a revolution for rural J&K.

The UT has also redefined the agriculture and horticulture business in the country with expanded operations and a strong supply chain system, which had never happened in the last 70 years.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha at the first-ever "Vishal Pashudhan Vyapar Mela" at Sports Stadium, Hiranagar said that UT Administration will provide a major fillip to the Animal Husbandry sector with an additional source of income to the farmers. "It is an effort on the part of the government towards providing a single platform for sale/purchase of high-quality livestock breeds that will strengthen J&K's Dairy sector, besides exploiting the full potential of J&K in milk, fodder & mutton production, to cut down imports and bridge the demand and supply gap in the poultry sector, and generating employment by attracting new entrepreneurs," he said.

Recently the Government of Jammu and Kashmir also signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) for transforming the Sheep Farming Sector in the UT. The partnership between J&K and New Zealand will boost production & productivity in the livestock sector of the UT. The overarching objective of the MoC is to improve farmers' remuneration, transfer of technology in research & development as well as marketing & value addition of sheep products of J&K. The Government is also creating an enabling environment for the integrated growth of the livestock sector which is providing livelihood support to around 1.2 million families and contributing 5% to the Union Territory's GDP.





‘Scientific methodologies prove game changer in Saffron cultivation in J&K’

Jammu: The India International Kashmir Saffron Trading Centre (IIKSTC), Dusso, Pampore has proved instrumental in facilitating saffron growers with organized marketing, quality based pricing besides direct transaction between growers, traders, exporters and industrial agencies ensuring substantial profits to the beneficiaries.

In IIKSTC, scientific post-harvest handling practices like Drying, Grading, Stamen Separation etc are being adopted for fetching better returns to farmers.

Saffron produced at farmer fields in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is of best quality which proffers strong flavour, aroma and colour effect as well in comparison to Saffron produced across the world.

The governments, in an effort to maintain the identity of Kashmir Saffron and eliminate the role of intermediaries from the marketing channel for better pricing for growers in the domestic and international market which will eventually help growers realize maximum prices, established IIKSTC.

IIKSTC is tremendously helping the saffron growers to enforce adoption of quality standards and fix the price based on quality grades at farm gate level.

The government worked hard to motivate the orthodox mindset of farmers towards adopting scientific methodology for promoting saffron cultivation as bold initiatives like prophylactic measures and soil health reclamation measures are being taken which are proving a game changer in Saffron cultivation in J&K.

More than 30000 families in J&K located in 226 villages are associated with saffron cultivation. Jammu & Kashmir is the second largest Saffron producing area in the world and is the only place in the country where saffron is being cultivated.

Collection center unit set up as part of IIKSTC with a cost of Rs 37 crore is meant for collection of produce from farmers, proper weighing, issuing code numbers, tagging and maintenance of record.

Proper marking of crates is ensured so that there is no mixing of produce and ownership disputes are avoided, a saffron farmer, Ali Muhammad Mir of Dusoo Pampore said. “Then our produce is sent to the stigma separation unit and in case of excess produce, it is kept in cold storage after proper coding. We are facilitated at every step by the departmental officials to locate our produce,” he added. In the quality evaluation laboratory unit, officials receive coded samples from the drying unit for quality evaluation and testing for conducting physical and chemical tests of saffron samples received, using IS methods.

The laboratory is equipped with all the facilities and machines to provide accurate and globally acceptable test results.

“The technicians allot grades as per ISO standards for each parameter besides maintaining liaison with e-auction units by providing test certification so that the farmer can sell his produce as per the grade certified,” an official of IIKSTC said.

During the selling process, the auction center of the IIKSTC facilitates the growers to revise the “Base Price” and “Valuation

Price” based on the demand and supply and other parameters till 24 hours before the auction day. The growers are able to control the “Reserve Price” in real time during the auction. It gives him the ability to monitor multiple lots simultaneously via features like single button knockdown. A grower can identify the market trend (demand and pricing) of various brands,” an official at the center said, adding that, “Faster settlement process via electronic movement of contract note and delivery orders is ensured to sellers at the center.”

The IIKSTC is a win-win situation for both seller and the buyer. Earlier, the growers are not aware of buyer details across India and world and hence they had a very small market. They were not sure that they are receiving the right market price for their Saffron produce. It used to take longer for the growers to receive money. Similarly, buyers don’t have to wait for a longer time to receive Saffron and need not to travel hundreds of kilometers to visit Saffron Growers in Kashmir to ensure that they receive the genuine price and authentic product.

Saffron production in Jammu and Kashmir had been under threat of extinction as is evident from its dwindling share in global production. Area under Saffron Production declined from about 5707 hectare to 3785 hectare in 2010-11. Simultaneously, productivity had declined from an average of 3.13 Kg/ha to 1.88 kg/ha over the years before 2010.

To give boost to saffron production and mitigate sufferings of saffron growers, the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperation, during the year 2010-11, introduced a scheme “National Mission on Saffron” and setting up IIKSTC is one the components of the Mission.

During the launch of “Jashn-e-Zafraan”, Lieutenant Governor said that the increase in saffron production from 2.5 Kg per hectare to 5 kg per hectare will motivate farmers of other agriculture and allied sectors to increase their production taking maximum benefit of various agriculture development schemes of the Central and Union Territory government.

LG said that after the tireless efforts of the central government last year, Saffron got the Geographical Indication Tag and paved the way for it to become a powerful brand in the international market.

To acquaint the saffron growers/sellers with the mechanism/protocol to be adopted for post-harvest management of saffron and its e-auctioning under Kashmir saffron brand, the department of Agriculture Kashmir organizes awareness training program at IIKSTC.

Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Narendra Singh Tomar, during his visit to Spice park said, the central government is ready to provide all possible help and support to the farmers. “With the existence of Spice Park, the income out of saffron production of growers has doubled. The Center will provide all kinds of facilities and assistance to the farmers that will make the lives of our farmers prosperous,” he said.

Govt to launch 200 electric buses with real-time tracking in JK

Jammu: The Jammu and Kashmir government is all set to launch a fleet of 200 electric buses equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, including a real-time tracking system, in both capital cities of the union territory, an official said on Saturday.

The move to introduce 100 eco-friendly buses each in Jammu and Srinagar is aimed at reducing air and noise pollution and dependence on fossil fuels, as well as to provide better facilities to the people, he said.

The official said the buses will be procured under the second phase of the central scheme Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and EV (FAME II), and tenders have been floated for the procurement.

“The electric bus service will encourage commuters to shift towards the public transport system,” he said.

Introduction of the high-tech buses will also boost revenue generation as more viable and lucrative routes will be included in the operational network of transportation, the official added.

These buses will be equipped with modern features like a real-time passenger information system (PIS), panic buttons for emergency, automatic bus vehicle location system, CCTV cameras, public address systems, stop request buttons and online collection of fares through various mediums.

“The Intelligent Transport Management System (ITMS) of buses will be connected with the Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) of Jammu Smart City Limited (JSCL) and Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL) simultaneously,” the official said.



Fares will be collected through a variety of options like cash, smartcards and QR codes, he said.

An online monitoring platform will be created at the city level for these buses to monitor relevant parameters, including running kilometres, equivalent fuel saved in litres per day, and equivalent carbon dioxide reduction per day, the official said.

Officials said the Jammu and Kashmir Road Transport Corporation (JKRTC) will be rolling out the ITMS by April 30.

In the first phase, online ticket booking facilities will be provided, they said.

Srinagar airport to get advanced ILS to operate flights at low visibility

Srinagar: To overcome the problem of frequent cancellation of flights due to low visibility at the Srinagar airport here, authorities said the process to install Category II instrument landing system (ILS) will commence next month.

The system will bring the visibility threshold down to 500 metres from the current 1,000 metres and it will be ready for commissioning in October, they said.

“The instrument landing system at our airport is currently designed to function at the visibility of more than 1,000 metres. We never operate a flight if the visibility is less than this threshold...,” an official at the Srinagar airport said.

“The installation (of the new system)

will commence in April and it will be ready for commissioning in October. The visibility threshold with the new system will come down to 500 metres... We have state-of-the-art landing and navigation facilities and we continuously strive for their improvement in line with the increase in traffic,” the official said.

To enhance the safety of passengers, aircraft and employees, a range of modern equipment have been installed, he said.

“We recognize that a piece of equipment is as good as the person operating or using it. Therefore, we ensure world class training for our staff...,” he said.

Flights are cancelled, sometimes for days together, due to low visibility in the

wake of bad weather, especially when it snows in Kashmir.

The officials said the latest machinery is being used for snow removal and clearing of ice from the airfield and the objective is always to ensure minimum disruption to flight operations during inclement weather.

“We are sensitive to the adverse effect of the snow accumulation on the aircraft wings. Thus, we deploy water spray for de-icing so that there are no unnecessary delays in flight operations,” the official said.

About Rs 1,500 crore will be invested in constructing a new terminal building and six more aircraft parking stands at the airport, he mentioned.



Ahead of apple season J&K records 8-fold increase in CA storage capacity



Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir has recorded an eight-fold increase in controlled atmosphere (CA) storage since 2015-16, an official said.

The Jammu and Kashmir government, in a bid to reduce post-harvest losses by increasing the shelf life of various agriculture and horticulture products besides addressing the issue of distress sale of crops by the farmers, has encouraged and aided private players to set up cold storage (CA) facilities.

Director General Horticulture Aijaz Ahmed Bhat said the efforts have resulted in 700 per cent increase in CA storage capacity from 25,000 MT in 2015-16 to 2 lakh MT in 2021-22, which is expected to be further increased by 25000 MT in the next year.

“Establishment of CA stores has resulted in significant reduction of distress sales resulting in higher returns for the orchardists. There are 40 CA stores across Jammu and Kashmir with Industrial Growth Centre (IGC) in Lassipora area of south Kashmir’s Pulwama alone having as many as 23 CA stores,” he said.

Besides, there are 17 stores functioning in different districts including Shopian, Srinagar, Anantnag, Baramulla and Jammu.

He said the government has taken several concrete steps for increasing Agriculture and horticulture production besides enhancing the quality of crops while laying special focus on post-harvesting management infrastructure, especially in the private sector.

Apples kept in cold storages in Kashmir help farmers to fetch much better rates by selling their production as per their will according to demand.

He said the government-aided cold stores would help in fetching higher rates to the A-grade apples in Kashmir which amount to around 8 lakh metric tonne.

Earlier, these apples used to be sold at less than their actual value due to inadequate availability of CA stores in the valley.

Bhat said the department is committed towards strengthening the post harvest infrastructure in the valley.

“We are exploring every possible opportunity to have infrastructure like CA stores, processing units and related utilities developed across the Valley and best services are provided to the orchardists,” he added.

At present, he said, “we are encouraging new entrepreneurs to set up CA storage capacity with government support to cater to the annual production which otherwise would result in distress sales.” As per available data, Kashmir produces 20 lakh metric tonnes of apples annually.

Ali Muhammad Bhat, a farmer, says that setting up of cold storage system is not only benefitting the growers but consumers also.

“The local consumer pays higher rates for purchase of apples imported from other countries like the US and New Zealand but with a cold storage facility he can buy local apples for a reasonable price during any time of the year,” Bhat said.

The recent visit of CEOs from several Gulf countries to Kashmir to explore the investment opportunities here will also help in creating post-harvest infrastructure in J&K.

“In the past two years, a significant change is being witnessed in Jammu and Kashmir especially if I talk about the investment, industry and business,” Lt Governor Manoj Sinha said.

He said his administration discussed several areas and issues. “We have identified their (CEOs’) concerns and assured them of their redressal in minimum time period especially in the Health and Medical Education, Real Estate, Hospitality, Food processing, Cold storage and cold chain and education.”

Sinha said the government is hopeful to bring an investment of over Rs 70,000 crore in next six months.

“Last year, we had a total outside investment of Rs 15000 crore. By now, we have cleared investment proposals of around Rs 27000 crore,” he said, asserting that “we hope that in next six months, it will cross Rs 70,000 crore”.

Sinha said when the investments take place on ground, it would generate a minimum of six to seven lakh jobs in Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmir on an average produces over 20 lakh metric tonne of apple every year and it is expected that it will jump over to 25 lakh metric tonne production in next few years.

The 2017 economic survey in J&K said that half of Kashmir’s population is directly or indirectly dependent on the apple industry and over 3.5 lakh hectare are under apple cultivation.

'CARPET EXPORT PICKS UP PACE AFTER LAUNCH OF GI TAG'



Jammu: The launch of Geographical Indication (GI) for the famed hand-knotted Kashmiri Carpets by Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, to revive the sheen and glory of Kashmiri Carpet Industry has bestowed a new lease of life to the carpet trade in Kashmir.

The GI certifies the genuineness of hand-knotted Kashmir Carpets with relevant information of the manufacturer, weaver, district and raw material.

An official of the Handicrafts Department said the innovation will go a long way in preserving the quality of hand-knotted carpets.

The artisans and traders dealing with the Kashmiri carpet say the initiative was much needed to see Kashmir carpets flourishing again.

“Kashmiri carpet was the big brand enough to sell it anywhere in the world but some people were selling Iranian and machine-made carpets in the name of handmade Kashmiri carpets. Now buyers can distinguish between hand and machine-made carpets,” said a group of artisans of village Gadekhoud, known for carpet weaving and artisans here have been weaving carpets for decades.

They also said that GI Tagging will fetch better returns to their products and would certainly encourage and motivate younger generations to learn carpet weaving for preserving this art.

On February 11 this year, history was created with the launch of QR-code by Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, for handmade Kashmir carpets, first-of-its-kind in the country.

Customers could now verify the authenticity and other requisite details of carpets produced in Jammu and Kashmir and assure themselves that the product they purchased was not fake.

The QR code-based system can help in checking the cheating and misbranding that has badly dented the carpet Industry in Kashmir.

The QR-code based label will capture vital parameters of the carpet such as GI user, manufacturer, artisan, knots per square inch, the material used, among others.

LG Sinha said that with the help of modern technology, the government will be able to standardise the uniqueness of hand-made carpets and boost the export of J&K's carpets in international

markets.

The carpets from J&K are being exported to at least 25 countries. In 2020-21, carpets worth Rs 115 crore were exported to Germany while the figures were Rs 34 crore for US, Rs 36 crore for UAE and Rs 22 crore for the Netherlands. The J&K administration is also working on starting a mega carpet village.

Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Chief, Sheikh Ashiq, has welcomed the launching of QR-code based mechanism. He said the GI tagging of Kashmir's hand-made carpets would increase exports of Kashmiri handicraft, which have been on decline for the last 3-4 years.

“This GI tagging restores customer's confidence besides protecting authenticity of artisans,” he said and urged the authorities to provide maximum grants for the QR-code-based mechanism so that artisans can compete in the international market.

Addressing a seminar virtually on introduction of GI tag for the carpets, organised by Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC), Ranjan Prakash Thakur, Principal Secretary, Government Industries and Commerce, said the QR code-based mechanism will help in checking the duplicity or fake branding sabotaging the growth of the carpet industry in the valley.

“Given the international export size and market competition, it is a prerequisite to safeguard the authenticity of the products for sustainability of the local weavers and exporters,” Thakur said.

A month later for the first time, the GI-certified Kashmir silken carpets were exported to Germany which are valued at around 40,000 Euros. The export of the consignment reflects the commitment of the Government to help the artisans, traders of J&K to export their products to international markets for better returns.

Any carpet dealer can apply for the GI license and get their products checked to increase their brand value. GI tagging is a process in which knotting of the carpet is tested. Customers can use their mobile phones and scan QR code. He will get a certificate containing all information.

Lt Governor recently remarked that the Government is determined to provide new markets, create sustainable livelihood for the local artisans, besides preserving the rich cultural heritage of J&K.

J&K AIMS TO ATTRACT RS 70,000-CR INVESTMENT IN SIX MONTHS: LG

Jammu: Lt Governor Manoj Sinha said that the Union Territory is expected to attract Rs 70,000 crore worth investments in the next six months.

J&K has been looking to bring in investments in diverse sectors, including tourism and hospitality, and currently a UAE delegation is visiting the Union Territory.

The delegation reached Srinagar on Sunday to explore investment opportunities in the region, following an invitation by the LG at the Dubai Expo in January this year.

Officials said that the LG along with Ranjan Prakash Thakur, Principal Secretary, Industries and Commerce, and other government officials will showcase investment opportunities to the visiting delegates as part of a four-day programme, focusing on entrepreneurship, tourism and hospitality sectors.

The LG said that the J&K government has already sanctioned industrial investment proposals worth over Rs 26,000 crore so far and provided land to the investors. "We are hopeful of getting an investment of over Rs 70,000 crore in the next six months," Sinha said.

The 34-member delegation includes top businessmen from real estate, hospitality, telecom, import-export, and other sectors. A member of the ruling family in Sharjah is also part of the delegation.

"The delegates are looking for avenues where investment can be made in Jammu and Kashmir," Sinha told reporters on the sidelines of a function here.

About the four-day programme, Sinha said, "I am hopeful that its good results will be witnessed by the people of Jammu and Kashmir."

Asked about the sectors that are expected to attract investment, he said a clear picture will emerge tomorrow. "The investment is going to take place in both regions of Jammu and Kashmir in different areas and sectors," he said.

According to the officials, the Union Territory is aiming to attract new investment in industries and tourism by highlighting key opportunities and growth sectors to the delegation.

The officials said the delegation will also visit the famous hill resort of Pahalgam in south and Gulmarg in north Kashmir to explore investment opportunities in the tourism and hospitality sector.

They said there will be pitch presentations by several importers, exporters and start-ups in J&K along with an overview of the cottage and silk industries, product displays and artisan meets.

The programme is in line with the initiatives taken by the government towards creating favourable infrastructure for export promotion and an entrepreneurial-friendly environment, the officials added.

Meanwhile, referring to the visit of a 36-member UAE delegation that arrived here on a four-day visit on Sunday to explore investment opportunities, Principal Secretary of Industries and Commerce Department of the Union Territory Ranjan Prakash Thakur told PTI that the visit is a good omen for J&K focusing on some main sectors to give a fillip to investments and economic development.

"This is a very high-level delegation. Hospitals, hotels are of their keen interest, along with agro-industry, IT and horticulture," he said, adding that the government has taken various steps with a new and futuristic mindset.

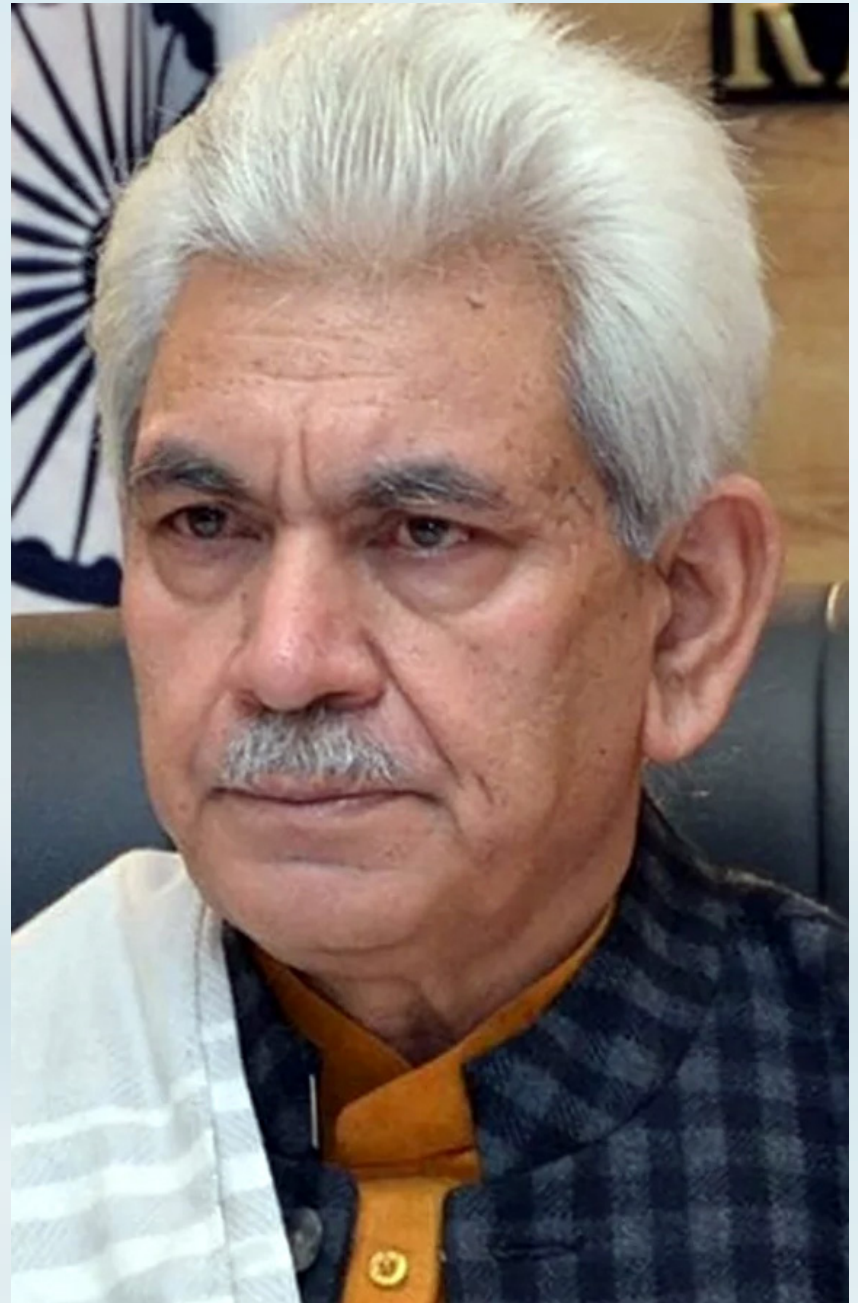
Besides, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will kick-start investments worth about Rs 35,000 crore in Jammu and Kashmir during his likely visit to the Union Territory next month, the official said.

"The prime minister will do the ground-breaking of investments worth about Rs 30,000-35,000 crore during his visit here," Thakur said.

He did not get into the details of the prime minister's programme.

Thakur said that during the tenure of Lt Governor Manoj Sinha, the Union Territory administration has received investments worth about Rs 50,000 crore so far, for which detailed project reports have been submitted and money has been deposited, whereas the total investment stood below Rs 15,000 crore in last six decades.

Thakur, an officer of the Indian Railway Traffic Service of 1989 batch, said there has been a fundamental shift in the policy, and Jam-



mu and Kashmir has made a huge leap forward.

"J&K is a high focus area now. This is our time now and J&K needs to develop for its own people. There has been a fundamental shift in the policy as well as the implementation. An ecosystem has been created and we are taking one step forward every day," he said.

Referring to the visit of the delegation from Gulf countries, the principal secretary said that the thinking has to change radically. "With the visit of the delegation, the idea is just to whet the appetite, but, I am sure, the investment will follow," he said.

"The idea is to expose Kashmir and clear their confusion about the place. The visit is really important because we need investments in hotels and hospitals today for our future. We have attracted investments worth more than three times than what J&K got in the last 75 years. By the end of the year, J&K will have investments worth Rs 75,000 crore," Thakur said.

He said the delegation consists of industrialists involved in the manufacturing of textile, cement, pharma, fibre and cable, among others.

Talking about the steps taken by the government in the last few months to bring J&K on the industrial map, Thakur said a single-window clearance system has been put in place. He said the government has notified a change in the land use policy as well.

"The incentivisation of investments has taken place, which is the initial impetus, a kick-start. J&K is one among the top five states in the ease of doing business. We have shown that transformation is possible and the ground has been set," he said.

However, Thakur emphasised the need to overcome various challenges towards the implementation of the projects on the ground. "We have to improve the power scenario and we are working on that. We have to create road infrastructure and improve accessibility. And we have to hold ourselves accountable to deliver," he said.

Thakur also said that the government will increase the number of medical seats by 1,100 each year for the next three years.



J&K ready for economic partnership with UAE, taking it to new level: LG

Srinagar: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said that Jammu and Kashmir is ready for economic partnership with the United Arab Emirates, with global standard end-to-end facilities for the businesses, skilled workforce, transparent and hassle-free regulatory mechanisms and necessary infrastructure.

Addressing the Gulf Countries' Investment Summit at SKICC here, which is aimed at providing a platform for the foreign business delegates to explore a host of investment opportunities in Jammu & Kashmir, Sinha highlighted the scope for J&K and GCC companies' economic cooperation to make J&K as the "most beautiful investment destination in the world".

According to an official press release, The LG said that the visit of CEOs of top companies, entrepreneurs, start-up representatives, exporters in J&K is an expression of confidence of the industry leaders in the potential for business cooperation between J&K and Gulf countries.

"Since 2014, India's relationship with Gulf countries has undergone a massive evolution which is being translated into a vibrant, revitalized economic partnership with J&K that will not only diversify our export basket but will also create a conducive environment for the expansion of the existing trade," the LG said.

"We have worked with a coherent framework in the last two years to harness immense natural resources, economic potential of J&K," he said, and added that under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, "we have also worked out a blueprint to unlock investment flows from compliance and restrictions. Over Rs 70,000 crores worth investment proposals have been received within a year."

"We promise to provide global standard end-to-end facilities for the businesses, skilled workforce, transparent and hassle-free regulatory mechanism, and creation of necessary infrastructure wherever required," the LG pledged.

"Since my Dubai Expo visit earlier in January this year, many foreign companies from UAE have announced long-term plans for J&K. We are ready to take the relationship to a qualitatively new level and strengthen our economic partnership," he added.

Talking about the fast-paced socio-economic transformations

taking place in J&K, the LG said that the government embarked on several major initiatives in developing physical and social infrastructure and some of these initiatives are the biggest ever since the country's independence in 1947.

The development of the power sector, trade, horticulture, rural infrastructure, roads and air links, medical education and health services, Industrial Training Institutes, Information Technology and storage facilities for the produce are the diverse areas that have been addressed, the LG added.

He said that the sector-specific industrial estates and industrial parks are being promoted in a focused manner, besides launching a single window portal as the one-stop solution for attaining all the approvals and permissions in a time-bound manner.

He also said that J&K offers an abundant demographic dividend, "amazingly easy interface with the government, specific industrial land bank, sector-specific policy, ever-growing public infrastructure, reforms furthering ease of doing business, a host of tax benefits, and most importantly a secure environment to facilitate new investments in the UT."

"I welcome the business delegates in J&K's journey of economic growth and to move together towards creating a more prosperous and vibrant UT, benefitting all sections of our society," he said.

Meanwhile, BST Organics Pvt Ltd, Pashmkaar, Sarveshwar Group, Sky Robo Drones Pvt Ltd, ESPA Learn Pvt Ltd, Fastbeetle, Orchardly, JKTDC, Reem Automotives, Peaks Group of Companies, other entrepreneurs and startups showcased their products, and pitched their ideas to the investors for investment and answered their queries during the interactive session, the press release informed.

Women entrepreneurs, who are being provided assistance in the form of capacity building, access to credit, and market linkages under the "Hausla- inspiring her growth" programme also pitched their models for further investment. These included- Ecokash, Masha and SEED solutions, the press release said.

The Investment Summit was attended by CEOs of top UAE and Hong Kong companies; women entrepreneurs, start-up representatives and exporters.

LG launches MyGov – citizen engagement platform, UT Dashboard

Jammu: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha launched My Gov – the robust citizen engagement platform for the union territory, in an effort to bring the administration closer to the common man.

According to an official press release, Sinha said the innovative platform to build the partnership between citizens and the administration will promote participatory governance and policymaking.

“MyGov will bring the J&K administration closer to the common man while providing them opportunity to share opinions, ideas and suggestions on a range of issues for socio-economic transformation of the UT,” the LG said.

“Governance process is a two-way street. Citizens’ suggestions are essential for people-centric policy making and the MyGov platform will ensure that views of all stakeholders are incorporated in planning and decision making,” the LG said.

Dedicating the new initiative to the citizens of J&K, Sinha reiterated the government’s commitment to fulfill aspirations of the people.

“We are setting new benchmarks of participatory governance, providing technology-driven solutions, real time monitoring of government schemes & programmes, and making public services easily accessible to the people of J&K,” the LG added.

Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary, while speaking on the occasion, asked the officials to reach out to citizens in a more effective manner and put dedicated focus on ensuring that the facil-

ities and services created for people are being utilized by them to the fullest. Abhishek Singh, CEO MyGov congratulated the LG-led J&K government for becoming the first Union Territory to launch the MyGov platform, which is a unique initiative to connect the people with the government and enable them to contribute towards good governance.

According to the press release, LG also launched the UT Dashboard. The dashboard will monitor development works and flagship schemes of various government departments for ease of decision-making.

The UT dashboard facilitates a graphical overview of the performance of various schemes pertaining to different departments based on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), the press release said.

Prerna Puri, Secretary, Information Technology department highlighted the initiatives taken by the department for empowering common citizens through digital initiatives.

All possibilities are being explored to develop a unified portal for public services, she informed.

Amit Sharma, CEO Jammu and Kashmir e-Governance Agency (JaKeGA) briefed the meeting about the measures taken by JaKeGA to ensure increased transparency, and efficiency of citizen services delivery to common people.

Administrative Secretaries, HoDs, besides senior officials were present on the occasion.

Govt has taken all possible steps for public outreach and grievance redressal: LG

Jammu: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said that the government has taken all possible steps for public outreach and grievance redress efforts.

Addressing the public grievances during “LG’s Mulaqaat”- Live grievance hearing here at Civil Secretariat, the LG while interacting with some randomly selected individuals from across the UT, issued on spot directions to the officials to take proactive measures to resolve people’s grievances, an official press release informed.

He said that responsive governance and consequent accountability in the system have led to manifold increase in citizens’ complaints on JK-IGRAMS.

“LG Mulaqaat is playing a pivotal role in improving public policy, delivery of public services and encouraging the constructive participation of common man,” the LG said.

“DCs, HoDs and Administrative Secretaries have a constitutional duty and a moral obligation to see that every complaint from the citizens is addressed within a reasonable time frame. Regular performance & compliance audit would be a productive exercise to strengthen accountability structure,” he added.

Sinha also directed the SSPs of all districts to explore the possibility of organizing ‘Thana Diwas’ on the lines of ‘Block Diwas’ to improve efficiency, transparency and accountability in policing.

In today’s LG Mulaqaat program, with the intervention of LG, an applicant from Kathua — Rakesh Kumar– will now receive his Old Age pension, the press release said.

One Munish Badyal from Upper Roopnagar Jammu projected the issue of non-availability of streetlights in the area, upon which the LG directed the Commissioner JMC to take appropriate action on priority.

On the issue put forth by Moolraj Chanayal from Udhampur regarding the completion of sewerage work, the LG directed the concerned DC to take the issue on priority and submit the action taken report within 10 days.

Ashish Singh of Ramban drew the attention of authorities per-

taining to construction of Jawahar Navodhay Vidhyalaya School. The chair was informed that the work on the school will be started in the month of April.

On the issue projected by Ummer Hussain Bhat from Anantnag pertaining to the toilet facility at Toll Plaza Qazigund, the LG directed the concerned officers to take the appropriate action in this regard. Similarly, redressing the grievance of Mohammad Maqbool Mir from Kulgam regarding better road connectivity in his area, the LG said the work would be taken up on priority.

Several applicants appreciated the LG-led administration for resolving their grievances. Around two lakh grievances have been received in the last one year. Srinagar, Jammu, Baramulla, Anantnag, Pulwama emerged as top five performing districts in grievance redressal, the press release informed.

It said that Disaster Management Relief, Rehabilitation & Reconstruction; School Education; Higher Education; GAD; Health & Medical Education, besides Relief Commissioner Migrant J&K, Chief Engineers Distribution of KPDCL & JPDCL; CE PWD (R&B) Kashmir, J&K Bank, are among best performing Administrative departments and HoDs for effectively redressing the public grievances.

Rehana Batul Commissioner/Secretary, Public Grievances moderated the monthly program of LG’s Mulaqaat and informed the chair about the progress and status of grievances received on JK-IGRAMS.

The LG also sought feedback from the people on the grievance redressal mechanism.

Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary; Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary, Finance; R K Goyal, Additional Chief Secretary, Home Department; Vivek Bhardwaj, Additional Chief Secretary, Health and Medical Education Department; Nitishwar Kumar, Principal Secretary to LG, Administrative Secretaries; Divisional Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, Superintendents of Police, Heads of the departments, and other senior officers were present during the interaction, in person and through virtual mode.

Huge potential for investments in J&K: visiting Gulf delegation

A visiting delegation of foreign investors said that Jammu and Kashmir is a “big opportunity” to invest and its members will soon take forward their investment proposals.

A business delegation from the Gulf countries is on a four-day visit to the Valley to explore investment opportunities in the Union Territory.

Speaking with reporters at SKICC here, the CEO of Emirates International Investment Group, Abdulla Mohammad Yousuf Abdulla Alshaibani, said there is a “big opportunity” to invest for the visiting delegation.

“The people of J&K are very kind. We felt so safe between (among) you, like our family. This place is very beautiful, it is a piece of paradise. There is a big opportunity to invest from our whole team,” Alshaibani, who has several companies involved in around 27 different sectors including real estate, hospitality, agriculture, said.

Asked if the delegation was sure of making investment in Kashmir, he said, “Let me tell you very seriously, we are not here to waste time. We came here for something. We took a step, there is a step we are taking now and there is a step which we are going to take in the future very soon.”

The visiting businessman noted that the investments in J&K would be beneficial for both the countries — the UAE and India — and “especially for Jammu and Kashmir”.

To a query if the group was of the opinion that there was potential for investment in J&K, Alshaibani said “yes, it is. It is 100 percent”.

Another member of the delegation, and the CEO of the Century Financial Group, Bal Krishen, said the delegation has come to J&K with a clear mind.

“They (the members of the delegation) see opportunities in J&K. A businessman sees only profits and they see opportunities and profits here. For this, they have come here with a pure and clear-cut mind to invest here and create jobs,” he said.

LG unveils NABARD's Rs 34,829 crore potential linked credit plan for J&K



Jammu: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha unveiled Rs 34,829 crore potential linked credit plan of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) for the union territory, officials said.

Sinha said that the credit plan will meet aspirations of the rural population, bridge gaps in rural infrastructure and strengthen co-operative credit systems to transform the agricultural economy.

The credit plan was announced at a seminar organized by NABARD in Jammu for presenting the focus paper 2022-23 for J&K, covering physical and financial potential under agriculture and allied activities and other priority sectors including the off-farm sector activities in the union territory.

Speaking on the occasion, the LG, according to an official press release, underlined the need to focus on the development of rural economy for unlocking its full potential by filling the gaps vis-à-vis infrastructure, human resources and financing.

NABARD has been a vital driver of the rural economy by meeting the basic needs of infrastructure under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund, where 4,178 projects have been completed in the last 26 years at a cost of Rs 8,457 crores, focusing mainly on irrigation and rural connectivity, the officials said.

Highlighting that Agriculture & Allied sector sustains over 70 percent of population, the LG also announced that NABARD and J&K's Agriculture Department have jointly planned a development package of Rs 25,991 crore to improve agricultural inputs, farmers' income through easy availability of credit, technical up-gradation of agriculture and entire agriculture & horticulture production chain.

The LG noted that this comprehensive plan was in line with the vision of the Prime Minister to double the farmers' income.

“In J&K, 36 Farmer Producer Organizations have been formed by NABARD which are benefiting about 6,000 farmers and 26 more such organizations will be formed in this financial year, decisively advancing the development of a strong base of modern agriculture and horticulture in the UT,” he added.

The LG expressed hope that NABARD will work closely with the UT administration in bringing self-reliance and efficiency in the agriculture and allied sectors.

He noted that this year, the UT's Agriculture department is distributing a new, high yield variety of seeds to about 9 lakh farmers, besides targeting to link more than 33,000 farmers with farm mechanization.





“OUTSIDE INVESTMENTS TO HELP CREATE 7 HUNDRED THOUSAND JOBS IN UT”

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said that the Union Territory (UT) is at a transformative stage and about seven lakh jobs will be created here once outside investments bear fruit.

Speaking to media at SKICC here after attending the Gulf Countries investment summit, Sinha said a huge change has started in J&K in the last two years.

“Especially if I talk about investment and industrial business, a new industrial scheme was created by the Government of India for J&K wherein a proposal of having Rs 28,200 crore as incentives was kept,” he said.

The LG said J&K has the better industrial incentive scheme compared to the rest of the country which has resulted in an increased interest in J&K by the businessmen across the country.

“While about a year ago, the total outside investment made in J&K was about Rs 15,000 crore, today, we have about Rs 27,000 crore investments which have been cleared. We hope in the next six months, it will cross Rs 70,000 crore,” he said.

“When the investment is translated on the ground, I hope a minimum of six to seven lakh people will get employment,” he said.

Sinha said after Narendra Modi became the prime minister, a new era of friendship started between India and the UAE.

“I think it is for the first time that India’s head of state has twice or thrice visited the UAE and created a new environment of cooperation,” Sinha said.

The LG said during the Dubai Expo in January, the J&K administration interacted with many businessmen and invited them to visit J&K so that they could see with their own eyes and explore the investments here.

“We interacted today and specified several issues and areas. We have identified their concerns and we have assured them that their redressal will be done in a minimum time period especially in the hospital and medical education, real estate, hospitality, food processing, cold storages and cold chains, and education,” he said.

“The discussions have been very good. We will now try to take it to the conclusion very soon,” he added.

He said the administration has taken steps which have started to show results.

“I think it will result in an increase in the business and employment generation. The industries and commerce department has made several efforts to take J&K’s horticulture produce, handicrafts and crafts across the world. I am sure we will get huge success in this sector as well. The UT is at a transformative stage where prosperity will come, employment opportunities will come, and people will live in a peaceful coexistence,” Sinha said.

Later, taking to Twitter, Sinha said during his address at the summit, he highlighted the scope for J&K and GCC companies’ economic cooperation to make the “paradise on earth” as the most beautiful investment destination in the world.

“The visit of CEOs of top companies, entrepreneurs, start-up representatives, exporters in J&K is an expression of confidence of the industry leaders in the potential for business cooperation between J&K and Gulf countries,” he said in a series of tweets.

The LG said India’s relationship with Gulf countries is being translated into a vibrant, revitalized economic partnership with J&K that will not only diversify our export basket but will also create a conducive environment for expansion of the existing trade.

“We have worked with a coherent framework in the last 2yrs to harness the immense natural resources, economic potential of J&K. Under guidance of Hon’ble PM Sh Narendra Modi & Hon’ble HM Sh. Amit Shah, we’ve also worked out a blueprint to unlock investment flows from compliance & restrictions,” he said.

“We promise to provide global standard end-to-end facilities for the businesses, skilled workforce, transparent and hassle-free regulatory mechanism and creation of necessary infrastructure wherever required,” Sinha said.

He said since the Dubai Expo visit, many foreign companies from UAE have announced long-term plans for J&K. “We are ready to take the relationship to a qualitatively new level and strengthen our economic partnership”.



LG inaugurates 6 Power Infrastructure Projects costing Rs 64.10 crores

THESE NEW PROJECTS WILL BENEFIT MORE THAN 6 LAKH POPULATION OF JAMMU AND THE ADDITIONAL CAPACITY AUGMENTATION AT GLADNI AND CANAL STATION WILL ENSURE QUALITY POWER TO SEVERAL AREAS OF JAMMU CITY.

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha today dedicated 6 Power Infrastructure Projects costing Rs 64.10 crores to the public.

These inaugurated projects, according to the press release issued by DIPR-JK, will add another 660 MVA capacity to the existing power systems in Jammu region and include new 400 MVA, 220/132 KV Power Transformer at Gladni Grid Station, besides new 50 MVA, 132/33 KV Power Transformers each at Gladni, Canal, Bari Brahmana-I; Jaurian and Akhnoor Grid Stations.

Speaking on the occasion, the Lt Governor highlighted that the Gladni Grid Station - the Gateway of Electric Power to J&K has witnessed long-due capacity augmentation of 400 MVA after almost 14 years.

“In addition to the installation of 400 MVA power transformer at 220 KV level, as a major relief to inhabitants of Jammu city, the department has created additional capacity by way of installation of 50 MVA power transformer at 132 kV level at the same grid station, which will particularly cater to the increased summer demand mainly of domestic and commercial installations of Jammu,” he added.

The Lt Governor further said that these new projects will benefit more than 6 lakh population of Jammu and the additional capacity augmentation at Gladni and Canal station will ensure quality power to several areas of Jammu city. “The addition of three new power transformers of 50 MVA capacity each (Jaurian, Akhnoor & Canal) shall ensure sufficient and reliable power supply in the rural border areas of Jammu Region,” he added.

It was also informed that the 50 MVA power transformer installed and commissioned in the industrial area of Bari Brahmana is another step towards ensuring adequate power capacities to boost Industrial Growth.

“16 new sub-stations have also been built to provide adequate power to the existing industries, ensuring sustained economic activities,” the Lt Governor observed.

The Lt Governor further noted that last year till December 2021, the UT administration was able to achieve the capacity augmentation of up to 231.5 MVA, but in the last three months, it has been increased to 601.5 MVA, which has strengthened the power

system in the industrial areas of Jammu, Samba and Ghatti.

The Lt Governor observed that inauguration of a string of power projects in the last three months in both Jammu and Kashmir Division is a testimony to the UT government’s commitment to improve the quality of life of 1.25 crore citizens of J&K.

He further said that the UT administration is taking revolutionary steps to ensure energy security for the people of J&K and a systematic programme of adding, upgrading and improving the distribution and transmission infrastructure is going on across the UT.

“As a result, in the transmission sector, a total capacity addition of 2540 MVA has been achieved at different voltage levels by way of creation/augmentation of 33 no. grid sub stations. Similarly, in the distribution sector, a cumulative capacity addition of 2260 MVA has been achieved by way of creation/augmentation of 225 no. 33/11 kV Receiving Stations, besides addition/augmentation of 6475 no. Distribution Transformers,” he added.

The Lt Governor observed that the measures will not only resolve the power crises in peak season but will also open a host of employment opportunities by meeting the growing demand for opening of new industries in the UT.

On the occasion, the Lt Governor complimented the J&K Power Development Department for setting new standards in project planning and execution. He commended the efforts of employees for completing the installation and commissioning of the new 400 MVA transformer at 220 kV level 400 MVA at Gladni Grid Station a month before the stipulated deadline.

Dr Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary, congratulated the Power Development Department for the much needed capacity augmentation of Gladni and other grid stations to ensure reliable, quality power supply to the people of Jammu.

Nitishwar Kumar, Principal Secretary, Power Development Department, in his welcome address, highlighted the efforts of PDD for completion of the Gladni augmentation project before the set deadline.

Chander Mohan Gupta, Mayor JMC; Dr RP Singh, Chairman JKPCCL; Rohit Kansal, Principal Secretary to Government, Information Department; Dr. Raghav Langer, Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Anshul Garg, DC Jammu; Chief Engineers, and senior PDD officials were present on the occasion.



BUDGET UNION

BUDGET

Budget 2022-23 reflects govt's commitment for peace, progress, prosperity of J&K: LG

Jammu, Mar 25: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said that the Rs. 1,12,950 crore J&K budget reflects the needs and aspirations of the people and commitment of the UT administration for peace, progress and prosperity.

On behalf of the people of Jammu & Kashmir, he also expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for the "historic budget" for the year 2022-23.

Addressing the media during a presser at Convention centre here, the LG said that "the immediate goal is to accelerate the pace of economic development in the UT of J&K and make it multi-dimensional."

"The budget 2022-23 is primarily a 'growth-oriented' budget and is in line with the endeavours of the UT government to double its economy in the next few years," the LG said.

He said the budget envisages inclusive, all-round development and has also provided resources to realize the vision of developed and prosperous Jammu & Kashmir, he further added.

Speaking on the sector-wise allocation, LG highlighted the key features of the budget, saying "good governance, agriculture & horticulture, power sector, rural development, strengthening grass-root democracy, facilitating investment and industrial growth, infrastructure development, improving connectivity, broadening social inclusion, 'Har Ghar Nal Se Jal' (tap water to every household), education, youth, tourism, and health & medical education sectors have remained the focus areas of the budget 2022-23."

He also said that allocation of Rs 1313 crore to Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies is aimed at strengthening the grassroots democratic setup in the UT.

Rs 200 crore have been earmarked as Development Fund for 20 District Development Councils (Rs 10 crore for each DDC) and Rs 71.25 crore for Block Development Councils (Rs 25 lakh each). Besides, Rs 357 crore has been kept for Solid Waste Management with the two Municipal Corporations and other ULBs.

Huge allocation of Rs 9,289.15 crore has been allocated to the Jal Shakti Department this year. Rs 7750 crore kept under Jal Jeevan Mission for achieving the objective of 100 percent piped water supply to each household.

Apart from this, 43 irrigation schemes are being targeted for completion this year under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana and 28,000 hectares of irrigation potential will be created/stabilized during 2022-23, the LG highlighted.

He said this year, Rs 2,835 crore have been allocated to the agriculture sector and Rs 646 crore to horticulture. "The budget aims at doubling the farmers' income in a planned manner. The strategy is to focus on cultivation of high yielding/high density crops, use of modern technology and a host of other measures."

Nine lakh farmers are being benefited by distribution of high yield varieties/hybrid seeds. Provision for coverage of 400 hectares under high density apple plantation and 1000 hectares under sub-tropical fruit plants has also been made in the budget, he informed.

The allocation of Rs 391.90 crore for Animal, Sheep Husbandry and Fisheries sector will help to meet our target of setting up 2,000 additional dairy units in the Union Territory providing direct employment to 5000 people, the LG said.

"This year's allocation of Rs 5,443 crore for the rural sector will give a major fillip to our endeavors of rural development and economy. Under MGNREGA, 426 lakh persondays will be generated and more than 14,000 youth will be trained under the Rural Skill Development Programme.

"Target has been set for constructing 54,000 houses under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana during 2022-23. We are also targeting to include 21,994 additional Self-Help Groups to our existing tally," he informed

"Dedicated focus is being given to connect all Gram Panchayats with the Internet. Under Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, 1500 elected public representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions will be sent for exposure visits outside Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

Connectivity is a priority sector and critical for all round development of the UT of J&K. "Unprecedented progress has been made in the last two years in this regard. Allocation to the tune of Rs 6296 crore has been made to further strengthen the road and bridge network in Jammu and Kashmir," he said, and added that four major national highway projects viz; Jammu-Akhnoor road, Chenani-Sudhmahadev road, Baramulla-Gulmarg road and Semi-

ring Road Jammu are being completed during 2022.

Execution of Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway project is also being taken-up, besides 10 new road/tunnel projects for the UT under Bharatmala project. Overall 6000 kms of black-topping of roads will be achieved during 2022-23 under various components, the LG informed.

For the power sector, Rs 8,768 crore has been allocated in the budget this year. "In the last one and a half years, historic steps have been taken to strengthen power generation and infrastructure. We are working diligently towards the target of generating 3500 MW of electricity in three years and this will be further increased to three times in seven years," Sinha informed.

He said the Central government has also approved Rs 11,000 crore Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS) project aimed at improving the power system in the UT and providing quality power to the people of J&K. In this financial year, 3 lakh smart meters each will be installed in Jammu and Srinagar to ensure reliable power supply.

As far as the Health sector is concerned, the Union government has earmarked Rs 7,873 crore which will go a long way in extending best-in class medical facilities to the people of the UT, the LG said, adding that the pace of coverage of AB-PMJAY will be accelerated, covering all the residents of J&K.

"Efforts will be made to start the First Batch of MBBS classes in New Medical colleges at Handwara Kupwara and Udampur, increasing the overall intake capacity to 1300 MBBS seats in J&K. Completion of seven nursing colleges is also targeted for 2022-23," he said.

The Union government has given special attention to the School and Higher Education departments by allocating Rs 11,832 crore in this year's budget. 500 kindergartens will be established in government schools; 518 smart classrooms and 200 vocational laboratories are targeted to be established.

"We aim completing 37 girls hostel buildings and 12 KGBV buildings, constructing seven college buildings, setting up Centers for Invention, Innovation, Incubation and Training (CIIT) in Jammu and Srinagar, giving computer tablets to 8000 meritorious tribal students, besides providing skill training to around 20,000 undergraduate students. "We have also set the target to accomplish 100% coverage of pre-matric and post-matric scholarship to Tribal students," the LG said.

"Rs 1,003 crore allocation to the Industries and Commerce Department will complement the ongoing efforts being made to take industrial development in the UT to new heights. Substantial amount will be spent on establishing new industrial estates in Jammu and Kashmir. The Industries department will also assist 2000 Self Help Groups for promoting handicrafts," the LG said while informing that in this year's budget, an amount of Rs 200 crore has been allocated to provide financial assistance to young aspiring entrepreneurs of J&K.

The Social Welfare Department's Rs 3,203 crore budget allocation will ensure that the benefits of the welfare schemes reach every eligible beneficiary. Motorized tricycles will be provided to all Divyangjan, he informed.

"Tourism contributes significantly to J&K's economy. Rs. 508 crore tourism budget will enable the sector to grow, thus

benefiting the local population. 75 offbeat destinations are being identified and developed, and unexplored areas are also being developed under public-private partnership," the LG said.

Keeping in mind the welfare of the tribal community, provision has been made to establish 14 new milk villages, besides constructing seven transit accommodations for the community. Moreover, 29 Cluster Model Villages are being established which are at different stages of implementation, he informed.

The LG also said that best policies are being worked out to encourage the sporting talents like Arif, Sadia, and Aarushi Kotwal, who made J&K proud with their distinct achievements.

"In this financial year, national level events will be organized in different disciplines of 17 sports. Around 7.50 lakh youth will be provided an opportunity to showcase their talent, and 221 playfields will be constructed in all 20 districts of the UT."

"Development of border villages is another important sector that received a dedicated focus in the budget. With allocation of Rs 600 crore for border villages, and Rs 50 crore under the Samridh Seema Yojana, special efforts will be made for the development of villages along the borders," he said.

Under Smart City Mission, 80 projects will be completed and Rs 200 crore has been earmarked for this. "100 electric buses each will ply on the roads of Jammu and Srinagar. Nine major sewerage schemes at an estimated cost of Rs 1131 crore are to be executed and Rs 373 crore will be spent for the revival of Dal and Nagin lakes. Moreover, the balance portion of work on Tawi Barrage costing Rs 73.34 crore is expected to be completed during 2022-23."

Replying to the question on the government's efforts for the welfare of Kashmiri Pandits, the LG said that the relief and rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits is one of the prime focus areas of both the Central and the UT governments.

"1025 transit accommodations are ready at various places in Kashmir valley and 1488 units are at various stages of completion. Out of 6000 posts, appointments have been made to 4678 posts and the process of recruitment on the remaining posts is also being completed in mission mode," he added.

On the issue of employment, the LG said that "in the last one and half year, 11,000 appointments have been made in the most transparent manner. For the first time in history, meritorious candidates from disadvantaged sections have got government jobs on the basis of merit."

Apart from this, 20,323 other posts have been identified and recommended for the recruitment process on a fast track basis. "We are exploring all possibilities for generating a host of employment opportunities in every sector," he added.

Business delegates from Gulf Countries' visited Kashmir to explore investment opportunities in the UT. "We have cleared investment proposals to the tune of Rs 27,000 crore within a year's time and allotted them land for their projects. The investment proposals are expected to cross Rs 70,000 crores in the next six months," the LG added.

The government is encouraging cultivation by border dwellers on the abandoned land near the IB to increase acreage and production thus benefiting the farmers, said the LG in reply

LG INAUGURATES 42 TRANSMISSION & DISTRIBUTION PROJECTS

Srinagar: The government is committed to making Jammu and Kashmir power surplus in the next four years as the electricity generation capacity in the union territory is set to be doubled in the coming three years, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said on Wednesday.

Speaking after the inauguration of 42 Transmission and Distribution projects executed by Jammu and Kashmir Power Development Department (JKPDD), worth Rs 357 crores, in Anantnag, Sinha said J&K was able to harness only 3,500 MW of electricity in the last 70 years, but the power generation capacity in the union territory is set to be doubled in the next three years and trebled in seven years.

“To address the current power-deficit, we have initiated a large-scale capacity augmentation programme. In the 70 years, J&K was able to harness only 3500 MW, and now generation capacity is set to be doubled in three years and tripled in seven years,” Sinha said.

According to an official press release, the LG said that the newly executed power projects will substantially improve the power supply in all ten districts of the Kashmir division.

“I believe the operationalisation of these augmented facilities will ensure all-round development in the region,” he added.

In August 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had laid the foundation of a developed and progressive J&K and the UT administration ensured the access to basic necessities of quality roads, electricity and water on priority basis, he said.

Speaking about the reforms introduced by the government, the LG highlighted the initiatives taken to strengthen and improve J&K’s power infrastructure which had remained dilapidated for the last

several decades.

“Our AT&C losses are high and it is our social obligation to make power a self-sustaining, fast-growing sector of J&K,” he said.

Sinha said the Transmission and Distribution projects worth Rs 2000 crore are being completed and an additional amount of Rs 6000 crore has been allocated by the central government to strengthen the Sub-Transmission and Distribution network across the UT. This will help the administration to bridge the basic infrastructural gap between cities and villages, the LG said.

He said the aim of the administration is to provide quality electricity to all citizens and businesses. These augmented facilities will address the important need of the growing economy. Since August 2019, Sinha said, 3806 MVA has been added to the total capacity as compared to the 8394 MVA capacity achieved in seven decades.

Once the prestigious Ladakh- Jammu Kashmir-Punjab transmission line project gets the final nod by the central government, there will be no dearth of power availability in J&K, he added.

The LG reiterated the government’s commitment to make the UT power surplus in the next four years, and urged people to be equal partners in this transformative journey.

Every citizen of Jammu and Kashmir is a participant in the process of nation-building and their contribution to socio-economic development and progress in every sector is invaluable, he said. “I appeal to the people to support the efforts of the administration by installing smart meters to reduce power theft and enabling the government to provide 24x7 quality power supply to all the consumers across the region,” the LG added.

“Infection Prevention & Control post COVID era”: IFCAI organises first-ever CME in JK

Srinagar: Infection Control Academy of India (IFCAI) Hyderabad in association with Air indoor Assessment Pvt Ltd, New Delhi today organized the first-ever Continuing Medical Education (CME) in Jammu and Kashmir titled “Infection Prevention & Control post COVID era” at SKICC, Srinagar.

Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar was the Chief Guest on the occasion while as Principal Government Medical College Srinagar, Dr Samia Rashid; President IFCAI Dr Ranga Reddy Burri, dignitaries from all medical college and hospitals, infection control members and microbiologist also attended the CME.

At the outset, Advisor Bhatnagar praised healthcare workers for their role in the fight against COVID-19. He said that our doctors, nurses, clinical officers, and medical support staff have worked without tiring and have put their hearts and minds to the service of others selflessly during the last three years.

The Advisor said that the union territory handled the Covid-19 pandemic with great professionalism and used all possible resources to provide care to patients suffering from the disease. He said while the UT successfully managed to stem the spread of the first COVID wave, it didn’t stop there and continued to ramp up the facilities that were required to fight the disease.

Advisor Bhatnagar said that sufficient measures were taken by the administration which included increasing bed capacity, oxygen generation capacity or availability, ensuring supply of drugs and consumables, and management of protocols or directions.

He also acknowledged the great strides J&K has achieved in the last 2-3 years and said that the infrastructure build up has gone through a sea change.

Regarding medical education, the Advisor said that it has

shown a quantum jump over the past three years and the government has opened new Medical Colleges besides upgrading the district hospitals and Community Health Centres. He further added that the UT is going to have special cancer hospitals at Srinagar and Jammu which would provide a huge relief to the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Regarding Infection Prevention and Control (IPC), Advisor Bhatnagar said that it is becoming one of the most important topics that is gaining attention post COVID era.

He said that the CME titled “Infection Prevention & Control post COVID era” is being conducted at the right time and hoped that a good action plan would come out of the CME that would help us in Infection, Prevention and Control.

Dr Ranga Reddy Burri in his welcome address said that IPC is becoming a mainstream topic and most hospitals across the country are adopting it fully for providing better protection to the people. He said that IPC is going to make a huge difference in future times and said that IFCAI is ready to provide support to all the health Institutions across India to build up their capacities in IPC.

During the session medical practitioners who attended the session shared their knowledge and experiences on various topics. The topics include WHO Core components: a starting point for establishing and strengthening effective IPC programs, challenges and opportunities for infection prevention and control in Indian hospitals, role of IPC, AMR and AMS in improvement of quality and patient safety. The session also witnessed panel discussion on “How to sustain IPC practices in Post COVID era” and “How to stop Superbugs and contain AMR the “silent pandemic”.



‘Rs 31.12 Cr scholarship awarded to tribal students for professional, academic courses’

Jammu: The Jammu and Kashmir government has initiated various steps for strengthening the support to education of tribal students.

In line with the announcement made by Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha for effective steps aimed at welfare of tribal population in J&K, the Tribal Affairs Department has disbursed highest ever scholarship amounting to Rs. 31.12 Crore to tribal students during the current financial year.

The Tribal Affairs Department has also earmarked a budget of 45 Cr for scholarship in the financial year 2022-23. The rise in scholarship budget is aimed at catering the proposed enhancement in scholarship amount for students of Class 1 to 8 in order to encourage primary education in rural areas.

Secretary, Tribal Affairs, Dr. Shahid Iqbal Choudhary informed that education of tribal students is a top priority of J&K Government and with keen interest of Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha the department has disbursed highest ever scholarship amounting to Rs. 31 Crore to support the tribal students at Post-Graduate, Graduate, Post-Matric and Pre-Matric level. This also includes many cases of the previous two years pending due to various reasons.

The scholarship amount has been credited directly to the bank account of the students through PFMS mode. It was informed that a total number of 12,580 students received scholarship amounts to the tune of Rs. 15.40 Crore under Post Matric scholarship scheme while under Pre Matric scholarship scheme an amount of Rs. 13.50 Crore was disbursed to students studying in 1st to 8th class and an amount of Rs. 2.22 Crore was credited in the individual bank account of 7420 students of class 9th and 10th.

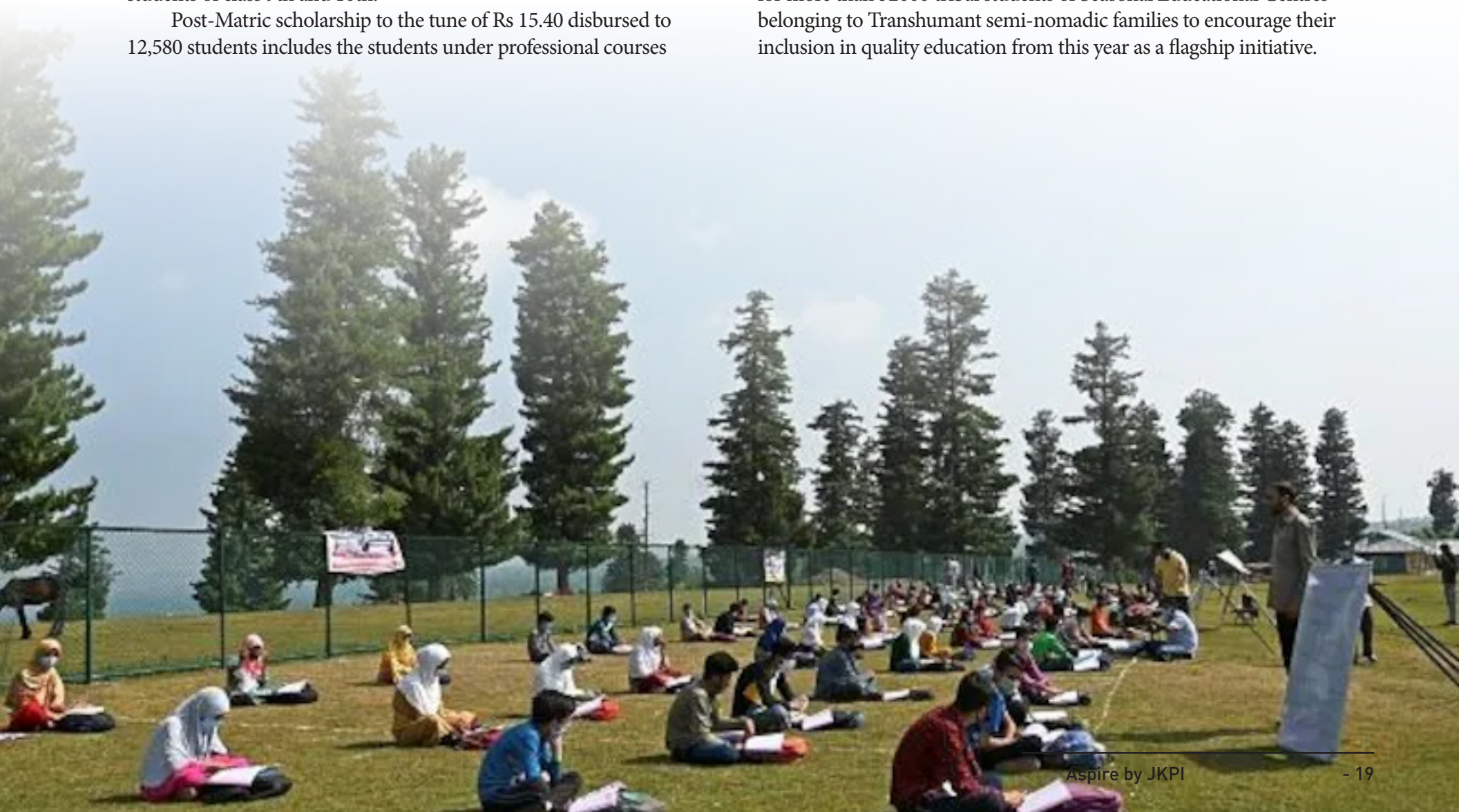
Post-Matric scholarship to the tune of Rs 15.40 disbursed to 12,580 students includes the students under professional courses

clubbed under Group A viz MBBS, BDS, BUMS, Degree Engineering Courses, P.G. Courses in Medical & Engineering, BSc Agriculture, BVSc, BSc IT, M Phill, Ph. D Courses, Non-Professional (and all other Government Recognized Courses), UG & PG Level Courses, Computer Courses of 3 years, Group B viz Diploma Engineering Courses, All Medical Courses, B.Ed Courses & CHM “A” Level & “A” Level Courses (01 Years), Group C viz All other Courses leading to a graduate degree not covered under group I & II e.g., B.A/BSc/B. Com etc and Group D viz All Post-Matriculation Level Non-Degree Courses for which entrance qualification if High School (Class X), e.g., Senior Secondary Certificate (XI & XII), both General and Vocational Stream, ITI Courses, 3 year Diploma Courses in Polytechnic, (“O” Level Hardware/Software Diploma Computer Courses etc).

The number of students provided scholarships under the Graduate and Post-Matric scholarship registered an increase of 120% over the numbers last year in addition to clearing the backlog of precious two years. The Tribal Affairs Deptt is further working on reforming the process of scholarship by introducing PFMS at Pre-matric and doubling the scholarship amount for classes 1 to 8.

Pertinently, the deptt had announced doubling of scholarship budget to 30Cr in 2021-22 which was achieved in time and for next academic year another 50% hike to Rs 45 Cr has been included in the budget. The scholarship budget of Rs 6.37 Cr in 2018-19, 8.60 Cr in 2019-20 was enhanced to record Rs 30 Cr outlay for the financial year 2021-22.

The department is also working on a special scholarship award for more than 32000 tribal students of Seasonal Educational Centres belonging to Transhumant semi-nomadic families to encourage their inclusion in quality education from this year as a flagship initiative.



CS ASKS BANKS INCREASE LENDING FOR INCREASED ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Jammu, mar 30: Saying that credit contraction is a big drag on a growing economy like J&K, the Chief Secretary Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta asked the banks to ramp up lending to enable J&K to keep up the growth momentum.

According to an official press release, he said that “rising tourist arrivals and plummeting unemployment rate would start showing results if banks loosen credit squeeze to prime the J&K’s economy.”

Dr. Mehta was speaking in the 6th meeting of J&K UTLBC, which was attended by Financial Commissioner Finance, Atal Dulloo, Principal Secretary, HUDD, Dheeraj Gupta, Principal Secretary, Agriculture Production Department, Navin Kumar Choudhary, Principal Secretary, I&C, Ranjan Prakash Thakur, MD & CEO, J&K Bank (Convenor J&K UTLBC) Baldev Parkash, Director, DFS, MoF (GoI) A.K. Dogra, Regional Director, RBI, Kamal P Patnaik, Chief General Manager NABARD, A. K. Sood and other senior functionaries of the Government, RBI, NABARD, Banks, LDMs, line departments, insurance companies and the representative of BSNL.

The Chief Secretary said that banks need to urgently move towards accepting and processing loan applications online for efficiency and transparency.

While appreciating J&K Bank for launching a portal for real-time tracking of credit applications under government sponsored schemes, he informed that a common portal for receiving and processing applications under all government sponsored schemes will soon be developed and integrated with all the banks operating in J&K.

“This will resolve all the concerns relating to delays in the processing of loan applications by different banks,” he said.

The Chief Secretary directed the UTLBC convener to ensure that J&K is saturated with the bank branches/banking correspondents as per DFS norms before 15th April, 2022.

Dr. Mehta also directed Agriculture Secretary, Industries & Commerce Secretary, UTLBC Convener and Regional Director, RBI to prepare an actionable export/financial road map for ‘one district one product’ scheme by 15th of April, 2022.

Saying that priority sector lending is an important social obligation of the banks, the Chief Secretary directed the banks against insisting upon the collaterals where it is not required under norms and operate within the ambit of the RBI norms/GOI schemes in the course of processing of loan requests.

Earlier Executive President, Sunil Gupta while making a presentation on the financial achievements of various banks in different sectors during the third quarter of the current fiscal year informed that Agriculture and MSME sectors have performed well in the priority sector lending.

It was informed that against 14,932 cases sanctioned under PMEGP during the last year, 24,135 cases have already been sanctioned ending February 2022 during the current financial year.

Similarly, against 10,155 cases sanctioned under NRLM during the last year, 14,448 cases have been sanctioned ending February 2022 during the current financial year.

He also informed that 1,443 cases under the MUMKIN scheme have been sanctioned and disbursed as on 16th March, 2022.

Against 29,146 cases sanctioned under various employment generation schemes during the last year, 46,569 cases have already been sanctioned ending February 2022 during the ongoing financial year.

It was further informed that 28,763 KCCs (crop) and 25,593 KCC (AH) have been issued ending January 2022 during the current financial year and near saturation has been achieved in respect of KCC.

Against the target of holding 651 financial literacy camps, 1,040 financial literacy camps have been organized ending December 2021 during the current financial year.

He also said that the aggregate CD ratio in J&K has increased from 50.67 percent as on 31.03.2019 to 56.57 percent as on 31.12.2021.

NRLM (1.60 percent) and PMEGP (1.90 percent) were reported to have the lowest non-performing assets under major government sector schemes.

Saying that social security is at the heart of the welfare effort of the government, the Chief Secretary directed for saturation of PMSBY, PMJJBY, PMJDY and APY before 15th April, 2022.

He directed the banks to increase lending to SC/ST/OBC and crafts persons to help improve their socio-economic conditions on a sustained basis.

Dr. Mehta informed that J&K’s performance under PM svanidhi is amongst the best in the country and directed the banks to expedite disbursement of 2nd installment under PM svanidhi to the eligible beneficiaries.

Dr. Mehta directed the banks to launch financial literacy campaigns in J&K, especially in far off areas including in educational institutions.

Holding financial literacy as an important step towards financial inclusion, he laid emphasis on sensitizing the people through media campaigns, erecting hoardings etc. at conspicuous places about benefits of various financial inclusion, social security and government sponsored schemes so that more and more beneficiaries can take advantage of these schemes.



BUDGET J&K 2022-23 TO 'REVOLUTIONISE' H&UD SECTOR IN J&K: GOVT

Jammu: In order to deal with the influx of people towards the cities, the Jammu and Kashmir government and central government are working shoulder to shoulder to cater the demands of the local urban populace.

The government is giving high priority to building sustainable and smart cities that are resilient to meet the challenges posed by rapid urbanisation.

Keeping in view these things, the central government has allocated a significant amount of funds to Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) which will revolutionise this sector in coming years.

AMRUT-1.0 & AMRUT-2.0

The purpose of Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) is to provide basic services (e.g. water supply, sewerage, urban transport) to households and build amenities in cities which will improve the quality of life for all, especially the poor and the disadvantaged is a national priority.

During the current financial year, 76 projects are likely to be completed and the remaining projects are to be completed during 2022-23 viz. Construction of Multi level car parking facility at Panjtirthi Jammu, Construction of 05 Nallahs of Tawi River Phase-II, Green Space at Roop Nagar, and so on. City Water Action Plan is to be implemented for all ULBs for providing 100% secure water tap connections to each household left out in urban areas. Besides, all water bodies in urban areas will be rejuvenated in a phased manner. The components of the AMRUT consist of capacity building, reform implementation, water supply, sewerage and septage management, storm water drainage, urban transport and development of green spaces and parks.

SWACHH BHARAT MISSION

Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) (SBM-U) had three major objectives; achieving 100% Open Defecation Free (ODF), ensuring 100% scientific Solid Waste Management (SWM), and behavior change through 'Jan Andolan'.

16 Urban Local Bodies (ULB) have achieved ODF+ status, 25 ULBs to accomplish ODF+ status by the end of the current financial year and the remaining ULBs to achieve ODF+ status in 2022-23. With the roll out of Solid Waste Management, nearly 70% source segregation is likely to be achieved by 2022-23. All the uncovered areas of Srinagar, Jammu & Anantnag to be covered with Sewage/Septage treatment facilities in a phased manner during 2022-23 under SBM (U)-2.0.

A target of scientific disposal of about 850 Metric Ton of waste per day is to be achieved by establishment of Solid Waste Management Plant at Srinagar and Jammu cities benefitting nearly 20 Lakh people. This will also result in elimination of the vulnerable garbage points in both the cities besides generation of energy and production of Compost/Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF). Establishment of decentralized processing facilities in 76 ULBs to be completed during financial year 2022-23 and 690 Metric Ton of waste generated in ULBs to be scientifically treated benefitting nearly 14 lakh population.

SMART CITY MISSION

Smart Cities Mission is an urban renewal and retrofitting programme launched by the Government of India to develop smart cities and make them citizen friendly and sustainable. With an increase in urban population and rapid expansion of areas, the government is looking at smarter ways to manage complexities, increase efficiencies and improve quality of life. This has created a need for cities that monitor and integrate infrastructure to better optimise resources and maximise services to citizens.

Under Smart City Mission, 95 projects are likely to be completed by the end of current financial year and 80 more projects to be completed in 2022-23 improving the quality of life of the people by way of providing Wifi facilities, Smart health centres, installation of river vending machines, smart class rooms, TV charging stations, development of cycle tracks & hawkers zone, development of parking and space under flyovers, etc.

9 major sewerage schemes at an estimated cost of Rs 1131.07 crore will be executed during 2022-23 benefitting the population of 620565 people. Also, 2.15 lakh LED lights in 76 ULBs, in collaboration with M/s Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) are expected to be replaced and nearly 14 Lakh souls in these ULBs will be benefitted.

NATIONAL URBAN LIVELIHOODS MISSION

The National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM), under the aegis of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, aims to facilitate skilled wage employment and gainful self-employment among the urban poor. It would also provide shelter that is equipped with essential services in a phased manner to the urban homeless. 15000 beneficiaries to be covered under the Self Employment component of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission scheme during 2022-23.


CONSERVATION OF DAL-NAGEEN LAKE

Sensing the necessity to protect Dal lake, the Government in the new budget has devised a string of plans like Western Foreshore Road along Dal lake is to be constructed, more indigenous lake cleaning machines will be procured, 1.5 sq.km. area to be cleared from lilly pads during 2022-23, de-weeding & dredging to be conducted along with shore line in 1.5 sq. km. area during 2022-23 and Dredging of acquired land near western side of the lake for 60,000 Sq. Mtrs. in 2022-23 which is to be converted into water bodies has been announced.

ELEVATED LIGHT METRO RAIL SYSTEM IN JAMMU AND SRINAGAR

To decongest both the capital cities and to provide the modern transport facilities to the people of J&K, the Jammu and Kashmir government has submitted a final Detailed Project Reports (DPR) of Rs. 10,599 crores for the metro rail projects in Jammu and Srinagar to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA). The project is expected to be rolled out in 2022-23 and is likely to be completed in 2026. This will reduce the traffic congestion in Srinagar and Jammu cities.





DEDS PROVES LUCRATIVE FOR DAIRY ENTREPRENEURS IN J&K

Jammu: With the focus of the Jammu and Kashmir government to ensure farmers' income gets doubled by 2022, as envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, dairy farming is thriving across the Union Territory.

Centrally sponsored Dairy Entrepreneurship Development Scheme (DEDS), is one of the pioneer initiatives, which is transforming the rural landscape of J&K.

The scheme is being implemented through NABARD with an objective to promote setting up of modern dairy farms for production of clean milk, encourage heifer calf rearing, bring structural changes in the unorganized sector and generate self-employment.

Being an agrarian region, Jammu and Kashmir's agriculture sector contributes 16.18% to its GDP, of which 35% is contributed by the Dairy Sector. The scheme is giving a huge fillip to dairy development in the UT with the socio-economic condition of people witnessing a huge turn around.

The special initiative of the J&K government towards easing out departmental schemes in the dairy sector witnessed gradual shift as more than 10,000 new dairy units have been set up in the past two years, Principal Secretary, Animal and Sheep Husbandry, Navin Kumar Choudhary had said at the inauguration of Pashudhan Vyapar Mela.

Jammu and Kashmir government is promoting DEDS to create self-employment and build infrastructure for the dairy sector in the UT so that the socio-economic health of the rural population improves

According to officials of Animal Husbandry, the scheme also promotes heifer calf rearing for development and conservation of good breeding stock keeping in view the future of healthy livestock.

The government, under the scheme, is also promoting the unorganized sector in bringing milk processing at the village level for better returns to the farmers by employing modern tools and technology. The scheme also provides an increase in the bargaining power of farmers to sell their products by doing value addition to milk via production and processing of milk products.

The scheme also encourages the J&K youth to set up the latest dairy farms for clean milk production and upgrade traditional technology to handle milk on a commercial scale, an official of Animal Husbandry said. He added that the scheme has attracted thousands of youth to start dairy entrepreneurship due to its lucrative assistance from the government viz subsidy and ease of sanctioning the benefits of the scheme.

According to the scheme, farmers, individual entrepreneurs, NGOs, companies, pensioners, groups of unorganized and organized sectors including Self Help Groups, dairy cooperative societies, milk unions, milk federations are eligible to take benefit of the scheme. The scheme also reads that an individual will be eligible to avail assistance for all the components under the scheme but only



once for each component.

"More than one member of a family can be assisted under the scheme provided they set up separate units with separate infrastructure at different locations. The distance between the boundaries of two such farms should be at least 500m," the scheme reads.

According to the funding pattern of the scheme, Entrepreneur contribution (margin) would be 10% of the outlay (minimum), back ended capital subsidy would be 25% for general and 33% for SC/ST. Besides, the effective bank loan balance portion is a minimum of 40% of the outlay and repayment period will depend on the nature of the activity and cash flow and will vary between 3 to 7 years. Also, grace period would be of 3 to 6 months in case of dairy farms and up to 3 years for calf rearing units.

The unemployed youth who are not defaulters of any bank or financial institutions can apply for the scheme along with photocopy of ration card, land papers for a mortgage if loan amount exceeds Rs.1.00 lakh, photocopy of category certificate, if any. Besides, candidates with a degree certificate of BVSC & AH can also apply for Mobile/Stationary Veterinary Clinic.

The components of a unit that can be funded under the scheme included establishment of small dairy units with crossbreed cows/graded buffaloes up to 10 animals (Rs 5 lakh) while minimum unit size is 2 animals. "Rearing of heifer calves crossbreed/graded buffaloes up to 20 calves (Rs. 4.80 lakh) and minimum unit size is 5 calves."

For purchase of dairy processing equipment for manufacturing of indigenous milk products Rs 12 lakh subsidy can be availed under the scheme. Similarly, for establishment of dairy product transportation facilities and cold chain Rs 24 lakh can be availed. The scheme also reads that for setting up of cold storage facilities for milk and milk products Rs 30 lakh can be availed. Besides, Rs 2.4 lakh would be provided for establishment of private veterinary clinics and Rs. 1.80 lakh can be availed for mobile veterinary clinics under the scheme. For setting up of a stationary clinic and dairy marketing outlet/dairy parlour the scheme will provide Rs 56,000.

'J&K Film Policy to revive Kashmir as preferred film shooting destination'



Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir known for its breathtaking beauty and incredible landscape dotted with meadows, valleys, high altitude passes, dense forests, lakes, apple orchards, snow capped peaks, provide just the picture perfect for shooting a film.

Several movies have been shot in this beautiful region blessed with magnificent scenic splendor, with film tourism in Jammu and Kashmir remaining as popular as ever.

The Indian film industry is rekindling its romance with Kashmir, a destination once a favorite of filmmakers and the audience alike. Soon, the Valley witnessed the cameras set on its blooming tulips, placid lakes, coniferous trees and the Dal Lake.

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, has met Bollywood filmmakers including Ekta Kapoor, Dinesh Vijan, Imtiaz Ali, Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari and Nitesh Tiwari among others in Mumbai. He invited them to shoot in the Valley and also discussed how the shooting of films can be made business-friendly in the Union Territory.

The concept aims to bring back the lost glory of the valley through benefits to the local artists, including dancers, fashion designers, actors, choreographers, cinematographers, sound recordists, set designers and others.

Bollywood's love affair with the picturesque Kashmir dates back to the 1960's and 70's. Back then, scores of films were set in the backdrop of the beautiful locales of the Valley.

Some of the most romantic and ever-green songs were picturized in the snow-clad hills and lush green locales of Jammu and Kashmir. In 1961, Shammi Kapoor romanced Saira Banu in the snow-capped mountains in Srinagar as he sang "Chahe koi mujhe jungle kahe". He immortalized the 'Shikara' on the Dal Lake in the song "Tareef karun kya uski" as he wooed a beautiful Sharmila Tagore in Kashmir Ki

Kali (1964).

In the late 1970s and early 80s, cinephiles witnessed Yash Chopra's love affair with the beguiling beauty of Kashmir in superhits like *Kabhi Kabhi* (1976), *Noorie* (1979) and *Silsila* (1981). Everybody remembers the movie *Betaab*, starring Sunny Deol and Amrita Singh, the movie and its location was such a hit with the audience, that the Valley, which was earlier known as Hagan Valley, was renamed as *Betaab Valley*.

Several scenes from another famous movie in 1973, *Bobby*, was shot in a hut, with the result it was renamed *Bobby Hut*.

However, by the 1990s, the region witnessed some of the most violent times and Kashmir found a new narrative in cinema.

The stories got consumed by the tension in the Valley. Kunal Kohli, whose film 'Fanaa' was based in Kashmir, could not shoot there. Mani Ratnam's *Roja* (1992) and *Dil Se* (1998) was set against the backdrop of political turmoil in Kashmir. *Mission Kashmir* (2000) and *Yahaan* (2005) also showcased the unrest in the region. However, the rising tensions there forced filmmakers to shoot elsewhere even as they ostensibly showed Kashmir, a case in point being *Roja*. Mani Ratnam had planned to shoot the film in Kashmir but ended up shifting it to Coonoor, Ooty and Manali.

Eventually, film producers and directors became hesitant to shift base to the Valley as a sense of fear and uncertainty engulfed Bollywood's once favourite backdrop. They preferred to shoot in various other regions of the country and also on the foreign shores. The exquisite locales of Ooty formed the backdrop for many other Bollywood films like *Hum Aapke Hain Koun!*, *Maine Pyar Kiya*, *Deewana* and *Dil Se*.

Also, touristy landmarks of London, Paris, New York and Switzerland replaced Sonamarg, Srinagar, Gulmarg and Pahalgam.

But, now that the film directors and

producers plan to return to the bay, we revisit some recent films that were shot in Kashmir.

The Kabir Khan directorial *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* starring Salman Khan in the lead role was shot at picturesque locations across the Valley including at the famous resorts of Pahalgam and Gulmarg. The song "Bhar Do Jholi Meri" was shot at a famous shrine in Ashmuqam area of south Kashmir's Anantnag district. While shooting for the film, Salman had written on Twitter, "KASHMIR bahut AMEER in natural beauty... Maashallah Maashallah." The climax of *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* was shot at Sonmarg near the Thajiwas glacier.

Action-driven films like 'Shershaah' has renewed the interest in border conflicts and it seems like the Indian audiences have an insatiable appetite when it comes to patriotic stories. The 'Shershaah' story is based in Kargil and it was shot in the mountains of Kashmir.

Aamir Khan (who's just shot a portion of 'Laal Singh Chadha' in Ladakh) and Rajkumar Hirani (who shot a segment of '3 Idiots' in the same location), were in the picturesque UT to launch Jammu and Kashmir's Film Policy, along with Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha. Under this new policy, drafted to promote overall growth of film industry in the Union Territory, the Jammu and Kashmir Film Development Council will be set up.

The J&K government will incentivize owners to reopen closed cinema halls, upgrade the existing ones and encourage setting up of multiplexes, besides offering a slew of subsidies to establish the UT as the first choice for filmmakers as a shooting destination.

The officials aim to facilitate development of shooting locales, focus on destination marketing, organize the J&K film festival and also turn their attention towards restoration and preservation of films from the region.

They have promised to provide infrastructure for film screenings by reviving closed cinema halls, upgrading existing cinema halls and encouraging the setting up of multiplexes and cinema halls besides offering a slew of subsidies to establish the UT as the first choice for filmmakers as a shooting destination. It's a monumental effort to bring back film shoots to Kashmir, a sort of throwing-the-kitchen-sink effort at reviving Kashmir's glory days.

Kashmir will now be on the international tourism map again and film shoots will not only generate employment for the people of the Valley but also invite thousands of tourists from worldwide to bask in the glory of this blessed land.

‘5900 SMART METER HOUSEHOLDS CONNECTED TO 3 FEEDERS IN SRINAGAR TO GET 24X7 QUALITY POWER SUPPLY’

Srinagar: After Jammu, 5900 households of Srinagar equipped with smart meters and connected to 3 feeders in Srinagar will get 24x7 quality power supply, announced Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha during a Press Conference at Srinagar.

“We are committed to quality and reliable power supply to every household. I urge people to install smart meters and support the government’s efforts in bringing reforms in the power sector”, said the Lt Governor.

Feeders – Peerbagh 02, Rawalpora F-05 and Rawalpora F-04 in Srinagar will now get round the clock quality power supply without any scheduled curtailment, he said.

Pertinently, on March 21, the Lt Governor had announced zero scheduled power curtailment to 6603 households in the areas of Jammu where smart meters have been installed.

While interacting with the media persons, the Lt Governor reiterated the government’s commitment to generating 3400 MW power in the next four years, making J&K UT self-sufficient in the power sector.

He said that no serious efforts were made to exploit the power generation potential in the past. However, power generation being targeted for the next four years will be equal to the cumulative capacity installed during the last 7 decades, added the Lt Governor.

‘MUMKIN’ SCHEME ESTABLISHING A SYSTEMATIC LIVELIHOOD GENERATION PROG FOR JK YOUTH

Jammu: 31-year-old Muzafar Wani of Ramsoo, Ramban, always dreamt of owning a vehicle as he wanted to secure a respectable livelihood that could fulfil the needs of his family and open the door to him for a better tomorrow.

Wani, before working as driver for different vehicle owners, couldn’t bear the expenses of his family of four including his two daughters with that meagre salary.

“Sometimes I would not get work for many days. Many times I decided to stop my daughters from going to school. I always wanted to educate them but financial constraints always forced me to look the other way,” Wani said as he was revealing his struggle of 12 years while working for different vehicle owners on a daily basis.

Wani couldn’t save enough money to purchase his own vehicle and the unfulfilled needs of the family had left him in an overwhelming feeling of frustration and depression. That is when the Mumkin scheme of the J&K government came to the rescue of Wani.

“In October last year, a friend of mine informed me about the ‘Mumkin’ livelihood scheme for unemployed youth and asked me to contact Mission Youth officials. It was like a dream come true when I was informed about the benefits of the scheme,” he said. Wani said he is satisfied being the happy owner of Tata Yodha and is earning enough to feed his family and educate his daughters.

A customized livelihood generation scheme ‘Mumkin’ for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir was launched by Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha. Under the scheme, unemployed youth are facilitated to procure small commercial vehicles on subsidized basis to establish a sustainable livelihood in



the transport sector.

The ‘Mumkin’ is a livelihood programme designed primarily for unemployed young people in the age bracket of 18 to 35. Under the ‘Mumkin’ scheme, small commercial vehicles are being provided to the youth with the banking partner extending the loan facility to the extent of 100 percent for on-road price of the vehicle to be purchased.

Mission Youth, J&K provides an amount of Rs 80,000 or 10 percent for on-road price of the vehicle (whichever is lesser) as upfront subsidy and the vehicle manufacturers (scheme partner of government) provide an upfront special discount, not less than the amount of subsidy.

To make the scheme implementation completely transparent and fast, a module has been developed on JK-e-Services portal for operating the scheme digitally. Till date, 1882 applications for self-employment assistance under the scheme have been approved.

Riyaz Raqeeb of Khonmoh Srinagar said he is on cloud nine after receiving a Mahindra Pickup Vehicle under ‘Mumkin’ scheme.

Like many youngsters of his age, Raqeeb always dreamt of earning his livelihood and making the economic conditions of his family better.

Seeing the struggle of his family in making two ends meet, Raqeeb learnt driving at a young age and started lending a helping hand to his family of six including his four siblings. He was working for private companies and other vehicle owners on a daily basis.

“I was not earning enough to fund the education and other needs of my four younger siblings. I used to work for 12 to 14 hours daily, but at the end of the day, I was getting peanuts,” Raqeeb revealed his ordeal of tough times.

In August last year, Raqeeb saw the news regarding the Mumkin scheme on social media and immediately rushed to the District Employment and Counseling Centre Srinagar. Then after completing all formalities, he was provided with a vehicle.

“I am thankful to the government for providing me a source of livelihood with subsidy,” Raqeeb said.

‘Mumkin’ is definitely a special initiative of J&K administration towards channelizing and engaging youth energy through a systematic livelihood generation programme. This exclusive initiative would definitely transform numerous lives in the UT through a collective approach of all stakeholders towards materializing the scheme into a huge success.

‘Panchayati Raj System steering JK towards highest echelons of rural emancipation’



Jammu: The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), through which the self-government of villages is realized, have been entrusted with the task of economic development, strengthening social justice and implementation of Central and State Government Schemes at grass-roots level.

The modern Panchayati raj system was formalized and introduced in India in April 1999 as the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution.

Under this system, an institution of ‘empowered local government’ is established with devolution of Functions, Funds and Functionaries (3Fs) to give people not only the voice but the power of choice as well. The essence of Panchayati Raj is participatory local governance with bottom-up inputs into the development process. It is part of a broader strategy of new ways of looking at and implementing participatory development in the light of a fresh parameter of ‘inclusion’ in governance.

Panchayati Raj has assumed importance for the democracy to ensure peoples’ participation for equitable development and social empowerment in a transparent and accountable manner.

While people across India enjoyed the right to elect local representatives, the same freedom was not exercised in Jammu and Kashmir. It is only after the abolition of article 370, the Union Cabinet on October 21, 2020 approved adoption of Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act 1989, paving way for local body elections in the Union Territory. It ensured establishment of all three tiers of grass root level democracy in the UT of J&K for the first time since independence.

In a fresh impetus towards strengthening grassroots democracy, free, fair and peaceful panchayat elections were held in the UT which led to the constitution of vibrant Panchayati Raj institutions here. In a significant achievement, these panchayat elections recorded a substantial 74.1 percent voter turnout. A total of 3650 sarpanchs and 23660 panchs were elected to lay the foundation for 3-tier Panchayati Raj system for the first time across J&K.

After successful conduct of Panchayat elections, elections for Block Development Councils (BDCs) were conducted for the very first time in the history of J&K. The BDC elections saw an overwhelming voter turnout of 98.3 per cent in which 276 chairpersons were elected in a total transparent manner.

Finally, District Development Council elections were held in 8 phases which witnessed tremendous voter turnout of 51.7 per cent. The process elected 20 DDC Chairpersons and 20 Vice Chairpersons besides a total of 278 DDC members were also elected thus completing the implementation of 3-tier Panchayati Raj system in its total form.

After amendment of Panchayati Raj Act 1989, 27 subjects were

transferred as part of 73rd amendment in the constitution.

Following establishment of three tier Panchayati Raj system in J&K, Rs. 1727.50 crore have been devolved under MGNREGA, Mid Day Meal scheme and ICDS. In addition, 1889 Panchayat Accounts Assistants and 317 Panchayat Secretaries were recruited and panchayats have been empowered to conduct social audit and grievance redressal.

In an endeavor to further enhance skills and efficiency of PRI representatives, a slew of capacity building and training programs are being conducted for Sarpanchs and Panchs in reputed training institutions like IMPARD and outside institutions as well. Besides, induction courses, digital literacy training, gram panchayat development plan training and training workshops have been organized for newly elected BDC Chairpersons. About 750 elected representatives have been provided training cum exposure visits outside UT.

For the first time since independence, elected grass root representatives were given formal protocol to unfurl the National Flag on Independence day and Republic day. The elected representatives are being given honorarium and formal position in the warrant of precedence and the regular system of interaction of district officers with panchayat representatives has been institutionalized.

The administration organized a historic ‘District level planning process’ meeting under the chairmanship of Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, which was attended by all DDC Chairpersons and members.

Further, in an encouraging move, the plan allocation for Panchayats has been doubled from Rs.5136 crore in 2020-21 to Rs.12600 crore in 2021-22. The planning process has been accomplished in accordance with constitutional mandate. Besides, an insurance cover of Rs.25 lakh has also been provisioned for the elected representatives of all the panchayats.

Under Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA), about 195 panchayat ghars have been taken up with completion of 36, so far. Likewise, about 160 panchayat ghars have been taken up for renovation, of which, 105 have been completed. Besides, 1131 panchayats have been taken up for the establishment of the solar system; 3973 panchayats have been provided funds for procurement of computers with accessories.

The implementation of Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act aims to empower people in the Union Territory enabling them elect their own representatives who will plan the development of the district and implement welfare measures. This multi level institutional governance model will also cater to the needs of different regions and subregions and guard the public against the feelings of deprivation and under development.

2400 km rural roads worth Rs 1380 cr constructed in J&K during 2020-21



During 2020-21, Rs 270 crore had been allocated for 737 road projects for construction of 582 Km of road length.

Srinagar: An area with enhanced connectivity and sturdy roads and other amenities often reap the benefits of improved health-care facilities, employment opportunities, good education and a better quality of life.

The Government of India, with an objective to streamline rural road connectivity, a highly essential requisite for rural development, launched Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY). The motto was to provide access to better socio-economic conditions, enhance the agricultural income besides raising living standards of rural India. The scheme was aimed at eliminating lack of accessibility and connectivity through construction of solid, all-weather resistant roads that allow for easy movement of vehicles and goods.

Under this scheme, the Government of India is striving to establish high and uniform technical and management standards in rural roads networks by facilitating policy development and planning from micro level. The primary objective of PMGSY is to provide connectivity by way of an all weather resistant roads with all necessary arrangements and cross-drainage structures to make unconnected habitations in rural areas with a population of 500 persons and above (2001 census) connected throughout the year.

In Jammu and Kashmir, the PMGSY programme has proved to be a boon towards expanding all weather resistant roads in rural pockets of the Union Territory. The scheme, here, was launched in 2001-02 with an aim to provide all weather connectivity to unconnected habitations in rural areas with a population of more than 250 as per 2001 Census. Union Ministry of Rural Development Department had sanctioned

3347 schemes under PMGSY-I to be executed in 12 phases envisaging construction of a length of 18432.79 Km with a cost of Rs. 119646.76 crore to provide connectivity to 2148 eligible habitations. Under PMGSY-II, 107 schemes had been sanctioned with a length of 704.55 Km worth Rs. 790.49 crore.

As on date, 2113 schemes having length of 13233.36 Km have been completed with an expenditure of Rs.7864.60 crore. Out of 2148 eligible habitations, 1943 have been connected, so far. During the current year, against the target of 3500 Km, 2400 Km have been achieved as on date with an expenditure of Rs.1380.00 crore thereby completing 280 schemes and connecting 105 eligible habitations.

Under the road sector, construction and up gradation of roads has been taken up and funds for acquisition of land and shifting of utilities required for road widening have also been provisioned under the scheme.

During 2020-21, Rs 270 crore had been allocated for 737 road projects for construction of 582 Km of road length.

Bridges form an important component of road connectivity under PMGSY that ensure accessibility and reduce time of travel. Given the topography of UT and the nature of rivers and streams zig zagging its landscape, demand for construction of new bridges is huge.

In 2008, a special bridge program was launched by the department in which construction of new bridges was taken up. During 2020-21, 78 bridges had been under execution with an estimated cost of Rs 327 crore. An additional amount of Rs. 60.00 crore has also been allocated during 2020-

21.

Also, maintenance of roads is equally important as construction of new roads. Due to the normal wear and tear and tough weather conditions, macadamization coats of the roads deteriorate and need maintenance after a few years. Under the Capex budget, a scheme called "Cities and Towns" has been introduced where under funds are being allocated for providing renewal macadam coats to the city and town roads besides major district roads of the UT. During 2020-21, an amount of Rs 400 crore had been allocated under the programme under which 1650 Km of road length was planned to be macadamized.

In a significant achievement, Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir has bagged top position at the national level for successfully implementing Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) for the year 2020-21. The district has received top position for constructing roads of 560.49 km in 2020-21. Besides, four more districts of the UT of J&K have featured in the list of PMGSY top performing 30 districts of the country. These included Rajouri (420.25 Km), Doda (335.71 Km), Kathua (297.79 Km) and Reasi (223.23 Km).

The Jammu and Kashmir Government has performed remarkably in the last few years in implementation of PMGSY making development of rural areas as one of its prime objectives.

For J&K administration, road connectivity is not only a key component of Rural Development by promoting access to economic and social services but generating increased agricultural incomes and productive employment opportunities is also part of their implementation strategy.



'Jammu, Srinagar fast marching towards enhanced growth, development'

Srinagar: In India, the Smart City Mission (SCM) has been initiated with an aim to drive economic growth and improve the quality of life of people by enabling local area development and harnessing technology that leads to smart outcomes.

Smart city mission mainly focuses on four things; Social Infrastructure, Physical Infrastructure, Institutional Infrastructure (including Governance) and Economic Infrastructure.

Cities are mainly the places of confluences of people; places where people live, come to meet, exchange ideas, earn livelihoods, access education, health and other services and enjoy a life of good quality. People are at the core of the city and in that sense cities should work for their people. Cities that work for their people will continuously become better versions of themselves with each passing day.

We need to understand the reasons which make a city attractive to people in the first place. These reasons would be, to a large extent, different for different cities and different for different sets of people and therefore cannot be generalized. Some cities attract people for the opportunities that exist therein as markets and centres for manufacturing, some others due to the greatness of their cultures or their cosmopolitan vibes and others for their ability to provide better education and health facilities or a combination of factors and so on.

The government of Jammu and Kashmir, in its endeavor to make cities the UT hub of modern infrastructural edifice to enhance quality of life here, has initially taken up Jammu and Srinagar cities for development into smart cities under Smart City Mission. The vision for Jammu city is "Transforming Jammu into a sustainable and economically vibrant city focusing on tourism, quality of life and trade by leveraging its heritage and location". Promoting Jammu's identity, sustainable and liveable Jammu and promoting inclusion

are the three main action areas which have been identified to make the vision implementable. Besides, city chowk multi-level parking, renovation of MA stadium, construction of musical fountain at Baghe Bahu, improvement of street lighting by LED bulbs, multi-level parking at bus-stand, 100 bedded emergency block at GMC-Jammu, Jammu ropeway project are some notable projects completed under smart city mission in Jammu city, so far.

For Srinagar city, Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL), a Special Purpose Vehicle, has been created under Smart City Mission which envisions transforming Srinagar into an eco-friendly, resilient and socio-economically vibrant city that celebrates its natural and cultural heritage creating harmony and opportunities for all.

Srinagar Smart City aspires to leverage its natural and cultural heritage/tourism through innovative and inclusive solutions, enhancing the quality of life for its citizens. EV charging stations, smart street lighting, multi-level parking, sports infrastructure (3 stadia and 5 schools), water transport system in Jhelum river, installation of ornamental LED lighting around Dal-lake, pedestrian walkways and footpath, riverbank development have been started under smart city mission in Srinagar.

The main goal behind launching Smart City Mission is to create a city for its people which possess their chosen pursuits. Not all people or sets of people desire the same things. In order to simplify the understanding of the diversity of needs expressed by a city's diverse residents, it is useful to classify them under three broad pillars including livability, economic-ability and sustainability. These three broad outcomes are the main things a city needs to target in order to work for its people.

In J&K, the Smart City Mission has brought remarkable transformation for both the capital cities of Jammu and Srinagar. Some

JKTPO sponsored startups shine at 'India First Startup Conclave and Awards' 2022

New Delhi: Union Minister of State in Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Dr Jitender Singh, visited the 'India First Startup & Conclave 2022' being organized at Hotel Le Meridian by All India Council for Robotics and Automation (AICRA).

Dr Singh interacted with the young entrepreneurs present in the conclave.

While interacting with Shivaang Satya Gupta, Dr Singh appreciated the efforts of ESPA Learn Private Limited EdTech.

"India is emerging as the world's preferred StartUp destination due to its vast unexplored potential coupled with an entrepreneurship friendly environment being provided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Union MoS maintained during interaction.

Managing Director, Jammu Kashmir Trade Promotion Organization (JKTPO), Ankita Kar, also visited the stalls of J&K start ups set up in the conclave.

Pertinently, JKTPO sponsored 15 startups from J&K at the event. JKTPO is J&K government undertaking incorporated as a

Joint Venture of Government of J&K, Indian Trade Promotion Organization (ITPO) and Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH). Among the startups were Espa Learn Private Limited and Espa Fee Private Limited.

Ankita Kar admired the ideas being implemented by bright brains of J&K. "For making processes and the technology sector relevant, JKTPO has worked hard to showcase the efforts being put in by startups in Jammu and Kashmir," she said.

ESPA Group of Companies had three unique startups in the event including ESPA Learn Private Limited, ESPA FEE Private Limited and ESPA Lines Private Limited. Shivang Satya Gupta, Chairman, ESPA Group, attended the event as Director Promotions for these companies.

Shivang Satya Gupta explained his vision and modern IT interventions being used in the start ups and expressed that it would be highly useful for the target groups. He also invited the prospective entrepreneurs to get along with ESPA Learn in this journey.

Every district to have 'Women Haat': Mehta

Jammu: On the eve of International Women's Day the Chief Secretary, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta announced that every district would have its 'Umeed Women Haat' by next month.

The Chief Secretary was speaking in a function organized by J&K Rural Livelihoods Mission (JKRLM) to honour the women achievers of J&K and launch few women oriented initiatives.

Dr Mehta desired that he wishes to see a women haat in every panchayat. He said that women of J&K have shattered the glass ceiling and had always been ahead of men even in the difficult times of the 90s. He said that a little needs to be done to empower them in real terms as they were never discriminated against on the basis of their gender.

The Chief Secretary encouraged them to come forward and try their luck in men-dominated avenues like MGNREGA contracts, tourism sector and others. He said that they would always find administration on their side. He told them to explore any enterprise of their liking and ask for assistance due to them as their right with all emphasis. He said that JKRLM is the apt platform to fulfill their dreams.

He asked the JKRLM to take the simultaneous initiative of creating digital literacy among these rural women so that their interests are safeguarded more effectively. He maintained that these women even if not literate are capable of learning these skills if given a chance.

Dr Mehta mentioned that a plethora of measures had been taken by the government to take J&K ahead. He said that no initiative is going to fulfil its objective unless women are not going to own and adopt it. He said that in the next 5 years the GDP of J&K is going to double and women have the opportunity to take their share out and increase their income manifold.

The Chief Secretary said today JKRLM has achieved the feat of training 5 lakh women and he expects them to take it to 10 lakh women trainees till next Women Day. He gave out that our motto is to ensure that no potential beneficiary is left behind among women.

He also entrusted women to put their vital role in creating awareness about all these initiatives among their acquaintances. He asked them to atleast take this word to 5 of their friends so that all are informed about benefits accruing out of these schemes. He also urged them in creating 'Nasha Mukht' J&K.

The Commissioner Secretary, RDD, Mandeep Kaur said that the mission has created hope among thousands of women. She said that she is very confident that the trust reposed by CS in the mission would be kept under every circumstance.

Kaur further said the mission is hand holding some 50000 women Self Help Groups (SHGs) involving more than 5 lakh women. She said that there is no cap on our target and abilities and she finds Umeed the most promising in making things happen for all targets to be achieved.

In her presentation the Mission Director, JKRLM, Dr Syed Sehrish Asgar said that in just 6 months the SAATH initiative has attained its targets successfully. She gave out that under this programme 513 women entrepreneurs have been provided sectoral specific training out of whom 120 have been chosen for further mentorship.

The MD further explained that under this initiative 4 months long training courses were conducted for aspirational women entrepreneurs besides holding dozens of online and offline sessions across 20 trade sectors.

Throwing light on other achievements, the MD said that dozens of SHG products have been successfully boarded over e-commerce sites like Amazon, Flipkart and Meesho. She also revealed that exclusive 'Umeed Women Haats' have been established for marketing of these products at these popular tourist destinations. She said that this platform is providing a chance to about 5000 SHGs annually to showcase and sell their products on a rotational basis.

On the occasion an SHG tracking portal- 'Aajeevika JK' was launched by the Chief Secretary besides declaring open the Umeed Women Haat at Srinagar from 8th to 12th of this month. The portal was said to help in tracking all economic activities undertaken by SHG members, their income and other services availed from different departments like gold card, artisan card, Shram cards, insurance benefits under PMSBY, PMJJY.

The CS praised JKRLM for creating Aajeevika JK portal being first such livelihood tracking portal in the country which will help to make evidence based policies and interdepartmental convergence. He called it a milestone in the journey of the mission.

He also congratulated JKRLM for on-boarding SHG products on e-commerce platforms. He said that it will change the way rural women can do business right from the comforts of their homes in villages.

During this event the success stories of women entrepreneurs mentored by JKRLM were also presented by the entrepreneurs themselves. The names of 120 women mentees of JKRLM who are going to get further handholding and up-scaling through the mission were also unveiled.

The event being held on the International Women's Day also witnessed honouring of the women achievers of the UT through JKRLM. These include the young Wushu Champion, Sadia Tariq; famous singer, Sonali Dogra; Founding Chairperson, FICCI FLO J&K, Ritu Singh; Entrepreneur, Sana Masood and dozens of other women known across J&K for their accomplishments and repute.

Others who were present included India SME Forum President, Prahlad Kakar, SAATH mentor, Vinod Kumar and officers of JKRLM besides hundreds of women SHG members and entrepreneurs.



J&K TAKING A GIANT LEAP IN IMPLEMENTATION OF NEP: GOVT

JAMMU: National Education Policy (NEP) was approved by the Union Cabinet on July 28th, 2020 in order to transform the educational scenario of the country.

After a gap of 34 years, the government consolidated feedback from 2.5 lakh village-level stakeholders to two national parliamentary level committees, over more than 50 months of consultations and workshops and at the end NEP was framed.

The J&K UT administration has also taken a leap in the implementation of NEP-2020. The J&K government is mainly focusing on skilling and employability of students, besides promotion of local languages and culture. Vocational courses, co-curriculum activities and student exchange programmes will be made an integral part of the education system under NEP.

The Higher Education Department has started taking initiatives for implementation of NEP-2020 for equitable access, gender parity and to uplift Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), the JKHEd has taken several initiatives and executed several state and centrally sponsored schemes.

Lieutenant Governor's Sustainable Development Fellowship (LGSDF) is started in 2021 to provide a platform for highly motivated young professionals to contribute towards strategic planning and implementation of development policies and initiatives in the union territory

Under AICTE-Pragati scheme 124 students have been benefited and the number is increasing year by year.

Under the PMSSS scheme 4488 students were granted scholarships last year to pursue undergraduate studies outside Jammu and Kashmir.

AICTE-Saksham scholarship scheme is also successfully executed for physically disabled students.

The Department is offering several programmes at the UG and PG level to promote the Indian rich knowledge in Arts, Music, Sanskrit, Linguistics, Urdu, Punjabi, Dogri and Environmental Sciences. For skill enhancement and employability, the department of higher

Education has identified 16 degree colleges to start B.Vocational from the next academic session.

To boost research and innovation and integration of technology, several Research and Innovation centers, innovation & Incubation Centers, Browsing Centers, Smart/Digital have been established in degree colleges. Moreover, the process has also been initiated for establishing Centers for invention innovation, incubation & training (CIITs) in 14 different colleges under PPP mode.

For improving the quality of teaching and learning, the department has taken several initiatives for NAAC accreditation of Degree colleges in UT of Jammu and Kashmir. A target of 100 colleges has been set to get NAAC accredited by December, 2022.

To address, "access including online and Open and Distance Learning (ODL) education", and "Transforming education through integration of technology", the JK Higher education is going to launch "JK e-Governance system" for networking all degree colleges on single platform, to support monitoring of Institutes, online Learning and Teaching, online submission of documents.

Under NEP-2020, the Higher Education Department of J&K is mainly focusing on establishing a more holistic and multidisciplinary education in UT of J&K besides introduction of B.Vocational courses (Bachelor of Vocational Education), Introduction of Honors/PhD Programmes in GDCs as well as establishment of Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) in HEIs also forms the core objective of HED under NEP-2020.

Moreover, Catalyzing Quality Academic Research in All Fields through a new National Research Foundation, JK- Research Foundation and establishment of Innovation and Incubation centers in colleges also form the major objectives of HED under NEP.

Further, the government also plans for institutional Restructuring and Consolidation Accreditation of Govt. Degree Colleges and moving towards Autonomy as well as boosting faculty/student exchange programme.



Implementation of FRA a historic step towards changing lives of JK's tribal communities: Govt

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir government scripted a historic chapter on 13th September 2021 with Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, handing over individual and community rights certificates to the beneficiaries of Gujjar, Bakarwal and Gaddi Sippi communities under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006 at a momentous event in Srinagar.

The event was hailed as a significant step with a potential to transform the lives of members of tribal communities in the UT where the rights of forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers were recognized albeit to a long delay.

"After a long struggle and efforts for more than 14 years due rights have been conferred upon the tribal community through implementation of Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, keeping in mind the basic spirit of social equality and harmony as guided by the constitution of our country and the Parliament," Lieutenant Governor had remarked. Giving due credit to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guidance for conferring forest rights to tribal communities, Sinha had added that the J&K administration had been vigorously pursuing the ideals of establishing an equitable and just social order in the UT. The UT government had been working sincerely to empower the tribal community which remained neglected and discriminated against for decades together.

Conferring rights over the forest land for these forest dwellers is poised to elevate the socio-economic status of a sizable section of 14 lakh population of tribals and nomadic communities including Gujjar, Bakarwals and Gaddi Sippis in the Union Territory.

These people have been living in the forests for centuries without any right over the forest land but implementation of FRA proved to be of great help for these forest dwellers. The Act was a step towards redressing prejudice and empowering communities to participate in the management of forest and wildlife protection. The preamble to the Act itself notes that it recognizes the historical injustice to tribals and others who have been traditionally living in forest areas.

As per provisions of Forest Rights Act (FRA), it provides the right to hold and live in the forest land for habitation or self-cultivation for livelihood by a member or members of Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribes (FDST) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFD). FDSTs can be related with Gujjars and Bakarwals in J&K and OTFD can be related to Kashmiri, Dogri, Pahari or any other non ST people living near forests for the last 3 generations or 75 years or more.

The FRA will certainly help towards strengthening democracy at grassroots level besides correcting the wrongs done in the past by replicating the true spirit of the Act in Jammu and Kashmir.

'Over 3.5 lakh households electrified in J&K under SAUBHAGYA scheme'

Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir has achieved another milestone under Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana 'Saubhagya' with the Union Territory accomplishing the 100 percent target of rural electrification.

The J&K administration has proactively worked in ensuring electrification to every village which is visible from the fact that almost 3,57,405 households have been electrified in the whole of the UT. J&K has also received a reward of Rs100 crore from the Government of India for achieving the target of 100% electrification ahead of the timeline.

Jammu and Kashmir is faced with many natural barriers like mountainous terrains and tough topography of the region thus providing energy access in these hard locations was a distant dream just a couple of years ago. For the first time, after 73 years of independence, Saddal of Udhampur district and Ganouri-Tanta village of Doda district saw the light of an electric bulb ending decades of darkness from the lives of villagers.

Remote villages in the Kellar area of south Kashmir's Shopian district had only heard of electricity but Saubhagya scheme lightened up their lives when they witnessed electricity in their homes.

Similarly, villagers in far flung and hilly border areas of Nowshera sub division in Rajouri are experiencing a big transformation in their lives after receiving electricity under the government's Saubhagya scheme. This area was deprived of power supply from the last seven decades and the scheme.

"We are grateful to the government for launching ambitious schemes like Saubh-



gya which has made our lives comfortable and convenient in incredible ways. Earlier, our children could not study due to lack of electricity. We had to go to another village to get our mobile phones charged," said Abdul Hamid, a resident from the area.

In 2017, Saubhagya was launched with the objective of achieving Universal Household Electrification in the country through last mile connectivity and providing access to electricity to all un-electrified households in rural areas and poor households in urban areas. While launching the scheme, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, had pledged to provide access to electricity and work towards equity, efficiency and sustainability in the new Age India.

Under the SAUBHAGYA scheme,

Distribution Companies (DISCOMs) organized camps in villages or clusters of villages to facilitate on-the-spot filling up of application forms including the release of electricity connections to households. BRSIDES, DISCOMs/Power Departments also adopted innovative mechanisms like dedicated web-portal and mobile app for collection and consolidation of application form in electronic mode and also capturing process of release of electricity connections.

In another significant move by the government, GARV (Grameen Vidyutikaran) App was launched which aims to monitor transparency in implementation of the electrification schemes, Grameen Vidyut Abhiyantas (GVAs) have been appointed by the government to report progress through GARV app.

Also, mobile apps like 'Gram Jyoti Doot', 'Urja Vistaar' have been devised for fast track release of power connections. 'Saubhagya Rath' in all districts, is being lauded as an innovative practice by the Power Ministry.

Besides, the government has also given the concept of '4 Es' in the revised Tariff Policy which included 'Electricity for all, Efficiency to ensure affordable tariffs, Environment for a sustainable future and Ease of Doing business to attract investments and ensure financial viability.

According to the government data, with the 100% electrification target being achieved, the administration's focus is now to provide consistent electricity at affordable rates, power tariff reforms, last-mile connectivity, and electricity connections to all households in rural and urban areas.

'Berozgar Se Swarozgar' scheme to provide job opportunities for youth of J&K: Govt

Srinagar: In order to provide adequate Job opportunities to the youth of J&K and make them self dependent, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir has started the 'Be Rozgar Se Swarozgar Scheme'.

The scheme is part of a 10-point campaign initiated by the government to give a renewed push to the implementation of employment and other beneficiary oriented schemes on the ground. The objective of the 10 point campaign is to achieve quantifiable results within specific timelines, in an effort to touch the lives of ordinary citizens at the grassroots level

Under the 'Be Rozgar Se Swarozgar Scheme' scheme, the youth of J&K will get a chance to get employment. This Scheme is launched to provide job opportunities to youth who are struggling to earn their living. It is a targeted campaign to identify and provide self employment to at least 5 persons in every Panchayat and overall two lakh youth in the entire UT. It will include financial support and skilling as part of the process. It will ensure that a local youth will get a chance to earn livelihood.


The main objectives of this scheme is to generate employment opportunities both in urban and rural areas through setting up of self-employment ventures. Due to adversities of COVID-19 in the economy of our country, many youths lost jobs. In order to hand

hold these youth and provide them adequate opportunities, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir has decided to run this scheme so that unemployed people will be provided employment.

The young entrepreneurs are being sensitized about the different schemes that are being run through different line departments. are also being issued to youths who will now become eligible to participate in online tendering process of District Capex Plan under 3 lac ceiling in their respective Panchayats.

To create awareness among the youth about the 'Be Rozgar Se Swarozgar' Scheme, the government started "Yogyata se Rozgaar Mahotsav".

The scheme has been launched with an aim to help the youth of a country to build their future better for tomorrow. This scheme will not only help the youth of the country to get employed but also help the country to get developed. The scheme will be effective for those applicants who want to have job but are facing problems in finding them. Apart from this scheme, the government is doing constant handholding of youth through various schemes to facilitate employment, provide self-employment guidance and skill development for the unemployed youth so as to enhance their incomes, thus promoting inclusive growth.



'Har Gaon Haryali aims to boost Agro-Forestry activities in UT'

Srinagar: Sustainable development is an approach towards development and growth by using resources in a way that allows them to renew or continue to exist for future generations.

In this context, the government of Jammu and Kashmir has launched the remarkable initiative 'Har Gaon Haryali' program in consonance with the vision of 'Green Jammu and Kashmir' drive 2021 to ensure sustainable development and promote climate justice across the Union Territory.

The Green Jammu and Kashmir drive itself is in commensurate with the National Forest Policy 1988 and the Jammu and Kashmir Forest Policy 2011 which envisages afforestation on all degraded and denuded lands in the union territory within and outside forests.

Spelling out broad contours of this initiative, Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, remarked that the 'Green Jammu and Kashmir' campaign aims at creating people's movement at a massive scale with involvement of all stakeholders particularly village panchayats, women, students, Urban Local bodies, NGOs and civil society.

"Our aim is to bring two third geographical areas of Jammu and Kashmir under the forest and tree cover. The forest and tree cover in Jammu and Kashmir is about 55 percent, which is substantially higher than the national average of 24.56 percent," Lieutenant Governor maintained.

The J&K Government also initiated the 'Har Gaon Haryali' campaign in November 2021. Under this campaign, forest and sister departments were vested with the responsibility to cover all the village panchayats and planting of one crore saplings.

With an aim to realize the objectives and target set under Har Gaon Haryali campaign the Social Forestry department is laying emphasis on providing hybrid clonal plants to farmers from its modern nurseries, so that farmer's income can be supplemented and sustained supply of raw materials to wood based industries can be ensured.

In addition, the department is organizing such programs with multiple activities in all districts of Jammu and Kashmir to provide impetus to J&K Green drive initiative with

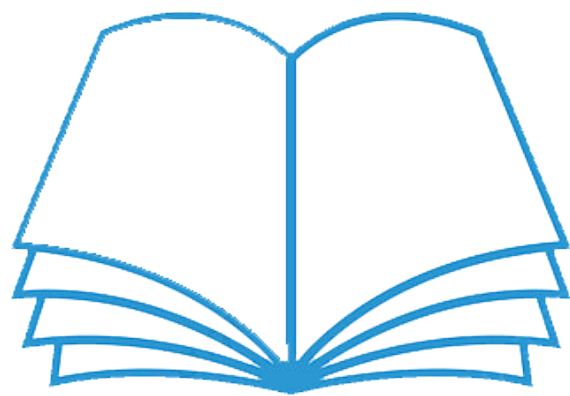
participation of local communities. The department has apprised the people in general and farmers in particular to avail the supply of plants from departmental nurseries to take up agro-forestry activities on their lands.

Furthermore, in a bid to celebrate 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' in collaboration with the School Education Department, the Social Forestry department is also involving schools in afforestation and awareness activities. The students being important stakeholders in sustainable development, their adequate sensitization would go a longer way in achieving the long-term objective of the programme.

This campaign is strenuously laden with the potential and propensity to act as breakwaters against the unbridled trend and temperament of environmental pollution. This in turn, will help in reversing the progression of climate change and help in promotion of the concept of climate justice. It also envisaged addition to the already existing strength and resources of the farmers thus helping in realization of the objective of doubling the income of farmers in the long run.

Importantly, if the participation of all stakeholders at the grassroots level is ensured and taken in its intended direction, the campaign will help in reducing carbon footprints. With this campaign, India will be able to fulfil its global obligations regarding climate change and in the long run will help in realizing the sustainable development goals like end poverty in all its forms everywhere, end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages, make human settlements and cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss among others.

More significantly, if this campaign is taken in its right perspective, it will help in maintaining ecological balance and consequently will help in the preservation of fragile ecology and rich biodiversity of the Himalayan landscape of Jammu and Kashmir.



JKPI Publications

REOPENING OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN J&K: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



ARKA CHAKRABORTY

As the situation improved and the increased risk of COVID-19 transmission lessened, the government of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir ordered reopening of all educational institutions in a phased manner. This welcome decision marked the end of what can be reasonably described as one of the longest shutdowns of educational institutions in the world, spanning two and a half years with only sparse interruptions. In his declaration regarding the guidelines for the reopening of the educational institutions in the UT, Chief Secretary A K Mehta announced that the academic session 2022-23 will be the year of educational transformation for Jammu and Kashmir. This is an opportune moment to evaluate the condition of the education system of the UT. In J&K, the education system and the millions of students dependent on it have been suffering due to a number of factors for decades and this suffering has been magnified manifold by the unprecedented catastrophe brought about by the double-lockdown. Both the long-term and the short-term damages to the UT's education sector must be taken into account if the transformation promised by the UT administration is to truly mend and improve the lives of the students who are the future of Jammu and Kashmir.

In an interview, renowned educationist Prof. A. G. Madhosh stated that the education scenario in Jammu and Kashmir is 'really endangered.' The sheer weight this statement carries is hammered home in an examination of the numerous problems that plague the region's education sector. While a number of issues have slowly crippled the education sector of the region for decades, the problems brought about by the two and a half year long shutdown of educational institutions delivered a crushing blow to the already damaged sector, affecting the well-being of all stakeholders. A detailed discussion of both the long-term and the short-term factors and mindfulness towards all the stakeholders in the UT's education sector should take place to fully understand the nature and extent of the damage that has been done and figure out strategies to address it. It should be kept in mind that most of these issues are interrelated and cannot be seen in isolation to one another.

Long-term issues

Problems in the education sector have been constant in Jammu and Kashmir. While the erstwhile state has shared some of its issues with the country's education sector at large, it is undeniable that some of the problems it faces are unique to the region and place its student community at a comparative disadvantage compared to the rest of the country and the world.

1. Conflict and education

Since 1947, Jammu and Kashmir has been a region subjected to instability and conflict, making the lives of its inhabitants difficult and undoubtedly affecting its burgeoning education sector. These tensions, however, exploded during the 1989-90 insurgency which, among other things, led to a mass closure of schools and higher educational institutions. This was an era characterized by violence, disruption and struggle for normalcy. According to a study by IndiaSpend, the erstwhile state lost as many as 207 working days in 1990, 112 working days in 2010 and 130 working days in 2016. Between 2016 and 2017, just 80 days of schooling could take place as opposed to the estimated goal of 197 days. The shadow of violence has affected the lives of each and every student in the region in a



number of ways which will be discussed in detail below.

2. Time crunch, rote learning and inhibited development

Educational institutions are not just places of knowledge dissemination and consumption; they should be the essential social spaces where young people learn to function in society in a safe manner by participating in debates, discussions, quizzes, cultural events; where they form meaningful friendships; where they learn moral and social values and emerge as healthy and productive individuals who contribute to society. Frequent interruptions to continuous schooling due to the conflicts greatly disrupt this development among students. As school authorities are forced to rush towards the completion of the syllabus in whatever little time they have, the issue of holistic development is often inadvertently left to the wayside. The school becomes a place for cramming information into desperate students to help them to pass their exams. There have been times when even this basic expectation could not be met: in 2016, the government had to resort to mass promotions of students of classes 8, 9 and 11 without any evaluation. This process was repeated in 2019 and 2020 (albeit the latter being due to the pandemic-induced lockdown and could be seen across the rest of the country).

Rote learning or memorizing by repetition is something that the students end up resorting to as a partial consequence of the frequently interrupted academic calendar, but this is also a residue of the colonial or colonial-inspired education system that India at large has inherited and so far has failed to shake off completely. Overall, the deformed experience of education that students are subjected to reduces education to a process of cramming and passing examinations which greatly inhibit the students' mental development.

3. Discrimination

In an ideal society, educational institutions should act as great equalizers, sensitive to the problems of students belonging to different strata of society and even in some cases providing them with individual attention, focusing on their individual problems and necessities. In a conflict-ridden society such as J&K, however, where educational institutions struggle to function properly, discrimination among students along various lines, especially that of gender and economic condition, becomes evident.

While the overall literacy rate of Jammu and Kashmir according to Census 2011 is 67.16%, there is a wide gender gap between men and women – 76.75% and 56.43% respectively. There are a plethora of issues concerning women's education in Jammu and Kashmir, discussing all of which in detail is beyond the scope of this commentary. The most problematic issue, perhaps, in J&K, is the persistence of the decades-long conflict which convinces scared parents to refrain from sending their daughters to schools

out of concern for their safety. To this can be added a traditionalist view of gender roles (an issue that is seen across India), lack of awareness about the importance of women as equal contributors and stakeholders in society, lack of infrastructure like girls-only schools and higher educational institutions and an efficient transportation system. While many women are technically literate, there are numerous cases where they are pulled out of their schools in primary or secondary level, rendering them ineligible for the majority of decent job opportunities which in turn contributes to the massive problem of women's unemployment in the UT.

Poverty becomes even more of a curse for students when government-aided schools with a comparatively lower cost of education fail to function properly. In J&K, the chief reason for this dysfunction is the conflict, as mentioned above. However, it is evident that the government schools in the UT are in a worse position than its private schools regarding infrastructure, with at least 18000 of the around 23000 government schools being in a dilapidated condition. Many of the UT's poor cannot afford to send their children to private schools. For many others, private tuitions or coaching centers which in a place like J&K serve as a go-to alternative to the frequently-closing schools are also unaffordable. Many of the region's poorest are also uneducated, meaning that children from these families who cannot attend schools due to a number of reasons cannot even access the guidance of their parents, an informal solution that children born to educated parents often opt for and benefit from.

Apart from gender and financial security, there are also a number of other dimensions of discrimination in education which should be studied in detail in order to appreciate the extent, spread and intensity of inequality in the region.

4. Lack of funds

Like the rest of India, J&K's education sector suffers from a lack of funds. According to Naseer Ahmad Bhat, after 1948 only 7% of the total budget in J&K was allocated to the education sector. After that, the budgetary allocations have increased very slowly, reaching 11% of the total budget in 2018-19. Shortage of funds undoubtedly inhibits educational infrastructure development.

5. Lack of proper infrastructure

As mentioned before, it is estimated that at least 18000 of the region's around 23000 government schools are in a dilapidated condition, suffering from a lack of toilets, clean classrooms, electricity and drinking water. The inability of these schools to provide the basic necessities to its students and staff should be a matter of immediate concern.

6. Low-quality teacher education system

M.Y. Ganai (2016) and Rayees Ahmad Dar (2019) point out that with the establishment of primary and secondary schools across J&K, there has been a mushrooming of private teacher training institutes across the erstwhile state. Consequently, the number of trained teachers has also increased considerably. However, the uncontrolled expansion of these institutes has resulted in a lack of quality in terms of infrastructure (labs, ICT and libraries), teacher educators and uniformity of curriculum. Most of these institutes are not funded well and are less receptive towards new developments in the realm of teacher training. As a result, the 'trained' teachers that these institutes produce lack the life skills, emotional skills, techno-pedagogic skills and info-savvy skills that are the need of the hour in a constantly changing education sector. A prevailing problem not only in J&K but across India is that the future teachers who opt for these training courses often do so as a last resort towards gainful employment and lack motivation towards the profession that they are training to enter into.

7. Corruption

Khurshed Nabi (2020) points to the avenues through which corruption plagues the education sector. As private schools form an integral part of J&K's education sector, the sacking of these schools can be a major avenue of bribery. Bribery also affects individual schools in both admission and assessment processes as affluent parents can bribe their way into ensuring that their children are admitted into the best schools and get good grades despite poor performance. Meritorious but poor students are sometimes removed from the list of those admitted to make room for the otherwise incompetent students belonging to affluent families. The same process happens in teacher recruitment, which may lead

to incompetent teachers lowering the quality of daily education. Favoritism and groupism affect the student community and teacher-student relations. Dishonest diversion of funds allocated for the improvement of the educational institutions' infrastructure to fill the personal coffers of government servants and other key stakeholders involved in the management of said institutions and funds is a major factor that can cripple the sector.

8. Higher education

Pranav Kumar Anand and Yasar Mehmood (2020) opine that the higher education of Jammu and Kashmir is fraught with difficulties to the extent that it convinces a sizable section of the UT's young population seeking higher education to apply to institutions in other areas of India. The teacher recruitment process in colleges and universities is accompanied by corruption as those related to or near or dear to those positions of power are often offered jobs bypassing deserving candidates. Many of the higher educational institutions do not offer research degrees like M. Phil or PhD. Admission processes to colleges and universities are also sometimes corrupt. The institutions lack proper computer facilities and other ICT tools.

Apart from the above-mentioned major problems, many other problems also plague the education sector of J&K which include teacher-student ratio, psychological damage and trauma due to the conflict and violence and problems regarding the widespread consumption of narcotics and other harmful substances by students.

The 'double-lockdown' and crisis in the education sector

According to a United Nations report, India after Uganda is experiencing the world's longest closure of educational institutions due to the pandemic- around 82 weeks in total which has undoubtedly left significant scars in the education sector of the nation in general. However, Jammu and Kashmir was subjected to what is dubbed a 'double lockdown' which has left various sectors of the region, including the education sector, utterly devastated. This long spell began in August, 2019 with the abrogation of Article 370 and the conversion of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories which was accompanied by a complete communications blockade and lockdown issued by the government in order to ensure peace and stability in the troubled region undergoing a fundamental transition. This meant the beginning of lockdown for J&K around six months before the rest of India experienced it.

The most significant difference that characterizes the lockdowns imposed in J&K from that of the rest of the country, apart from the difference in duration, was the long restriction imposed on the usage of the internet. J&K has been one of the chief areas subject to internet blockages due to a number of reasons. An article published in October 2021 by The Wire, of the 548 internet shutdowns recorded in India since 2012, 317 were in Jammu and Kashmir. August, 2019 saw the beginning of a long restriction on the internet, with a complete blockage being imposed through the first five months of the lockdown and only 2G connection being provided afterwards. While this was done due to security reasons, the internet blockage spelled doom for the educational institutions as schools, colleges, universities and coaching centers in the region could not even partially compensate for the lockdown by transitioning to the online mode of education as the rest of India did following the imposition of the pandemic-driven lockdown there. Efforts to do so with 2G connection meant for viewing static websites led to nothing as online classes were a horribly troublesome affair with neither the teachers nor the students being able to effectively communicate with one another, sending virtual educational materials becoming a chore as uploading and downloading files that would have taken seconds to hours and online exams becoming near impossible to conduct. As a result, students in the region were affected far worse than their counterparts anywhere else in the country. It is, perhaps, safe to assume that students in J&K suffered the loss of two and a half years worth of academic growth in a far more complete way than the partial loss suffered by students in the rest of the country who can at least access online education.

The pandemic-induced economic standstill led to businesses being closed down and countless people losing their jobs across the world and J&K is no exception. As parents are unable to pay the exorbitant education fees charged by the private schools due to economic losses, the amount due piles up and the future of their children's education is severely threatened. On the other hand, as G. N. Var, the President of the Private Schools Association of J&K (PSAJK) has pointed out, private schools across the Valley have been

facing severe financial stress due to transportation costs, the inability to rent out the school buildings as sites for coaching centers and the government's decision to ban the private schools from charging admission fees for any new student since 2021. This stress has led many private schools to close their doors and, according to him, will severely inhibit the private schools' capability to provide good-quality education to their students. Var has rightly stated that around 65000 people associated professionally with private schools are threatened as far as their livelihoods are concerned, as well as the education of the schools' 650,000 or so students' education. The same can be said for the professionals associated with government schools.

The pandemic-induced lockdown is sure to increase educational disparity across various lines across the world and J&K, where such discrimination is already rampant, is no exception. The existing discrimination across gender lines as increased economic desperation may lead girls' education to be the earlier casualty. Moreover, as students are unable to access educational institutions, educated and affluent parents are usually able to mobilize their educational and/or financial resources to navigate the problem of their children's education much more easily than their poor and relatively less-educated counterparts can.

Child and adolescent mental health therapist Wasim Kakroo opines that psychological issues could become a cause of concern among children in a post-pandemic offline educational scenario and this may vary across age groups. The young children who were stuck at home due to the pandemic at an early age may face the most problem in reorienting their lifestyle with an offline education as they have already gotten used to screens, hence, they may exhibit behavioral issues. Adolescents may also exhibit problems adjusting to the offline reality. Bunking classes, Kakroo points out, may become a matter of major concern.

Government initiatives

Understanding the complexity of the process, the UT administration has opted for a phased reopening of the educational institutions. It has been declared that the classes 9th to 12th will resume in Summer Zone of the UT on 14th February, with the classes of the lower standards resuming from 21st February. All classes of the schools in the Winter Zone are set to resume from 28th February, after the Winter break is over. Chief Secretary A K Mehta also issued guidelines for the functioning of these institutions, stating that Covid-appropriate behavior (CAB) and SOP guidelines will be of the utmost importance in the daily functioning of the institutions. The heads of the institutions will be held personally responsible for the health and cleanliness of the institutions.

Recommendations

The education sector of Jammu and Kashmir, impacted by decades of mismanagement, neglect and conflict, has been devastated by the pandemic. While the administration is taking swift measures to ensure that the reopening of the educational institutions goes smoothly without provoking a new wave of Covid cases which should indeed be the first priority, the problems plaguing the education scenario are complex and interrelated and a number of strategies should be adopted in order to move towards proper recovery.

1. A strategy should be developed to assess the loss of students in terms of their academic qualifications as opposed to the standards they are promoted to. Based on the results of such an assessment, remedial courses meant for students to catch up to their academic loss should be developed by the government.

2. A system should be introduced to bring back to school those students who may have dropped out of them during the lockdown due to various reasons.

3. Private schools are important stakeholders in the education sector of Jammu and Kashmir and have been badly damaged due to the financial losses brought about by the lockdown. In view of this, the administration should financially assist deserving private schools to re-establish themselves. Schools that have closed their business during the pandemic should be given priority in this process, along with the quality of education which was provided before the pandemic.

4. As a part of the promised educational transformation, the government schools should be reformed in terms of infrastructure and quality of the faculty because a significant part of the region's

poor cannot afford to send their children to private schools. The target should be to establish a quality of education in government schools which would be on par with the best private schools.

5. The UT administration must find a way to navigate around the loss of time in the educational institutions due to frequent and irregular closures of the physical campuses. This has to be an area of major concern as the frequent disruptions in the regular teaching-learning process negatively affects the students in a variety of different ways. As long as internet blockages are a reality of J&K, online teaching is not an alternative to fall back on, which the experience of the double lockdown has already shown. As far as the dissemination of knowledge is concerned, the television and the radio should be developed into mediums rivaling schools. The syllabi of every class, every stream and every level of education should ideally be covered through these media outlets with the help of experienced and trained teachers. In this way, although television and radio can never truly compensate for the space that educational institutions offer in terms of social, emotional, physical and intellectual growth, they can emerge as a viable alternative to online classes across the UT.

6. In view of the psychological damage that the conflict and the recent pandemic has wrought upon the students, competent counselors should be employed in every school, college and university in order to properly address the emotional and psychological needs of the students. Their services should be made available through phone calls in order to compensate for physical closures of campuses.

7. The teacher training system in J&K has to be subjected to a major transformation in a qualitative sense. The curricula should be redrawn and made more uniform across the UT with a special emphasis on developing practicable skills in the teachers appropriate for 21st century education rather than simple theoretical knowledge. The practical part of the teacher training courses should be emphasized and to this end demonstration schools may be established near the teacher training institutes.

8. Corruption in the education sector is a complex, varied and multi-layered problem. A detailed investigation must be conducted by teams of competent professionals both within and outside the sector and a carefully drawn out multifaceted strategy should be employed to weed out the corruption.

9. A transformation in terms of the content of primary, secondary and higher education across India is long overdue, J&K being no exception. In a 21st century reality where the internet has made access to knowledge easier than ever before, education has to become a way to impart skills with which students can productively use the knowledge that they have gained, rather than a medium of imparting knowledge which the students will be able to access anyway. In this new reality, the role of the teacher also has to go through a revolutionary change.

10. Given the troubles of transportation across the region, establishing micro-schools within walking distance of the homes of the students in every locality can be an effective way to address this problem and can also contribute to bridging the gender gap.

11. Naturally, all of the changes suggested above will require the administration to invest a greater percentage of the budget in education.

Conclusion

The education scenario of Jammu and Kashmir is ridden with multifaceted problems at various levels which, moreover, overlap with and magnify each other. These problems, which at times share commonalities with the problems of the Indian education system in general, are exacerbated by the violence and conflict that has marred the erstwhile state for the last three decades and have diverted attention from the sector. To this has been added the effects of the double lockdown which has brought the sector and the stakeholders associated with the same near the brink of collapse. Given the urgency of the situation, resources must be diverted towards seeking a comprehensive solution towards the complex web of problems that plague the sector, keeping in mind the importance of every stakeholder involved while giving primacy to the well-being of the students. Since the problems associated with education in the UT are in many ways unique, context-sensitivity will be the key if any effective solution-oriented strategy is to be arrived upon. Only then will the future of the next generation truly be secured.

WILDFIRES: ARE WE STILL DEBATING WHETHER CLIMATE CHANGE IS REAL?



ADEELA HAMEED

Good intentions on paper mean nothing if not followed up with real and effective actions on the ground. These actions need to focus on forests, where the fire crisis is at its worst – Fran Price, Global leader for forests at WWF

The biggest challenge in protecting pristine forest ecosystems, apart from deforestation, is combating wildfires. It has been reported that the number of wildfire outbreaks around the globe increased by 13% in April 2019 as compared to previous years with 2020 hit even worse. Wildfires have been raging with ferocity, from the bustling Amazon to the lonely Arctic. Incidents of massive wildfires have been reported in Kashmir valley as well, unfortunately, that have increased in frequency since the past few years signaling the need for for an immediate and drastic response.

Australia was struck by an atrocious forest fire, and the propelled smoke reached upper parts of the atmosphere. Devastation could be seen from space. A multi-diverse domain consisting of temperate broadleaf and mixed forest biome was lost, and millions of hectares of land were rendered barren – devoid of cover.

Far west in California, firefighters battled some of the largest wildfires in recorded history. These fires were devastating, incessantly burning ecosystems and livelihoods of communities. In the winter of 2019-20, California only received half its normal levels of precipitation, suggesting the role of climate anomalies in increased incidences of wildfires.

With loss of forest cover in the first half of 2020 totalled at 307,000 hectares, which is 26% more than the same period in 2019, Brazil headed towards ruin. Deforestation is increasing rapidly and is likely to result in intense fires in this Amazon biome. Brazilian Amazon hit a 13-year high in June 2020. The Amazons were detected to receive 6,803 outbreaks of fires in July 2020, about 28% more than the same period in 2019.

With Himachal Pradesh, Kashmir and Assam bearing the brunt, India is faced with fire calamities on top of water shortages apparent from the past few decades. Baghjan, Assam is an example of human-driven accidental blowout of natural gas in an oil well causing massive fires. With devastating impact on environment in and around the nearby Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, mass evacuation of locals, deterioration in human health, and continuing fires in September 2020 – months after the fire began – Baghjan area has reduced to a desolate crater as opposed to the pristine ecosystem it once represented.

Kashmir valley also witnessed raging fires in 2021-22, particularly around the Dachigam National Park. Even though rescue teams and firefighters were sent to contain the blaze, a wealth of its ecosystem had been burnt to ground when the fire finally fizzed out. This is quite alarming, given the National Park is home to unique and diverse habitats, many of which are endangered.

Factors Responsible for Massive Wildfires

As per reports from World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), factors responsible for increased incidence of wildfires are persistent hotter and drier weather conditions induced due to climate change, land conversion for agriculture, and pathetic forest management.

Climate change reinforces wildfires.

This is proved by the fact that fires seen today in different regions of the world are larger, more intense, and last longer than they previously used to. Unprecedented is a frequently used word nowadays when it comes to fire severity, with climate change making outliers, i.e. abnormally long fire seasons, alarmingly unpredictable. Releasing millions of tons of carbon, destroying vital ecosystems, decimating biodiversity, threatening property and livelihoods, impacting economies and people, and causing severe long-term health problems for millions around the world are drastic outcomes of unprecedented wildfires.

Devastation is imminent. People, climate, and our planet will suffer if such wildfires continue. To cite an example, there are an estimated 340,000 premature deaths – every year – from respiratory and cardiovascular issues associated with wildfire smoke.

Estimates from Previous Decades

Based on global records from 2000 – 2015, 85% of the surface area burned each year is located in tropical savannas, making up 19% of the total land cover. Although forests constitute just about 10% of the total area burned, yet their higher carbon storage capacity holds responsibility for one-quarter of all fire-related carbon dioxide emissions. It has been observed that from 1979 to 2013, the global fire season length increased on an average by 19%. East Africa and Brazil usually undergo severe damages, with their forests and savannas experiencing an average of over one month increase in the fire season.

Forests and Negligent Human Pursuits

Human activity, intentional or otherwise, is estimated to be responsible for 75% of all wildfires in recent years. In the Northern Hemisphere, most fires are due to negligence, such as industrial accidents, burning rubbish and debris, and agricultural overspill. Arson is also to blame at times. In Europe, negligence causes 95% of fires, while in the US, 84% of fires are caused by the same.

Use of slash and burn techniques, especially in South-east Asia and Africa, controlled fires for clearing ground for palm oil plantations in Indonesia, and increased encroachment into public and Indigenous Peoples' lands in Brazil are some human interference that lead to huge uncontrollable wildfires. And unbearably in the end, wildland-urban interfaces suffer the most in the face of forest fires.

Kashmir, too, has been traumatized by unnecessary human interference. Hauling illegal timber, charcoal, as well as use of slash and burn, has been observed in the mixed forest ecosystem of our Valley, particularly in the upper reaches, where fire and rescue is even more difficult.

What Has To Be Done

Forests are treasures of nature. It may not be the first time you've read about protecting forests or sustainable cultivation but today the need to revise this information is more than ever.

1. With a young world population of nearly 2 billion, the requirement for preservation of biodiversity, both fauna and flora, has exceeded prior commitments. It has given rise to a now or never situation. So, we need to raise climate change ambition worldwide, and improve the Paris Agreement accounting for emissions from non-anthropogenic (non human-driven) fires.
2. Halting deforestation, reinvesting in prevention, clarifying governance, coordinating policies, and using a science-based approach to risk assessment and intervention are some important ideas to consider while planning.
3. Bringing businesses on board while advertising the importance of forest ecosystems and the need for fire prevention is another important initiative that needs sufficient screen-time.
4. Wildfires are a global problem and need to be prioritized in public and health policy.

Assessing Drinking Water Issues in Kashmir



ZAHOOR AHMAD DAR

Resources are an essential index to measure a country's potential for growth and development. However, when resources availability and consumption rate are not in equilibrium, the possibility of a crisis looms large. This crisis invariably transforms into conflict. African countries support this argument, where conflict for basic resources has frequently escalated intra-regional and inter-state strife. Mis-governance, inter-state conflict, intra-regional issues, civil war, climate change or topographical factors can be accounted as causal variables for this. It is argued that future wars will not be for territorial expansion rather for acquisition of basic resources such as food security and drinking water.

Paucity of drinking water is an established fact in Jammu and Kashmir. However, merely focusing on the fact and not on its consequences brings out an incomplete picture. A study found that nearly half of the schools and 30% of villages in Jammu and Kashmir, which is known for its glaciers, freshwater lakes, and streams, are being fed with contaminated drinking water. According to the assessment study conducted by the National Level Monitoring agency, nearly two-thirds of the villagers do not have enough potable water in their homes. Drinking water has been linked to an increased risk of cancer and other diseases. According to a report published in the Indian Journal of Medical and Pediatric Oncology in October 2010, 389 of 432 cases of primary malignant brain tumors (excluding metastatic lesions) were reported to be those of orchard farm workers. Obtaining water for the locals requires a significant amount of time, energy and effort. As a consequence of difficulty in obtaining potable water, high dropout rates were also observed.

In this context, it is imperative to situate Kashmir's drinking water crisis and find sustainable mitigation techniques to resolve the drinking water scarcity. To understand scarcity of drinking water, we need to first figure out availability of drinking water for assessing and evaluating the situation better.

Availability of drinking water

The total numbers of households in Jammu and Kashmir were 15, 51,768 in 2001 which skyrocketed to 20, 15,088 in 2011. According to Census report 2011, the total percentage of households having availability of water in Jammu and Kashmir:

1. within the premises: 48.2 %
2. near the premises: 28.7 %
3. away from the premises: 23.1 %

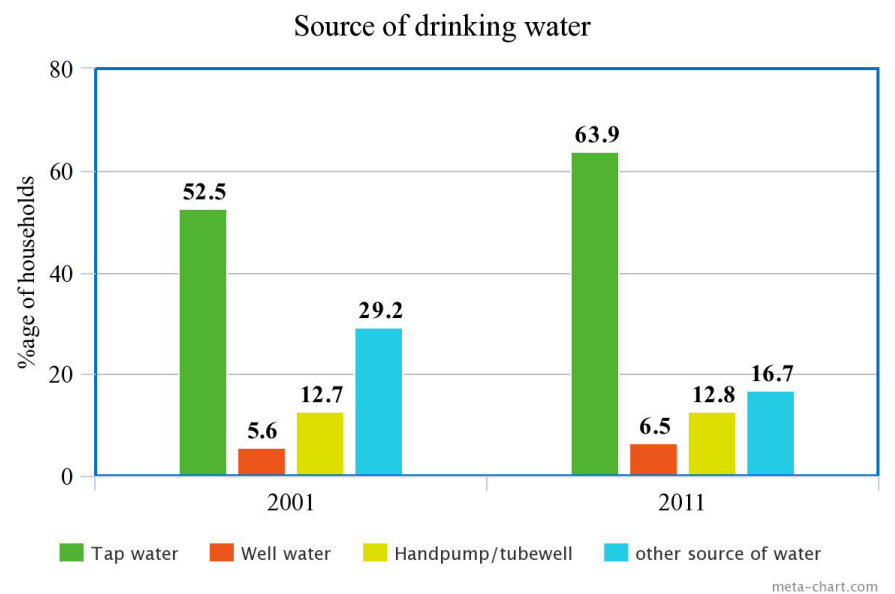
In the J&K's countryside the proportion of households receiving water supply is as follows:

1. within the premises is 35.5 %
2. near the premises is 35.1 %
3. away from the premises is 29.4 %

However, in urban and suburban areas, the chunks of households that draw continuous water supply are illustrated below:

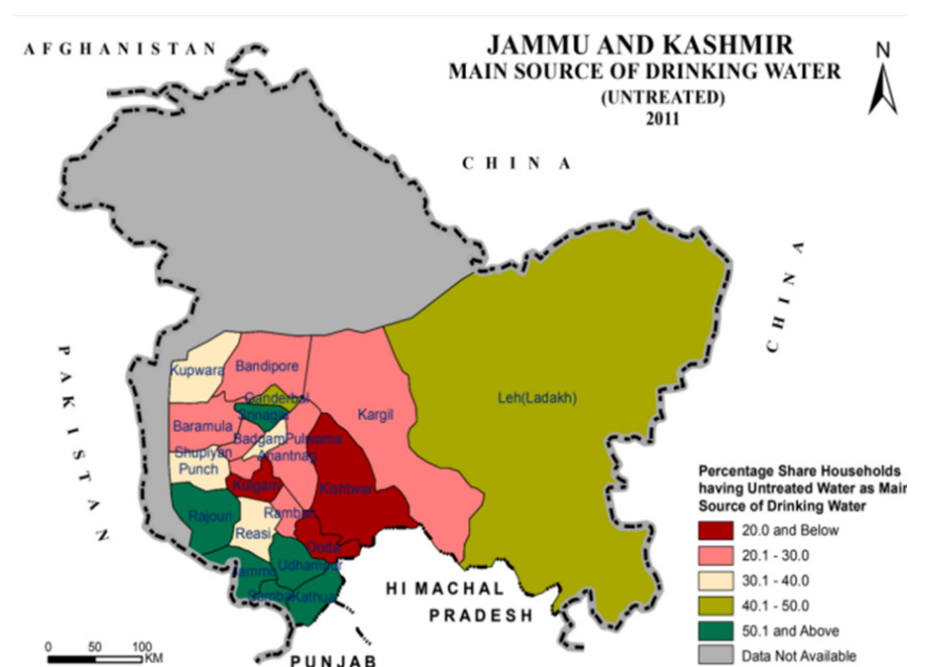
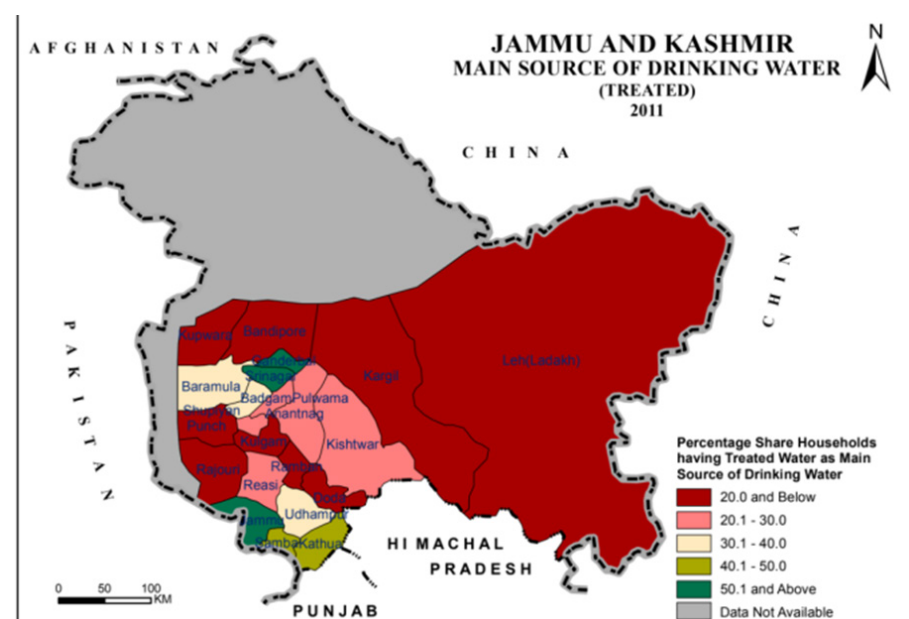
1. Within the premises is 84.7 %
2. near the premises is 10.2 %
3. away from the premises is 5.1 %

The graph illustrated below shows a comparison of households using different sources of water in 2001 and 2011.



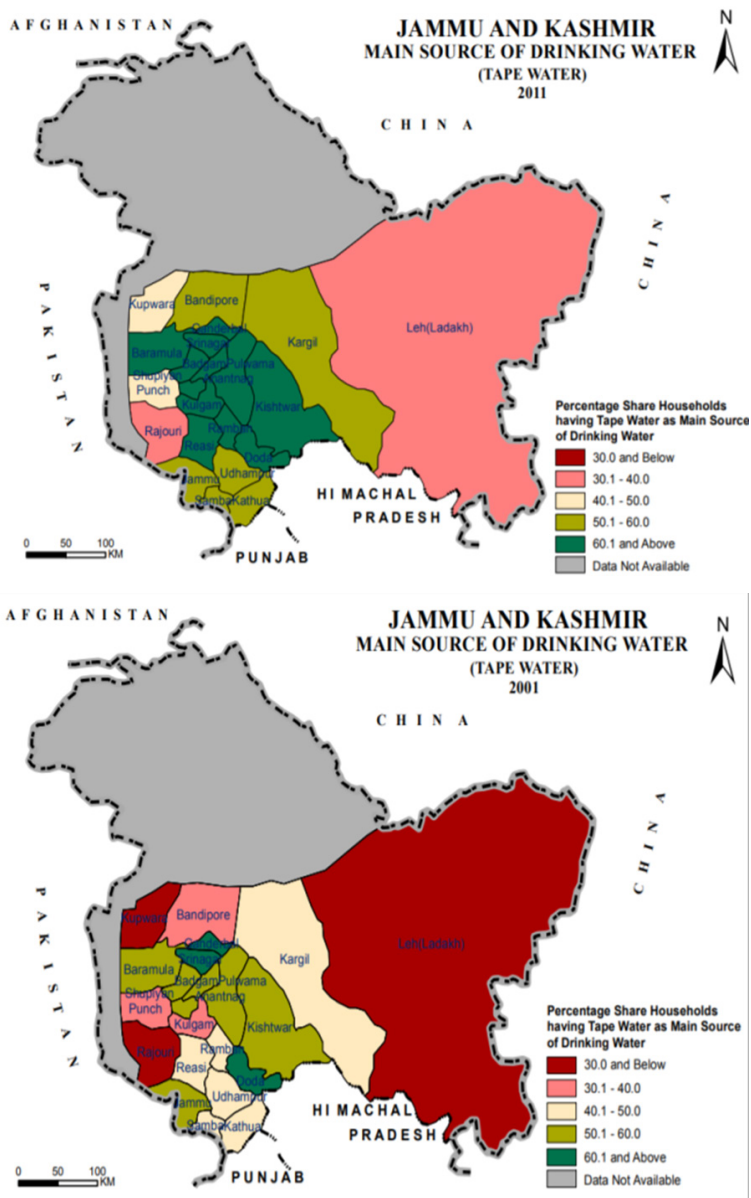
Source of data: Census Report, 2011

The maps situated underneath depicts the percentage share of households possessing treated and untreated water as the main source of drinking water in 2011.



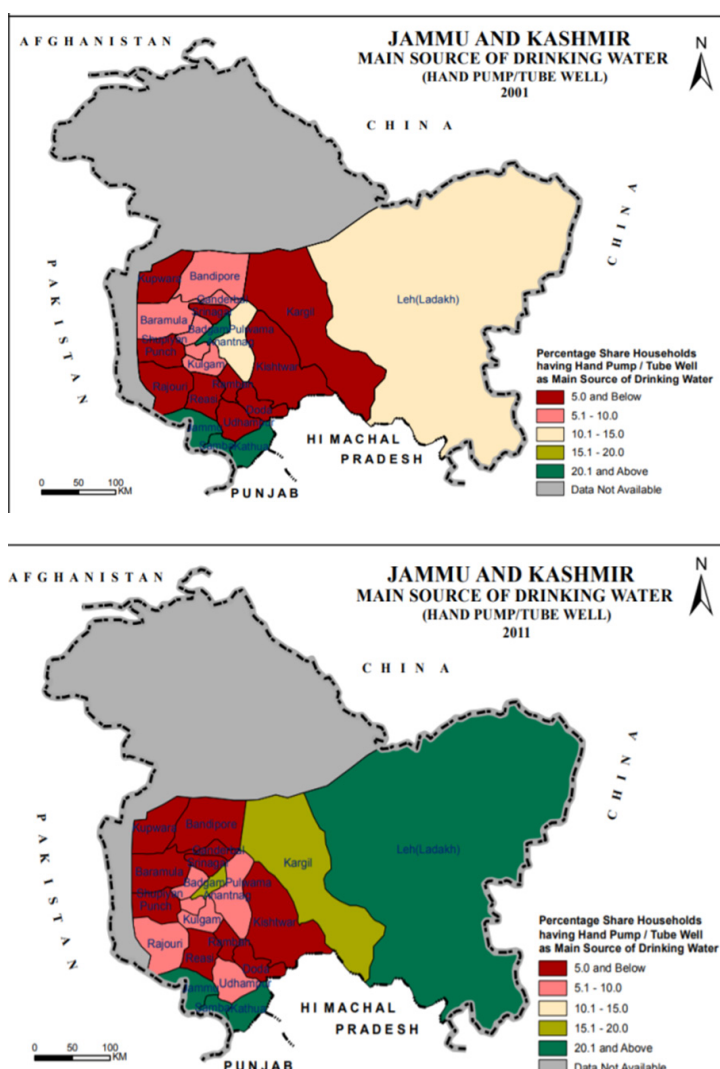
Source link: http://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/hlo/Data_sheet/J&K/Main%20Source_%20Drinking_Water.pdf

The following maps indicate the percentage share of households having tape water as the main source of drinking water in 2001 and 2011.



Source link: http://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/hlo/Data_sheet/J&K/Main%20Source_%20Drinking_Water.pdf

The map below shows the comparison in percentage share of households having hand pump/tube well as the main source of drinking water in 2001 and 2011.



Source link: http://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/hlo/Data_sheet/J&K/Main%20Source_%20Drinking_Water.pdf

The supply of drinking water should be accessible, equitable and inclusive transcending intra-regional disparities within the valley. However, the assessment of the below data depicts lack of access and uneven distribution of water supply coupled with regional disparity. Urban centers such as Srinagar has both the highest tap water connection as well as the highest treated tap water connection to the households. The rural areas experience inaccessibility of tap water connection and treated tap water connection with Bandipora (54.6%) registering the least tap water connection and Kulgam (7.4%) the least treated tap water connection to the households. These statistical data shows how drinking water supplies are skewed and favor the core while peripheral areas remains outside the spectrum of such basic amenities.

State/ District	Total households	Tap water	Well water	Handpump/ tube well water	other source of water	New Question in 2011			
						Tap Treated	Tap Untreated	Well Covered	Well Uncovered
	2011	2011	2011	2011	2011				
Jammu and Kashmir	14,97,920	55.7	8.3	14.4	21.6	22.3	33.4	2.3	6.1
Anantnag	1,09,465	67.1	1.8	9.5	21.6	19.5	47.6	0.9	0.9
Bandipore	47,620	54.6	3.4	4.1	37.9	14.7	39.9	1.9	1.5
Baramulla	1,19,791	75.7	4.4	3.6	16.3	31	44.7	2.4	2
Badgam	86,083	71.8	1.5	10.3	16.4	26.2	45.6	0.7	0.8
Ganderbal	36,626	81.9	0.6	2.6	14.9	51.3	30.5	0.3	0.3
Kulgam	56,316	66.5	1.4	6	26	7.4	59.1	0.8	0.6
Kupwara	10,040	65	13.1	6.4	15.5	11.8	33.5	5	10.7
Pulwama	71,063	68.3	1.4	16.6	13.6	25.2	43.1	1.1	0.3
Shopian	39,486	72.2	1.6	8.7	17.5	21.4	50.8	1.1	0.5
Srinagar	2,690	88.1	0.6	0.8	10.5	82.8	15.6	0.2	0

- Maximum households with tap water connection are in Srinagar (88.1%) whereas minimum households with tap water connection are in Bandipora (54.6%).
- Maximum households using well water as main source of drinking water are in Kupwara (13.1%) whereas minimum households using well water as main source of drinking water are in Srinagar (0.6%) and Ganderbal (0.6%).
- 16.6% households in Pulwama use hand pump/tube well water as the main source of drinking water. 0.8% households in Srinagar use hand pump/tube well water as the main source of drinking water.
- Maximum households that use sources of water other than tap water, well water, and hand-pump/tube well are in Bandipora (37.9%). While as minimum households are in Srinagar (10.5%).
- Maximum households that use treated tap water are in Srinagar (82.8%)
- Maximum households that use untreated tap water are in Kulgam (59.1%)
- Maximum households that use water from covered wells are in Kupwara (5%)
- Maximum households that use water from uncovered wells are in Kupwara (10.7%).

Jal Jeevan Mission Initiative

Jal Jeevan Mission is a flagship programme under the department of Drinking Water and Sanitation Ministry of Jal Shakti. This designated ministry in its report 'National Compilation on Dynamic Ground Water Resources of India, 2020', stated that the ground water resources of Jammu and Kashmir have been assessed for valley areas and outer plains in all 20 districts. All the assessment units have been categorized as 'safe' by the report.

The findings of the report are shown in the table below:

	2017	2020	Increase/decrease
Total annual groundwater recharge	2.78 bcm	4.68 bcm	Increase
Extractable groundwater resources	2.50 bcm	4.22 bcm	Increase
Annual groundwater extraction	0.74 bcm	0.89 bcm	Increase
Stage of groundwater extraction	30.8%	21.03%	Decrease

The Jal Shakti Department reported that 1077 villages have been provided with Functional Household Tap Water Connections

(FHTC) whereas in 1056 villages every household gets clean drinking water from the tap since August, 2021. The report mentions that in Kashmir division 593 villages have been provided with 100 % tap water connection. It includes 37 villages in Anantnag, 5 in Bandipora, 129 in Baramulla, 68 villages in Budgam, 147 in Ganderbal, 19 in Kulgam, 34 in Kupwara, 66 in Pulwama, 29 in Srinagar and 59 in Shopian.

Jal Shakti Departments data earmarks that out of 18.35 Lakh rural households, 5.75 Lakh (31.36%) were connected with piped water connection at the start of the mission i.e., 15th August 2019. Jammu and Kashmir has covered 10.37 Lacs (56.51%) households with tap water connection till date and out of which 2.22 lakh tap water connections have been provided during the year 2020-21. Thus, The total of 57.30% HH of J&K now has FHTC which was merely 31.36% in August 2019. Under the Jal Jeevan Mission, J&K has achieved the target of providing tap water to all 22,422 schools and 23,926 anganwadi centers ahead of time. After Andaman and Nicobar Island, Jammu and Kashmir becomes the second Union Territory to provide tap water in 100% of its schools and anganwadi centers.

Only two districts Srinagar and Ganderbal have achieved 100% tap water connections as of 2022 while eight districts still face problems with the availability of tap water connections. As far as villages are concerned, only 1109 villages have 100% FHTC. There are still 4076 villages that have less than 70% FHTC.

State	No. of villages with PWS				
	No. of villages with (100% FHTC)	No. of villages with >= 90 to < 100% FHTC	No. of villages with >= 80 to < 90% FHTC	No. of villages with >= 70 to < 80% FHTC	No. of villages with >= 60 to < 70% FHTC
Jammu and Kashmir	1109	580	573	538	4076

Any sustainable development goal is bound to be exclusionary in case it benefits some regions at the cost of others. Inter-regional and intra-regional parity in resource distribution and acquisition is the fundamental goal of SDG's. Also, any public policy predicated on core-peripheral divide rather than equitable supply of adequate water is bound to be pre-judicial and exclusive. A holistic accessibility of drinking water is the most essential function of the state. Ensuring accessibility and connectivity of treated tap water facilities to the rural households should guide the policy parameters. Hence, Jammu and Kashmir has to tackle its water challenges with a deep understanding of the water scarcity challenge and a robust commitment to research and development to solve it.

RAMZAN-2022 in pictures

