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“NIGHTMARE OF SEVEN DECADES IS OVER AND A FEAR-FREE, CORRUPTION-FREE J&K IS EMERGING TO TAKE ON THE FUTURE CHALLENGES”

Manoj Sinha

My dear brothers and sisters,
Wishing you all a very Happy Independence Day in ‘Amrit Kaal Khand’.

I salute our beloved tricolor and pay tribute to all those freedom fighters and martyrs, who made the supreme sacrifice to protect this land of Pir-Vaer. My heart is filled with everlasting gratitude towards the brave soldiers of Maa Bharti.

Today is a day of sacred remembrance. This land is made of blood and sweat of countless freedom fighters and martyrs. They kept our flag flying high and paved the way for our development and progress. Conquering the numerous challenges with a spirit of unity, zeal, dedication and a firm resolve, India is marching ahead to a glorious future with ideas and ideals of our forefathers.

Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji started the “Har Ghar Tiranga” campaign for bringing 130 crore countrymen under one flag, one identity and one emotion in the 75th year of India’s independence. This festival is an occasion to take a pledge to make India strong and prosperous. Today’s resolve and the energy of the new generation will guide us in building a new India of 2047.

Today I pay tribute to the brave soldiers of Army, Para Military Forces and Jammu and Kashmir Police, who have kept the unity and integrity of India intact with their amazing valor and sacrifice. We have decided that a Gaurav Stambh shall be established in Srinagar in memory of the brave soldiers who have sacrificed their lives defending our beloved motherland. I have full faith that the immortal flame of Gaurav Stambh and the museum of our brave hearts will be the center of inspiration for the new generation. I am proud of brave hearts of Jammu and Kashmir Police who have received 125 gallantry medals on the eve of Independence Day. Their sacrifices will always inspire us.

The sacrifices of our brave soldiers are invaluable, but concrete measures are necessary for providing succor to their families for living a dignified life. The Government has increased the compensation amount for the families of army personnel of Jammu and Kashmir martyred in the line of duty from Rs. 5 lakh to Rs. 25 lakh. The administration has decided to bear the cost of Jammu and Kashmir Police’s martyr wards up to class 12th. Agniveers after military service shall get 10 percent reservation in the recruitments to be conducted by the Jammu and Kashmir Police. On the occasion of Independence Day, I also announce the reorganization of Village Defence Committees. I have full faith that the sons of Mother India will work with the spirit of sacrifice and dedication to protect the honour of world’s largest democracy.

India, the mother of democracy, wants peace and welfare of the entire humanity, but we are also ready to defend our freedom, sovereignty and integrity with full zeal. A befitting reply is being given to those who are trying to mislead our youth with a nefarious proxy war. A final blow is being dealt to the terror ecosystem operating at the behest of the neighboring country. We will push the last nail in the coffin of terrorism. Strike, stone pelting and protests have become things of the past. I appeal to the 1 crore 30 lakh citizens of Jammu and Kashmir to speak with one voice against terrorism and atrocities on the innocent.

In this Amrit Kaal of independent India, Jammu and

Kashmir is soaring to a new height. A strong, peaceful and prosperous union territory is witnessing rapid growth over three successive years, which is unprecedented in the history. The nightmare of seven long decades is over and a fear-free, corruption-free new Jammu and Kashmir is emerging to take on the future challenges.

Last year, on this auspicious day, I had invoked revered Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ji’s wisdom for social justice and all-round progress with spirit of insaniyat, jamhooriyat and kashmiriyat. We have to fulfill the hopes and aspirations of citizens by becoming self-reliant, by displaying unflinching integrity, dedication and unwavering devotion to the values enshrined in the Constitution. After 25 years we should be remembered fondly by our future generations just like we recall the contributions of the great men who laid the foundations of a New India.

Panchayati Raj Institutions are working with determination for the development of every individual and safeguarding the interests of all sections of the society. By assimilating each other’s customs and traditions, by mutual understanding and mutual adjustment of all religions and sects, the message of Kashmiriyat is being spread to the whole world. Every section of population is being made an equal partner in the developmental journey of Jammu and Kashmir. There are limitless possibilities and challenges before us. To achieve the goals of economic equality and social justice, innovative entrepreneurs, intellectuals, educationists, farmers, youth and women shall have to come together. The elixir of freedom is the launching pad for the quantum leap into the glorious future. This is an occasion when we, as citizens of India, have to take a pledge to protect and expand the achievements of 75 years.

This spiritual place has bestowed the world with wisdom and mantra of composite culture for centuries. The mountain peaks here symbolize the devotion of Shankaracharya and the flowing rivers celebrate the devotional songs of Lal Ded. The leaves of Chinar embody the spiritual ecstasy of Nund Rishi and the deodar trees reverberate the melodies of Habba Khatoon.

Abdul Ahad Azad Sahib has written:

“Chalaan chumm sharr hubaban, izteraban,
valvalan ander,

Yivan chumm zindagi hund soz safaran manzilan ander”.

“My wishes are fulfilled in love, in impatience, in passion, I get the essence of life in journeys, in destinations.”

Jammu and Kashmir is not just piece of land but a symbol of cultural and spiritual heritage of the country. Kalhana has written in Rajataringini

“Sandhya Devi Jalan Yasmin Dhate Nisalile Giri –

“The taste of water of Sandhya Devi testifies the existence of virtue and absence of sin.

The Goddess appears in the form of a swan in the lake situated on the holy Bhedgiri from the source of the Ganges.”

This is the land of Mother Saraswati, abode of all virtues and the enlightened dream of Chaitanya. From Mount Harmukh to the summits of Vindhyas, from Jhelum to Prayag Sangam, from Bhedgiri to Baba Kedarnath, every breath, every heartbeat carries the fragrance of Hindustan and the aspirations for the supreme glory of the tricolor. There may be thousands and lakhs of obstacles and challenges, but each and every Indian should unite to fight these challenges and

be the architect of the future of India – this is the resolution of Independence Day.

“Ek ankur phoot kar bola ki main haara nahi hun,
ek ulka-pind hoon, taara nahi hoon,
mrityu par jeevan vijay udhyoush karta,
mainamar lalkar hun charaa nahi hun
mainamar lalkar hun charaa nahi hun”
“A sapling said that I am not defeated,
I am a meteorite, not a star.
Life is victor over death,
I am an immortal challenger not a whimper,
I am the immortal challenger, not a whimper.”

Three years ago, the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji laid the foundation for modern and equitable socio-economic development in Jammu and Kashmir. Under his guidance, J&K has been making remarkable achievements for the holistic development of the region. Despite many odds and challenges, we have been able to complete a whopping 50,726 projects in the last financial year.

Over the last three years, the pace of execution of developmental schemes has increased by five times on account of a resurgent institutional framework. Districts are the basis for implementation of policies and programmes; district CAPEX budget has been increased four-fold to Rs. 22,126 crore for completion of various developmental projects. Grass root democratic institutions like Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies have been empowered to actively participate in the decision-making process to cater to the needs of common citizens. There are around 20,000 such works/projects under execution presently which have been solely identified by the people.

In the last two years, the government has endeavored to develop areas which had remained neglected till now. Dalits, tribals and socio-economically backward classes have benefited from an equitable governance system, so have the women of the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The Union Territory has achieved new horizons of success in the field of business, economy, education, culture and sports.

The aspirations of the youth of Jammu and Kashmir have been synchronized with the aspirations of the country today. Their dreams are not confined to personal development, but transcend to create a good future for the society, nation and the entire humanity. The youth of today aspire for an equitable society free from poverty, unemployment and exploitation. They want a society which challenges and harnesses their creativity. Peace is a pre-condition for the establishment of such a social and economic order and the Government has laid the foundation for realizing these 21st century dreams. I want to convey to the youth that India is presently a torch bearer for the conscience and development of the whole world. The youth of the country have proved their mettle in almost every sphere of scientific and technological development around the world. The government has bridged the chasm and opened all forms of communication for all-round development. Let us reaffirm our commitment and resolve to build a strong, advanced and prosperous Jammu and Kashmir.

As many as 30 thousand government jobs have been provided to the youth in last three years with complete transparency. Certain complaints were received about the irregularities which are being probed. We will ensure stringent punishment to those found guilty. The administration has also planned recruitment drive to fill the vacant positions this year. Self-employment opportunities have been provided to 5.2 lakh young boys and girls under various programmes. Under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Program, Jammu and Kashmir has been successful in establishing 21,640 manufacturing and service units in the last financial year, thereby emerging as the best performing region in the country. Under this Programme, 1.73 lakh new job opportunities were

created, which is the highest among all the states and Union territories of India.

Under Mission Youth, opportunities are being provided to young boys and girls to become entrepreneurs through schemes like Mumkin, Tejaswini, Rise Together and Parvaaz. We have made significant strides towards making urban and rural women financially independent through Hausla, Saath, Umeed and House Stay programmes. As many as 5 lakh rural women have been empowered through Self Help Groups, thereby neutralizing the sense of insecurity and despondency. The administration is sensitive to the problems faced by women in government jobs and has decided to establish crèche facilities in all the districts and offices in Jammu and Srinagar.

Adequate resources have been made available for the inclusive growth of the region. Government spending in the social and economic sector has been increased by 43.83% and 45.60% respectively. Efforts are being made to take the benefits of development to the last person standing in the queue.

The online services of all departments have been brought under the Public Services Guarantee Act with fixed timelines, so that the administration is accountable to the general public by cutting delays in the delivery of public services. We have decided to celebrate 5th August every year as the day of Resolution for Freedom from Corruption.

Jammu and Kashmir has been ranked at the top among the UTs in e-governance service delivery. 209 public services are being provided online and Rapid Assessment System (RAS) has been established to obtain direct feedback from the public about these services. The feedback received so far reveals the approval ratings for most of the services are above 80%. Through “Aapka Mobile, Hamara Daftar” initiative, we have lived up to our commitment to make public service delivery faceless and cashless.



Transport infrastructure is a pre-condition for economic and social transformation of any region. In the last two years, road and tunnel infrastructure has been prioritized and Rs 1 lakh crore is being spent to build a robust road network. Last year, Jammu and Kashmir has set a new record of constructing 6,450 km of road length. Jammu and Kashmir ranks third in achieving the target of longest road length in the country. Earlier 6 km of road length was constructed per day which has increased to 20 km of road length per day. Under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, Jammu and Kashmir ranks fourth in the country. In the last two years, a total of 169 bridges have been constructed to

strengthen the transport system and in the last financial year, 7610 km of road length has been macadamized which used to be around 2500-3000 km previously. Travel time between Jammu and Srinagar has been reduced from 12 hours to 7 hours.

In the 70 years since independence, Jammu and Kashmir was able to attract cumulative investment worth Rs 14000-15,000 crores whereas investment proposals worth Rs 56000 crores have been received in the past one and a half year only. Out of this, a ground breaking ceremony for proposals worth Rs 38,080 crore was held in the presence of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji in April this year. J&K has emerged as the top performer in the category of UTs in the ranking of strengthening of startup ecosystem. In order to strengthen the ease of doing business ecosystem, 150 e-services of 18 departments have been made available on Single Window Portal which has been integrated with the National Single Window Portal operated by the Central Government.

The results of the MoUs signed with reputed foreign investors like Emaar, Lulu and DP World shall soon be visible on the ground. 22 proposals worth Rs. 4400 crore have been approved for establishing a Medicity which shall also increase the number of MBBS seats in the UT by a whopping 1000. The golden period of industrial development of Jammu and Kashmir

has been ushered in through the new industrial development policy of the Hon'ble Prime Minister.

Clusters of handicrafts and handlooms are being established to provide a global market for the rich heritage of handicrafts of Jammu and Kashmir. The Handicraft Department is completing the process of census of all artisans associated with handicrafts. Central Khadi and Village Industries Board have established 5851 units last year through which around 47,000 new job opportunities have been created. The Silk Weaving Factory in Srinagar, which was closed for many years, has been revived. Financial assistance given to handicraft artisans under the Artisan Credit Card has been doubled from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 2 lakh. 26 new units have been established under the karkhandaar scheme. For securing a place in the global market for valuable handicrafts and enhancing their exports, 7 Crafts – Carpet, Pashmina, Sozni, Khatamband, Walnut Woodcarving, Papier-mâché and Kani Shawl have been GI Tagged.

The administration is working diligently to transform the archaic electricity network and systems in the Union territory. Work has already commenced on five major hydropower projects in collaboration with NHPC and in the next three years, we shall be in a position to generate the quantum of electricity cumulatively generated in the last 70 years. In the last two years, the transmission capacity has been enhanced from 8234 MVA to 11,016 MVA and the distribution capacity has been enhanced from 12,745 MVA to 16,574 MVA. 95,000 smart meters have been installed in Jammu and Srinagar cities and 6 lakh smart meters shall be installed by March 2023 for quality and reliable power. While the per capita energy consumption for the country as a whole is 1208 units, the same for Jammu and Kashmir is significantly higher at 1384 units.

Jammu and Kashmir has been ranked in the category of front runners in the Sustainable Development Index of NITI Aayog. Jammu and Kashmir is performing better than the national average on 12 parameters of health. Whereas, the neonatal mortality rate for the country as a whole is 24.9 per 1000 births, the same for Jammu and Kashmir has come down to single digit i.e. 9.8. Similarly, while the infant mortality rate for the country stood at 35.2, the same for Jammu and Kashmir is 16.3, the Under-5 Mortality Rate for the country is 41.9 and 18.5 for Jammu and Kashmir. Sex ratio at birth for the country as a whole stood at 929 and for Jammu and Kashmir, it stands at 976. The national average for institutional births is 88.6% while as, for Jammu and Kashmir the same stood at 92.4%. The national average of Fully Immunized Children is 83.8% while as for Jammu and Kashmir, it is 96.5%. The national average of Life Expectancy rate is 69.4 years, while as for Jammu and Kashmir the same is 74.

J&K has emerged as a role model in the entire country in COVID vaccination and COVID management. In the last financial year alone, 159 projects in the health sector have been completed at a cost of Rs. 670 crore. In the current financial year, we have set a target of completing 220 health care projects at a cost of Rs. 1757 crores. Under the Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Scheme, 80% of population of Jammu and Kashmir has been covered, and the government is spending Rs. 1.7 crore per day on health care of general public.

The average water coverage for Jammu and Kashmir is 57.86% which is much higher than the national average of 50.30%. All schools, Aanganwadi centers and health care institutions have been provided with tapped water connections and the government is committed to realize the dream of providing water to every household by next year.

PMDP projects were stalled for a long time due to policy paralysis, but in the last two years alone, 30 out of 53 projects have been completed by eliminating all bottlenecks. Out of the remaining 23 projects, 12 projects shall be completed in this financial year. The construction of the world's highest railway bridge on Chenab River is going on in full swing and the dream of connecting Kashmir to Kanyakumari with railways

will be realized by next year.

Farmers are the backbone of the economy of Jammu and Kashmir. In the last two years, the government has taken a multitude of policy decisions for improving their conditions. J&K has been ranked 3rd in the whole country for monthly farm income. Jammu and Kashmir ranks 5th in the country in the category of better performing states for reforms in agriculture and allied sectors. More than 2500 hectares of agricultural land has been brought under High Density Plantation and the global market has been provided for the Kashmiri fruits and vegetables under Parwaz Scheme. The Shahpur Kandi project, which was pending for four decades, is finally being executed at a cost of Rs. 2793 crores. The project shall be completed by March next year and shall irrigate 32,173 hectares of land.

Some radical reforms and initiatives have been initiated in the Revenue Department. Under the Aapki Zameen Aapki Nigrani Project, revenue records like Jamabandi, Girdwari, Mutation and Mousavi have been made digitally available to common citizens who can access these records without visiting the office of Patwari or Tehsildars, besides filing applications for rectification. So far, 16 lakh citizens from all 20 districts have availed this facility.

Land passbooks are being issued to all land owners in three languages viz. Urdu, Hindi and English. Demystification of land records is also being carried out so as to ensure that people can have access to their records in popular languages. This facility is being provided in the Jammu and Srinagar districts in the first phase of the project. With these land passbooks, land owners have been empowered to use their land as a financial asset for obtaining loans easily from banks and other financial institutions.

Under the Svamitva Scheme, Jammu and Kashmir has become the first UT in the country to issue ownership cards. Srinagar is the first district in the entire country to achieve 100% saturation under this Scheme. Since independence, till now only 300 Patwar-khanas were functional in government buildings in Jammu and Kashmir. Under a special campaign launched in March this year, 1662 Patwar-khanas have been established in government buildings in a month's time. To ensure transparency and accountability in the revenue administration, the government has prescribed specific timings for patwaris to attend to the public. To prevent any manipulation of revenue records, the process of seeding mobile and Aadhaar numbers with revenue records has been initiated. By bringing 24 services of the Revenue Department under the Public Service Guarantee Act, provision of these services to the public has been ensured in a time bound manner.

Under the Forest Rights Act, the tribal brothers have been vested with rights over water, forest and land thereby securing the future of their coming generations. The government shall complete more number of hostels for the tribal youth than the cumulative number constructed in the last 44 years. Scholarships are being provided to 1.69 lakh tribal children and top 100 performing children are being provided coaching for NEET and JEE. Similarly, 100 promising children from the tribal community shall be provided coaching for the Civil Services Examinations. Skill training is being imparted to 2000 youth belonging to tribal community and 800 tribal students studying in hostels have been provided tablets and sports kits. From this year, smart cards are being given to all the migratory population so that they do not face any kind of inconvenience in travel. 40 trucks were provided by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir for the transportation of goods and cattle of migratory families.

The Central and UT Government is fully committed to the rehabilitation and welfare of Kashmiri Pandits. Sincere efforts are being made at the administrative level and the people should also come forward for achieving this objective. Out of 6000 jobs, appointments have been made on 5502 posts and recruitment for 458 posts has been initiated which shall be completed soon. We have been able to address the demands

of employees appointed under Hon'ble PM Package to a great extent. The construction of 6000 transit accommodations for facilitating their return under PMDP which was very sluggish, has received a new impetus. 1000 units have been completed and 1100 units more will be completed by this year. Further, the Government has set a target of completing the remaining 3900 units within one and a half years. All PM Package and minority employees have been deployed in safe places. Jobs and housing, although important, are not the only solutions for their rehabilitation and welfare, so other efforts are also being made. Kashmiri Pandits and other displaced communities facing the brunt of displacement have been given justice by implementing the Jammu and Kashmir Displaced Immovable Property Act, enacted in 1997, with effect from last year. Till June this year, 8000 complaints have been received, on the basis of which, 2414 kanals of land have been retrieved from illegal occupation by taking action on 6500 complaints thereby providing justice to these 6500 families after three decades.

All major social welfare schemes- Mission Indradhanush, Old Age Pension, Widow Pension, Disability Pension, Supplementary Nutrition, SC-Pre-Matric Scholarship, SC-Post-Matric Scholarship, Minority Pre-Matric Scholarship, Minority Post-Matric Scholarship, Merit cum Means Minority Scholarship Scheme, Sugar and Food Grain Subsidy, Poshan Abhiyaan, Nutrition Tracker, UJALA, Ujjwala, Saubhagya, PM Kisan Samman Nidhi, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, Kisan Credit Card have been saturated to 100% in the last three years. Under Saubhagya Yojana, 8.57 lakh beneficiaries have been covered by providing electricity connections. Under the Ujjwala scheme, 12.41 lakh rural women have been provided LPG connections and it is being ensured that all sections of the society benefit from the developmental efforts.

Realizing the vision of inclusive growth, Aspirational Block scheme has been launched in 44 blocks. Jammu and Kashmir is the first UT or state in the country to do so and also the first state or UT in the country to launch District Good Governance Index.

A record 12 million tourists who visited Jammu and Kashmir this year, testify the overall development and change that has taken place in the Union territory. This is the highest-ever visitor figure the Tourism Department has ever seen. The long-pending demand of night-flight operation of the residents of Jammu and Kashmir has been fulfilled. 75 offbeat tourist destinations are being developed in Jammu and Kashmir as a part of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations. Jammu and Kashmir had been a favoured shooting destination for Bollywood. A comprehensive Film Policy was launched last year to attract film-makers after decades and within a year of the notification of the policy, as many as 140 shooting permissions for films and web-series have been issued. Soon, a film studio will be launched with state-of-the-art facilities. This, besides providing new opportunities to the young talent of Jammu and Kashmir, shall boost the business ecosystem of the Union territory.

Earlier, merely 2 to 3 lakh youth used to get opportunities for participation in sports every year. We have set a new record and 17.5 lakh youth were provided the opportunity to participate in sporting activities last year. The Government has set itself a target of providing sports opportunities to 35 lakh youth. The FIFA standard renovated and upgraded Bakshi Stadium has been dedicated to the young players and play fields have been established in all Panchayats. Women's teams for Rugby, Football, Cricket, Volleyball, Kabaddi and Hockey have been formed in all 20 districts. To secure career progression of the talented and meritorious sports persons, a new sports policy has been notified and the process of their appointment to government services has been initiated for clearing the backlog from 2014-2021. 22 indoor multi-purpose halls have been set up in all 20 districts of the Union Territory and 40 state-of-the-art sports grounds have been constructed to host national level tournaments. 38 Khelo-India Centers have been established in various sports disciplines. Presently,

work on 948 Sports Infrastructure projects is underway which are expected to be completed in this financial year.

The Educational system of the UT has been overhauled and aligned as per the recommendations of the National Education Policy, 2020. Through the Aao School Chalein campaign, 1.7 lakh students from disadvantaged sections have been brought back to the class rooms. Jammu and Kashmir has secured first position in the loyalty program of teachers training. In the National Achievement Survey, the UT has been ranked No. 1 in primary education and third in middle school education in the country. With a view to provide quality education to the youth in remote areas of the UT, 25,000 additional seats at graduate level have been provided by setting up 50 degree colleges. This is the biggest addition in the Higher Education sector in the last 70 years. Uniform academic calendar has been introduced in all higher educational institutions.

As we celebrate 75 years of our Independence, the world order is entering a new phase. All citizens, farmers, youth, labourers, women, craftsmen, entrepreneurs, engineers, teachers, artisans and public representatives of Jammu and Kashmir have to fulfill their obligations with regard to a new resolution for the next 25 years of journey of Jammu and Kashmir.

Today, on this auspicious occasion, I want to call upon the people of Jammu and Kashmir that this is a golden opportunity to restore the pride and excellence of Jammu and Kashmir. Let us build a self-reliant Jammu and Kashmir for the coming generations and realize the dreams of our ancestors. Let us create a society where every citizen is a fellow traveler in the journey of development of the nation and lives a life full of dignity and honour, bereft of any discrimination. Let us build a social system which benefits every individual. Let us unite against the conspiracies and thwart the malafide intentions which have pushed Jammu and Kashmir into darkness for decades.

We must reiterate, today, our resolve to defend every inch of our territory and convert the challenges into opportunities. The future belongs to youth. Let us resolve to fully support young men and women in building a bright future for Jammu and Kashmir. Jammu and Kashmir is on the move. I call upon every section of the society to make their valuable contribution to a happy, peaceful and prosperous Jammu and Kashmir.

It is only on the strength of trust and coexistence that we can create a golden future for the UT of Jammu and Kashmir. Let us take a pledge to make Jammu and Kashmir Nasha-Mukt, Bhrashatachar-Mukt and Rojgaar-Yukt.

Let us walk into the bright future of Jammu and Kashmir with the lines of Ramdhari Singh Dinkar ji-

“Aazadi ka yeh taaj bade tap se Bharat ne paaya hai
Mat poocho iske liye desh ne kya kuch nahi ganwaya hai
Hai phoot rahi laalima timir ki toot rahi ghan kaara hai
Jai Ho! Ki swarg se chooth rahi aashish ki jyotidhara hai
Ho jahan satya ki chingari sulage, sulage, woh jwala bane
Khoje apna utkarsh abhay, durdaant shikha vikraal bane
Aage who lakhsya pukaar raha, haankte hawa par
yaan chalo

Surdhanu par dharte hue charan, meghon par gaate
gaan chalo,

Meghon par gaate gaan chalo”

India has found this crown of freedom with great tenacity,
Don't ask what the country has not lost for this,
Redness is bursting, there is a cracking cube of blackness,
Hail that there is a stream of blessings leaving from
heaven.

Where the spark of truth, smolders, it becomes a flame,
Find your lofty goals without fear, the wicked crest
become formidable.

Ahead the target is calling out, fly on the wind,
Let the feet be on the sun, sing a song on the clouds.
Let's sing a song on the clouds.
Jai Hind!



76th Independence Day celebrations held across Kashmir

The 76th Independence Day was today celebrated with great fervor and enthusiasm across all the districts of Kashmir.

This year several campaigns including 'Har Ghar Tiranga' under the aegis of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' were celebrated to commemorate 75 years of Independence. The programme aimed to invoke a feeling of patriotism among the citizens and promote awareness about the Indian National Flag.

Under 'Har Ghar Tiranga', citizens were

encouraged to hoist the National Flag of India (Tiranga) atop their homes to celebrate the 75 glorious years of a progressive Independent India.

Apart from the main function held at SK Cricket Stadium Srinagar, the celebrations were held in all districts where the District Development Council (DDC) Chairman/Chairperson hoisted the tricolour and addressed the participants.



Farmers' income soars 4-5 times after Lavender cultivation in J&K

With the constant interventions of J&K Government, Lavender cultivation has been amplified across J&K by implementation of various schemes which in turn has increased the farmers' income by 4 to 5 times here.

Thousands of farmers in J&K are shifting to lavender cultivation which has proved very profitable for them. According to statistics, 5000 entrepreneurs/farmers are cultivating lavender on more than 200 acres of land which has led to a 4 to 5 times increase in their economy. Farmers traditionally in J&K grew cereals such as maize, rice and millets which didn't provide great returns but with lavender cultivation, their earnings have gone up several times.

Lavender cultivation also called as 'Purple Revolution', is an initiative of the Central government to improve the incomes of farmers in J&K. Many farmers have given up traditional farming and switched to lavender farming for profitability.

Ali Muhammad, farmer from Pulwama area of South Kashmir said, "Traditional farming was not giving us good returns. We are very happy with switching to lavender farming. Lavender farming also does not get much affected by less rainfall."

Cultivation of lavender has changed fortunes of farmers in Jammu and Kashmir under 'Aroma Mission or Purple Revolution', transforming lives of UT's farmers community. It was launched in 2016 by the Union Ministry of Science & Technology through the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research's (CSIR) Aroma Mission.

The aim of the mission is to support domestic aromatic crop-based agro-economy by moving from imported aromatic oils to home-grown varieties.

Lavender cultivation is practiced in almost all 20 districts of Jammu and Kashmir. Under the mission, first-time farmers were given free

lavender saplings while those who had cultivated lavender before were charged Rs 5-6 per sapling.

Farmers are happy with farming of unconventional aromatic plants under Aroma Mission. The mission promotes cultivation of aromatic crops for essential oils that are in great demand by the aroma industry.

In J&K, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine, Jammu (IIIM Jammu) are the two bodies responsible for the implementation of the Aroma Mission across J&K.

The CSIR Aroma Mission is envisaged to bring transformative change in the aroma sector through desired interventions in the areas of agriculture, processing and product development for fuelling the growth of the aroma industry and rural employment.


It is expected to enable Indian farmers and the aroma industry to become global leaders in the production and export of some other essential oils in the pattern of menthol mint.

According to the Lavender farmers, the selling of at least one litre of its oil fetches them Rs 20,000. The farmers say that lavender grown over one hectare of land gives them a minimum of 40 litre of lavender oil.

Lavender water, which separates from lavender oil, is used to make incense sticks. Hydrosol, which is formed after distillation from the flowers, is used to make soaps and room fresheners.

IIM-Jammu also helps farmers to sell their produce as well as many private companies also procure lavender extracts from the farmers.

Notably, Doda district is leading the way and four distillation units have been set up by CSIR-IIIM Jammu in the district. Farmers from remote areas of Doda reach these plants for the extraction of lavender oil. More than 800 progressive farmers of Doda have adopted aromatic cultivation which has now proved to be profitable.



J&K admin formulating policies to engage youth in governance process: LG

Appeals people to join govt in fighting drug-menace for drug-free J&K

The Jammu and Kashmir administration is formulating policies that engage youth in the governance process and ensure participation in their on-ground implementation, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said on Sunday.

Only the youth have the potential to light up the society and transform several vital matters related to social welfare,' Sinha said at the closing ceremony of the Kashmir Mega Football Tournament at Sehpora in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district.

"The Union Territory government is formulating policies that engage the youth in the governance process and ensure their participation in on-ground implementation," Sinha said.

He said the targeted schemes under 'Mission Youth' have been crafted to empower the youth. "It provides the youth opportunities to become ambassadors of innovation, peace, progress and sports," he added.

Livelihood generation programmes, skill development, counselling, sports, recreation and financial assistance by the government have brought a new revolution in youth empowerment in the last two years, Sinha said.

The football tournament was organised by Voice for Peace and Justice, an NGO, in collaboration with J&K Sports Council under the Special Activity Programme of 'My Youth My Pride' (Phase-II), and witnessed participation of young talents of the region as well as football players from Nigeria, Brazil and South Africa, an official press release said.

"We are witnessing the unifying power of sports and personal transformation of youth who are emerging as creative leaders of the society," the LG said.

Terming the youth as the real wealth of the country, he said, "We have a moral responsibility and moral obligation to make sure the young generation has the opportunity to blossom."

Young men and women in villages and towns are vibrant partners of the government to achieve the ultimate goal of building a peaceful and prosperous UT, Sinha said.

"In the financial year 2021-22 alone, 1.76 lakh young boys and girls have become entrepreneurs and became job providers from job seekers. Last year, financial assistance of Rs 1,840 crore was provided under various programs and explicit directions have been issued that there shall be no limit for financial assistance to our youth who aspire to achieve their goals in life," the LG said.

He observed that UT administration has started vocational

training from higher secondary schools and has made arrangements for training from ITIs, polytechnics. A new building has also been built for Ganderbal's ITI where training is being provided to the youth with state-of-the-art infrastructure in various industry sought trades, he added.

Recalling his interaction with a 130 member delegation of PRIs and civil society members from Ganderbal, the LG reiterated the government's commitment to work for sustained development of the district.

In consultation with the PRI members and as per the aspirations and needs of the people, district capex budget of Rs 359 crore was passed for Ganderbal and work on 850 projects is going on, at a fast pace, the LG noted.

The LG also expressed his satisfaction over completion of 1,851 projects, more than the targeted 1,680 projects, in the last financial year in the district.

Congratulating president of Voice for Peace & Justice, Farooq Ganderbali, civil society groups, associated members and all the players participating in the tournament, the LG impressed that more organizations like Voice for Peace & Justice and enlightened citizens must come forward and support J&K Sports Council in its endeavor to shape the future of sportspersons and channelize young energies through sports activities to spread the message of peace and progress.

On the occasion, the LG also appealed to the people to join the efforts of UT government, Youth Clubs, Social Welfare Department, Sports Council, and District administrations in the fight against drug-menace and keep youth away from drugs and work together to achieve a drug-free Jammu Kashmir.

The LG interacted with the players and also handed over trophies and cash prizes to the winning and runners up teams on the occasion.

Farooq Ganderbali, in his welcome address, briefed about the objective behind organizing the tournament. He expressed gratitude to the UT administration and J&K Sports Council for their support to make the tournament a grand success.

Pandurang K Pole, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; Vijay Kumar, ADGP Kashmir; Sarmad Hafeez, Secretary, Youth Services & Sports; Nuzhat Gul, Secretary, J&K Sports Council, besides prominent sports personalities, a large number of people and youth were present on the occasion.



“Mumkin” giving wings to dreams of youth of Shopian; helping them become self-reliant

Of 200 applications received, 144 cases approved till date, 88 CVs provided to beneficiaries

Mumkin, a customized livelihood generation scheme of Mission Youth turned out to be a savior for Hatib Javaid of Memendar Shopian who always aspired to become self-reliant by becoming self-employed to secure a respectable livelihood that could fulfill the needs of his family.

Earlier, working as a daily wage labourer, Hatib could hardly bear the expenses of his family with meager earnings. “Sometimes I would not get work for many days and all my savings dried up those days, and this feeling of not being able to save money for my dream of being self-reliant by becoming self-employed had left me depressed,” said Hatib.

“Getting to know about the Mumkin scheme of the J&K government through an awareness programme by District Employment and Counseling Centre (DE&CC) Shopian gave me a ray of hope of realizing my dream,” said Hatib adding, “Besides, the awareness programme also gave my dream a direction i.e. to become self-employed by owning a vehicle.”

He said that at the awareness programme last year, DE&CC Shopian gave him detailed information about the ‘Mumkin’ livelihood scheme and the official procedure and it was like a dream come true.

Hatib said that he is satisfied being the happy owner of Tata Yodha and is earning enough to not only feed his family but also meet other expenses that he would earlier only dream of.

Laying emphasis on self-employment, the Employment Officer, DE&CC Shopian said that the Youth of Shopian should get more and more involved in self-employment ventures and entrepreneurship by availing the benefits under various self-employment schemes of the J&K government to stand on their own feet and earn for themselves besides creating job opportunities for others.

He said that the youth of Shopian have shown tremendous response to the government’s promising self-employment scheme viz. Mumkin to become self-employed, earn for themselves and their families.

Giving details, he said that the department has received as many as 200 applications under the Mumkin Scheme, and 144 cases have been approved till date, out of which 88 commercial vehicles have been provided to the beneficiaries.

He informed that under the Youth Livelihood scheme of the UT Government, small commercial vehicles are being provided to the beneficiaries, with the banking partners providing the loan

facilities up to 100 per cent of the vehicle’s on-road price.

He further said that Mission Youth, Jammu and Kashmir, provides Rs 80,000 or 10 per cent of the vehicle’s on-road price, whichever is lesser, as an upfront subsidy, and the partnering vehicle manufacturers, provides an upfront special discount, not less than the subsidy amount, which comes out as total Rs 120,000 or 20% of the on road price in form of subsidy/discount for the beneficiary. Financial assistance for purchase of small commercial vehicles such as load carriers, Taxis, Minibusses, Tempo, etc is being covered under the scheme.

“No down payment or Margin money, collaterals, or guarantor is required for availing loan from Bank,” the Employment Officer added.

He said that the department is conducting wide publicity of the employment generation schemes of the Government so that the educated unemployed youth are engaged in sustainable livelihood and employment generation ventures.

Similarly, Sahil Ahmad Khanday of Pinjoora said he is on cloud nine after receiving a Mahindra Pickup Vehicle under the ‘Mumkin’ scheme.

Like many youngsters of his age, Khanday always dreamt of earning decent to improve the economic conditions of his family.

Seeing the struggle of his family in making ends meet, Khanday learned to drive at a young age and started lending a helping hand to his family. 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,” said Khanday while revealing his ordeal of tough times.

Last year, Khanday saw the news regarding the Mumkin scheme on social media and immediately rushed to the DE&CC Shopian.

Then after completing all formalities, he was handed over the keys of the vehicle of his choice. “I am thankful to the government for providing me a source of livelihood with subsidy,” Khanday said.

It is worth mentioning here that the livelihood generation scheme ‘Mumkin’ for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir was launched by Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, last year.

The ‘Mumkin’ is a livelihood programme designed primarily for unemployed young people in the age group of 18 to 35. To make the scheme implementation completely transparent, and fast, a module has been developed on the JK-e-Services portal for operating the scheme digitally.

‘Mumkin’ is a special initiative of the J&K administration towards channelizing the energy of Youth and engaging them through a systematic livelihood generation programme.

This initiative will help transform numerous lives in the UT through a collective approach of all stakeholders towards materializing the scheme into a huge success.



Transparent, accountable governance system established across J&K

J&K Government has established a unique system through which every work is being put into the public domain thereby establishing greater accountability and transparency in the work culture as well as ensuring that money is spent as per the developmental needs of the people.

The government is undertaking several reforms which will help to further fine-tune the developmental strategy and give an impetus to the efforts of fast-tracking development here.

The proper documentation of development projects with photographic evidence and geo-coordinates is an effort towards enhancing transparency and accountability in the execution of works. 32889 works are available online on the Empowerment portal for citizens to check and ensure they are being done as per defined specifications.

The UT of J&K has achieved an unprecedented level of transparency in financial management through a host of financial reforms and interventions made by the Government which include the activity-wise online release of funds through “BEAMS” (Budget Estimation, Allocation and Monitoring System); EMPOWERMENT (Enabling Monitoring and Public Overview of Works Being Executed & Resources for meaningful Transparency) portal which gives details of projects and related expenses and puts them in public domain, making administrative and technical approvals, e-tendering, geo-tagged photographs mandatory for payments; online billing through “JK Payment System”; streamlining of GST; e-stamping; e-GRAS; digital payments; implementation of GeM; publication of important manuals relating to Budget and Audit, Back to Village and My Town My Pride initiatives and 100% physical verifica-

tion of projects.

The administration has successfully implemented innovative initiatives in this regard which inter alia included BEAMS, online submission of bills through J&K PaySys, mandatory administrative approvals, technical sanctions and e-tendering, digital payments, GFR, GeM and related measures which have greatly helped in bringing financial discipline in government departments here.

Key reforms introduced by the Jammu and Kashmir government in its financial structure envisaging added transparency and accountability have brought UT’s fiscal system at par with any other progressive arrangement across the country.

Promoting good governance in financial management has been one of the core objectives of the government. The financial system in J&K is one of the most transparent systems anywhere and is among the key changes that have taken root in the Union Territory.

Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, during her recent visit to J&K, said the abrogation of Article 370 brought impetus to financial activities, transparency in administration and growth in UT’s economy.

“In the past two years, work that has happened in J&K is absolutely stunning. The government procurement, recruitment, government spending of its resources, taxation or deployment of resources, whatever it be, they are now available online 24X7 with all transparency,” she asserted. “So in terms of bringing transparency in governance, in terms of being transparent itself tells you that they are accountable for every one rupee which is being spent on the ground,” she added.



EMPLOYMENT

Integration of JKECP with NCS portal a step towards creating employment avenues for youth of J&K

'Integration will provide access to youth for vacancies at pan-India level'

The integration of the J&K Employment Career Portal (JKECP) with the National Career Service (NCS) portal is a remarkable step of the J&K Government which would bring more remunerative and gainful employment opportunities for the youth of the Jammu and Kashmir.

The initiative would also offer greater choice and better chances for youth to gain employment as per their qualifications and preferences.

Through this integration, counselling and guidance from more than 800 approved counsellors providing career guidance in 4000 employment areas from National and International subject experts is also extended to job seekers of J&K UT.

This integration will also provide access to the youth of J&K towards vacancies at pan India level and also provides opportunities to participate in National/U.T. level Job fairs. The integration will also give job aspirants from J&K access to the larger job market besides making their visibility to employers all over the country.

The integration is capable of meeting the varied demands and requirements of the youth for information on education, employment, and training and will be supported by a multi-lingual call centre.

The National Career Service portal has been developed primarily to connect the opportunities with the aspirations of youth which facilitates registration of job seekers, job providers, skill providers, career counselors, etc. The portal also provides job-matching services in a highly transparent and user-friendly manner. The portal will also make available information on local service providers available to household and other consumers for services like driving, plumbing, carpentry, etc.

Lieutenant Governor's administration is also focusing on creation/generation of self-employment opportunities for the youth here. In this connection, a transparent process was initiated and the government fixed the target of creating avenues

for two lakh youth. They are being provided with training, and mentoring besides financing besides training and helping the youth to get employment under various schemes of the Government of India. Self-employment opportunities have been provided to 5.2 lakh young boys and girls under various programmes.

Notably, Financial assistance of Rs 1,840 crores was given as a loan through various banks to people to start their own employment ventures in the financial year 2021-22. In a short span of three years, J&K has introduced reforms in every sector, which has opened up plethora of opportunities for growth and development. The results are visible as J&K is now moving ahead to be one of the leading regions in sectors like IT, industries, tourism, revenue, women entrepreneurship, and youth empowerment.

Under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Program, Jammu and Kashmir has been successful in establishing 21,640 manufacturing and service units in the last financial year, thereby emerging as the best-performing region in the country. Under this Programme, 1.73 lakh new job opportunities were created, which is the highest among all the states and Union territories of India.

Mission Youth' and several other programmes for employment generation are going on and are remarkably contributing to establishing the self-employment avenues here.

Under Mission Youth, opportunities are being provided to young boys and girls to become entrepreneurs through schemes like Mumkin, Tejaswini, Rise Together and Parvaaz. Significant strides are being made by making urban and rural women financially independent through Hausla, Saath, Umeed and House Stay programmes. As many as 5 lakh rural women have been empowered through Self Help Groups, thereby neutralizing the sense of insecurity and despondency. The administration is sensitive to the problems faced by women in government jobs and has decided to establish crèche facilities in all the districts and offices in Jammu and Srinagar.

NITI Ayog to establish 500 ATLs across J&K to nurture innovative mindset among students

To nurture the innovative mindset among high school students across the length and breadth of J&K, Atal Innovation Mission and NITI Ayog is establishing more than 500 Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs) here under Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), an official spokesman said Fria.

ATL is the flagship initiative of AIM launched by Government of India, to nurture an innovative mindset amongst high school students across the length and breadth of India. The Government of India is working on a five-year vision document for AIM to create and promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship across the length and breadth of the country.

ATL is a workspace where young minds can give shape to their ideas through hands-on do-it-yourself mode and learn innovation skills. The objectives of the AIM are to create and promote an ecosystem of innovation and entrepreneurship across the country via interventions at school, university, research institutions, MSME and industry levels, the spokesman said.

The programmes of AIM cover 34 states and Union Territories with the goal of leveraging India's demographic dividend by inspiring greater participation in the innovation ecosystem.

Recently the AIM Team led by Mission Director, Dr Chintan

Vaishnav inspected the Atal Tinkering Labs in J&K during which creative students displayed their innovative models and briefed about challenges they faced while working on these innovations.

On the occasion, the MD said that Atal team has created over 10k Tinkering Labs all over India and hundreds of these have been also established in J&K schools.

He said the AIM is establishing more than 500 labs in J&K schools in the next few years to promote innovative and creative mind-set among J&K students. "We want to take this creative and innovative movement to all schools and provide these creative minds a platform to perform and showcase their talent," he added.

He said the aim is to encourage young minds in the field, and challenge students to become producers of products themselves instead of consumers.

The Government has directed the School Education Department to promote scientific temper among the students in areas such as machine learning and artificial intelligence by proactively engaging them in various experiments and scientific activities.

They have also been asked to fix timelines for setting up the laboratories and to emphasise on nomination of trainers or champions to run the labs against suitable incentives.

More than 7600 cases approved under Mumkin and Tejaswini

Chief Executive Officer, Mission Youth and Secretary Tribal Affairs, Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary today asked the banks and scheme partners to introduce youth-friendly measures to approval and sanction of cases under various schemes of entrepreneurship. DLICs have so far approved more than 7600 cases worth Rs 618 Cr.

Vice-President J&K Bank, Director, JKEDI, District Nodal Officers, OSDs Mission Youth and partner organisations in various schemes attended the meeting wherein a number of decisions were taken for revamping the process of DPR formulation, skill training and sanctions.

It was informed that District Level Implementation Committees (DLIC) headed by Deputy Commissioners have approved 5176 cases under the Mumkin scheme valuing Rs 496 Cr out of which 4295 cases have been forwarded to banks and 2315 disbursed so far while under the Tejaswini scheme for women 2443 cases valuing Rs 122 Cr have been approved by the DLICs.

Under the Spurring Entrepreneurship Initiative, 2700 applications have been received/approved by the DLICs. In view of the massive demand from the youth, the Finance Department has approved 5% margin money to be sponsored under the scheme apart from other benefits

already notified. A programme for the skill development of youth has also been rolled out. Under Rise Together scheme providing upto Rs 10 Lakh per enterprise a total of 68 cases were approved.

In view of the feedback given by Nodal Officers DLIC and DECC officers it was decided that DPR formulation will be coordinated at district level through designated competent authorities and candidates will have the option to have the DPR formulated at their own. Skill Development training and Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) under the Tejaswini scheme will now be conducted at JKEDI, Rural Self-Employment Training Institute (RSETI), Polytechnics, Industrial Training Institutes and Skill Development training institutes registered with NSDC and J&K Skill Development Mission

J&K Bank has been asked to notify the District Level Nodal Officers for grievances redressal in view of several issues raised related to sanction and disbursement of cases, in order to ensure timely resolution of the issues and help the youth for entrepreneurial success under various schemes. The CEO also asked the district teams and headquarters for monthly and weekly progress reviews and real-time updates of data.

JK Higher Education Department to rank colleges based on performance, excellence

MoU with IIT Jammu to provide technical expertise to be signed

“The J&K Higher Education Department is all set to launch a comprehensive ranking system for the colleges of Jammu & Kashmir.” This was announced at a meeting held at the Civil Secretariat Jammu here today.

The meeting was chaired by Principal Secretary Higher Education Department, Rohit Kansal.

Elaborating on the idea, the Principal Secretary informed that the Higher Education Department had decided to carry out a ranking of all Higher Educational Institutions in J&K based on assets of transparent criterion and a unique index. The IIT Jammu would be the knowledge partner of the Higher Education Department and would design the unique index as well as a special portal to collect the information and rank the colleges. For this purpose, an MoU would be signed between the Directorate of Colleges J&K and the IIT Jammu.

The two autonomous colleges of J&K viz. GDC Baramulla and GCW Parade would assist the Directorates of Higher Education in this exercise. A core team consisting members from Govt College Parade, GDC Baramulla and Director Colleges would help in the creation of indices and primary data would be provided by the department to the IIT team for the formulation of ranking indices. The IIT team would be responsible for creating an index of colleges based on the department’s suggestions, creating an online portal/ dashboard and processing raw data to prepare the final college rankings.

Director IIT Jammu, Dr Manoj Singh Gaur was also present at the meeting along with his team of experts expressed happiness at the opportunity of carrying out such an exercise which would be among the first such initiatives in the country. He elaborated that the performance of the college in a diverse range of activities including academics, sports activities, research, placement, innovation, diversity, quality would be used to develop an index which in turn would be used to rank the colleges. It was told that an ‘internal system’ already exists that broadly ranks colleges as; outstanding, good, very good, average and poor. Additionally, the colleges are also subject to rankings under NIRE, NAAC and other rating agencies which categorise the colleges based on different



parameters.

The Higher Education Department has already declared 2022 as the year of Excellence and the Principals of all the colleges have been given broad guidelines for achieving excellence under five broad segments: Achievements under Academic Excellence, Enhancing Skills and Employability, Research and Innovation, My College My Pride, Rewarding Efforts and Achievement. The Principal Secretary also noted that the feedback system launched by the department is already operational and is providing the students with an opportunity to provide feedback about the quality of the learning experience. Similarly, the teachers have also been facilitated by the system to provide inputs on the infrastructure and other administrative aspects of their respective colleges.

The Principal Secretary expressed the hope that the proposed College Ranking System would encourage the Higher Educational Institutions to strive for excellence and would also enable the department to spot and incentivize the leaders and handhold those who needed assistance.

Those present at the meeting included Special Secretary, Rakesh Badyal; Director Colleges, Dr Yasmeen Ashai; Principal GCW Parade, Dr SP Saraswat; Principal GDC Baramulla, Dr Mohammad Farooq Rather and Dr Sourabh.

‘Agri Deptt successful in curbing menace of spurious pesticides to a large extent’

The Director Agriculture Kashmir (Controller Insecticides), Chowdhary Mohammad Iqbal, today took stock of the supply/stock position of different insecticides, pesticides, and fertilizers during an interactive meeting with the Insecticide, pesticide, fertilizer dealers, concerned officers of the department and other stakeholders at Dak Bangalow here.

Speaking on the occasion, the Director appreciated the efforts by the concerned wing of the department for their role to prevent the movement of spurious and

non-standard insecticides, pesticides, and fertilizers into the valley.

He said serving the interests of the farming community is our top priority and by successfully curbing the menace of spurious pesticides, fertilizers in the valley, we are actually ensuring the financial security of our farming community to a very large extent.

Director was apprised by the concerned officers and the representatives of the insecticides, pesticides, fertilizer companies regarding the stock and supply position of

different inputs (insecticides, pesticides, fertilizers). A number of related issues were also discussed during the meeting.

Earlier, the Director visited Agriculture Engineering Workshop Sangrama Sopore and took stock of the manufacturing of different agricultural implements, the quality of material being used, and other related activities. He interacted with the staff of the workshop and impressed upon the concerned to ensure that quality material is used during the manufacturing of different implements.

PM KISAN beneficiaries to receive 12th installment only in Aadhar-seeded accounts

Month-long 'Nasha Mukht Abhiyan' to commence from September 1st across J&K, 'Back-to-Village-4' to be organized soon

The Chief Secretary, Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta, today chaired a meeting to take stock of progress under various welfare schemes in Jammu and Kashmir.

Additional Chief Secretary, Agriculture Production Department, Financial Commissioner, Revenue, Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Commissioner/Secretary, Revenue Department, and Commissioner/Secretary, Social Welfare Department, along with Divisional Commissioner Jammu, and Deputy Commissioners of all districts participated in the meeting.

Under the PM Kisan Yojana, it was informed that all beneficiaries will be verified through Aadhar seeding and revenue record authentication before the release of the 12th installment of the financial relief.

The Chief Secretary directed the Deputy Commissioners of all districts to ensure uploading of the relevant revenue record, completion of the e-KYC formalities, and Aadhar-seeding of all beneficiary accounts by 05.09.2022. They were asked to lay special focus on de-weeding of ineligible beneficiaries and recovery of false claims.

Further, the JK Bank was asked to raise public awareness among its users through text messages, especially with respect to the 12th installment of the PM KISAN Yojana, which will be credited directly into the Aadhar-seeded bank accounts of registered farmers through direct benefit transfer. Besides, Divisional Commissioners of both divisions were asked to rope in public representatives and concerned line departments in expediting the collection of requisite scheme-related data.

For raising awareness on the mandatory Aadhar-seeding and authentication of beneficiaries under various government schemes, Dr. Mehta asked the Information Department to run dedicated advertisement campaigns in all vernacular newspapers.

It was informed that a month-long 'Nasha Mukht Abhiyan' will be organized across Jammu and Kashmir, commencing on September 1st, 2022. It is estimated that a total of 06 lakh victims are

associated with activities related to drug and substance abuse in the Union territory.

Accordingly, the Social Welfare Department was asked to generate a database of all such victims through the Panchayati Raj Institutions in collaboration with the teams from Rural Development and Health & Medical Education departments along with district administrations, by 15.09.2022.

The Department was advised to extend medical care and rehabilitation to the identified victims while maintaining their anonymity and treating them as patients and not criminals.

Further, to strengthen the infrastructural support to the campaign, all district administrations were directed to establish a drug de-addiction centre at respective district hospitals with adequate arrangements for professional manpower and medical supplies. The Home Department was also asked to organize monthly meetings of District Narco Task Forces to tighten the noose against the drug peddlers and dealers.

Furthermore, the concerned departments were asked to ensure the completion of Amrit Sarovar and Swachh Gram Abhiyan within their stipulated timeframes. The district administrations were asked to submit the progress of developmental works to be completed during the current fiscal under the District CAPEX, besides giving a fillip to the self-employment schemes in their districts for greater employment generation.

The Chief Secretary asked the Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir to ensure that all places in Kashmir valley remain open and connected throughout the winter season as the region is receiving an unprecedented number of tourists. Similarly, the Divisional Commissioner, Jammu was asked to spruce up tourist destinations and promote tourism in Jammu region especially the Mansar-Surinsar circuit, Bani-Sarthal circuit, and Baderwah-Sinthal circuit, besides various other regional tourist attractions and destinations.

It was further informed that the 'Back-to-Village-4' will be organized shortly for which all district administrations were asked to prepare fully.

Prisoners don't cease to be humans, entitled to all fundamental rights: Justice Magrey

Prisoners should be provided all basic facilities as they do not cease to be human beings and are entitled to all fundamental rights, Justice Ali Mohammad Magrey of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh said on Tuesday.

Justice Magrey directed the officers to provide all the basic facilities to inmates in jails.

He emphasised that a prisoner does not cease to be a human being and while being lodged in a jail, he is entitled to all fundamental rights, an official spokesman said here.

Justice Magrey, who is the Executive Chairman J&K Legal Services Authority, chaired a meeting to discuss how to ensure that the undertrials and convicts are not denied the basic fundamental rights while they are in custody.

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary Home R K Goyal, DG Prisons H K Lohia and other senior officers.

During the meeting, Goyal apprised Justice Magrey about the existing facilities available for the detainees in different prisons of J-K and the improvements made in the near past, the spokesman said.

It was informed that against the sanctioned capacity of 3,629 in 14 jails of the UT of J&K there are as many as 5,148 inmates.

Therefore, the average occupancy rate of prisons in J&K is 142 percent, he said.

However, it was also informed that the government is considering raising the infrastructure to ensure decongestion in jails.

Justice Magrey was informed that in 2022, a total of 425 e-mulakats were held between the inmates and their relatives.

The agenda of the meeting was 'Access to Justice' for persons in custody/detention, review of prison population and overcrowding, counselling and rehabilitation of prisoners, the spokesman said.

"It was resolved that the government shall make all the endeavors to provide quality food, proper medical care and appropriate space in the jails for legal aid clinics so that the detainees are not deprived of the legal assistance," he said.

Justice Magrey was informed that five IGNOU study centres are functional in five jails while it was also resolved that IGNOU study centres shall be established in the remaining jails also.

Justice Magrey also impressed upon the participating members to increase the frequency of counselling of the prisoners and ensure their proper rehabilitation after they are released from the prisons, the spokesman said.

200 services made online by J&K govt for prompt service delivery

Move aims to establish efficient, responsive, transparent governance system across J&K

Jammu and Kashmir Government has made more than 200 services online for prompt service delivery for its citizens with an effective feedback mechanism system.

With the help of this system, people could easily learn about the development works being done anywhere in J&K through Jan Bhagidari online platform and thereby establishing a transparent system.

During the ongoing digital revolution, feedback from thousands of people could be gathered in a minute which could efficiently reveal the effect of services offered by the government.

The government of Jammu and Kashmir has embarked on an ambitious journey for ushering in an era of smart, efficient, responsive, transparent, citizen-friendly, and corruption-free governance across Jammu and Kashmir.

A number of major IT initiatives have been taken in recent times by the UT Government which has brought a paradigm shift in the structure of governance. The main emphasis is on G2C (Government to Citizen) Online Services, 213 of which have so far been launched and many of them have been made available under a Unified Service Delivery Portal called e-UNNAT. These have been integrated with MeriPehchaan, RAS feedback mechanism, e-Payment gateway, SMS gateway, DigiLocker, Aadhar, eKYC, and UMANG.

The government of Jammu & Kashmir is firmly committed to reaching out to the common public and making available to them

G2C services in an easily accessible, uncomplicated, and transparent manner.

The Government's resolve is to provide an enriching experience to the citizen/user, save them from physically visiting offices and dealing with public officials in crowded offices and going through complicated processes. At the same time, the objective is also to save the citizen from visiting too many online portals and having to remember all those website addresses and login credentials. There was a long-felt need for the citizens to have easy access to all those services.

The Rapid Assessment System (RAS) has been integrated with all the services for eliciting the response and feedback of the citizens regarding the ease of availing, usage, and quality of the service. About 30 of these services have been brought on board the UMANG platform thus moving towards the Goal of "AapKa Mobile, Humara Daftar".

A few services like Birth Certificate, Death Certificate, etc. have been integrated with Digi-Locker, and more are in the process of integration, thus paving the way for a citizen to obtain their digital documents while sitting in the comfort of their homes or offices.

The Government also aims to bring about transformation by means of a single National Single Sign-On (NSSO) called "MeriPehchan". In the coming days, all the remaining G2C services would be digitally enabled and brought on board a single platform.

NHM J&K releases ranking of Public Health facilities on Hospital Management Information System

The Union Territory of J&K has started the implementation of a Hospital Management Information System which is named JK e-Sahaj (Electronic System for Automation of Hospital Administration J&K) in different types of facilities i.e. Tertiary care, District Hospitals, Community Health Centres, Primary Health Centres and some New Type PHCs.

In the first phase of implementation 585 facilities have been covered under this initiative and will be further extended to other facilities in a phased manner. JK e-Sahaj has been integrated with Rapid Assessment System (RAS) and 104 comprehensive call centre for outbound calling.

In the category of Associated Hospitals of GMCs first rank has been clinched by GMC Anantnag followed by Govt. GB Pant Hospital Srinagar, Govt. Lal Ded Hospital, Srinagar, GMC Rajouri, GMC Doda. The bottom 05 under the said category are GMC Baramulla, MCCH Anantnag, Chest Disease Hospital Jammu, Psychiatric Hospital Jammu, and GMC



Jammu

In the category of District Hospitals first rank has been clinched by DH Shopian followed by DH Pulwama, DH Poonch, Govt. Hospital Gandhi Nagar, Jammu & DH Handwara. The bottom 05 under the said category are DH Kulgam, DH Budgam, DH Kishtwar, DH Bandipora and DH Samba.

In the category of Community Health Centres (CHCs), the first rank has been clinched by CHC Pampore followed by CHC Tral, CHC Seer, CHC Akhnoor,

and Emergency Hospital Qazigund. The bottom 05 under the said category are CHC Banihal, CHC Kremshore, CHC Chowki Choura, CHC Kot Bhalwal & CHC Pakherpora.

In the category of Primary Health Centres (PHCs), the first rank has been clinched by UPHC S.R Gunj, UPHC Hazratbal, UPHC Batamalloo, PHC Dangiwach, and UPHC SMHS Srinagar. The bottom 05 under the said category are PHC Kathar, PHC Sawajian, UPHC Pantha Chowk, PHC Satriyian, and PHC Sai.

Hospital Ranking has been assigned for different categories of facilities i.e. Associated Hospitals of Govt. Medical Colleges, District Hospitals, CHCs, and PHCs. The ranking has been done on the basis of registration uploaded on the portal of JK e-Sahaj from the last 7 days on a real-time basis. The ranking of facilities after the full acceptance and its implementation shall be held on the basis of the patient feedback Score as per the guidelines of the Mera Asptaal App at the national level.

Govt to allocate funds under CSS, UT CapEx for tribal welfare proportionate to their population: CS

Tribal Sub-Plan to be integrated with BEAMS, SEC approves several key initiatives for tribal development and welfare



Chief Secretary, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta, today chaired the meeting of the State Executive Committee for Tribal Plan and UT Level Coordination Committee meeting for approval of a number of tribal development projects and initiatives apart from the mandatory formulation of Tribal Sub-Plan in all sectors.

He asked the departments to ensure 100% saturation under various schemes by covering all tribal families and ensuring benefit reaches the migratory population.

CS directed all the departments to formulate Tribal Sub-Plan out of their overall budget allocation in consultation with Tribal Affairs Department and conduct regular outcome evaluations to ensure that gaps in the welfare and development of the tribal population are promptly redressed. This is the first time that all departments in J&K will be formulating Tribal Sub-Plans. Departments will allocate specific funding for tribal villages under CSS, CapEx, NABARD, loan component, and other special schemes.

It was decided that funds proportionate to the tribal population in Jammu & Kashmir shall be earmarked specifically by all the departments and districts under both Centrally Sponsored Schemes and UT CapEx for focused development in tribal villages. Special emphasis will be laid on beneficiary-oriented schemes and welfare infrastructure with priority to road connectivity, power supply, drinking water, healthcare, and education.

The SEC approved a plan for 134 tribal villages to be

developed under the Pradhan Mantri Aadi Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAAGY) as Model villages during the current financial year for which Gap Funding of Rs 20 Lakh/village will be released by tribal affairs departments while all other departments will converge by allocating 43% of their Scheduled Tribe Component (STC) under Centrally Sponsored Scheme.

District Planning and Monitoring Committee (DPMC) headed by DCs and Block Level Committees headed by Chairperson, Block Development Council will monitor implementation. DDC members will be special invitees in DPMC meeting. Tribal Research Institute has been assigned the task of capacity building and planning.

In another landmark initiative, the UTLCC approved Rs 45.00 Cr grant for the establishment of 4500 tribal Self-Help Groups to benefit 90,000 members of tribal families directly. Further, Rs 10.00 Cr for warehousing and marketing facilities were also approved.

In another significant move, the tribal affairs department proposed Rs 25.00 Cr project for providing mechanical shearing machines, Skilling, establishment of wool collection centres, setting up facilities for sorting, grading, and marketing of wool aimed at benefitting more than 30,000 sheep farmers. The SEC approved and recommended the project for funding.

The SEC also reviewed the functions of the J&K EMRS Society. It was informed that 6 model residential schools have been operationalised over the last year. It considered and approved to recommend the establishment of 10 new Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) for which land has been earmarked. These include Shopian (district Hq), Gandoh in Doda, Tral in Pulwama, Khwas and Budhal in Rajouri, Surankote in Poonch, Padder in Kishtwar, Mahore in Reasi, Kangan in Ganderbal, Kalaroos in Kupwara. Deptt also proposed residential schools for Bani, Ramnagar, Kulgam, and Poonch.

Earlier, Secretary Tribal Affairs Department made a detailed presentation elaborating on various proposals including a Tribal Sub-Plan of Rs 976 Cr and Rs 154 Cr to be earmarked by deptts and districts respectively out of their CapEx; earmarking of Scheduled Tribe Component under CSS, Tribal-Wool Project, Tribal SHGs, Model Schools and transit facilities among others.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary, Jal Shakti, Shaleen Kabra, Principal Secretary PWD Shailendra Kumar, Principal Secretary Higher Education Rohit Kansal, Principal Secretary School Education Alok Kumar, Principal Secretary Skill Dev Asgar Samoon, Commissioner-Secretaries Sanjeev Verma (Forests), Sourabh Bhagat (S&T), Mandeep Kour (RDD), Sheetal Nanda (Social Welfare); Secretaries Yasha Mudgal (Cooperatives), Sarmad Hafeez (Tourism & YSS), Bhupinder Kumar (Health & Medical Education), Managing Directors, Directors and Chief Engineers of all the departments.



Post-August 2019, J&K's economy marching ahead: LG

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Thursday said post-August 2019, industry-centric policies, provisions for financial assistance, handholding to new and existing enterprises have encouraged MSMEs and other industries in J&K so much so that the entire business ecosystem is now exuding the confidence.

Sinha made these remarks as he inaugurated the 8th India International MSME Start-up Expo & Summit at New Delhi.

The Expo provides a much-needed platform to SMEs, start-ups, trade, industry, service providers to explore new opportunities, buyers-sellers meet, sharing knowledge about central/state's/UTs schemes etc., an official press release said.

It said expressing gratitude towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi for bringing a revolution in MSME sector, the LG said that in the last eight years the MSME sector has undergone very rapid change. "New strength, resilience and global competitiveness of MSMEs will make India a preferred destination for manufacturing for the world," he added.

The LG said that the Indian MSME sector today can be described as magical, steadfast, magnificent enterprises, which is contributing nearly 45 percent of overall India's exports. The number of initiatives under Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan is driving economic progress and social development, he added.

"MSME is the nerve center of the country's business. Our focus is to rejuvenate traditional MSMEs with greater access to credit and market linkage to ensure a higher growth trajectory for MSMEs," the LG observed.

"Productivity, connectivity & standardization, are in fact, three important factors for MSME's sustained growth. Vocal for local, district export hubs, GeM portal, market linkage of domestic and global value chains, all these interventions are results of Hon'ble Prime Minister's efforts to ensure that MSMEs contribute to realize the vision of Aatma Nirbhar Bharat & Aatma Nirbhar Jammu Kashmir," the LG further added.

"The industry centric policies, provisions of financial assistance, handholding to new and existing enterprises have encouraged MSMEs and other industries in J&K. The business ecosystem is exuding the confidence," he added.

"After August 2019, J&K's economy has been living up to the expectation. In FY 2021-22, MSMEs export registered 54 percent

growth and importer-exporter registration has gone up by 173 percent," he informed, adding that strategic focus on food processing, handicrafts & and organic products has stimulated the economic growth.

"J&K has one of the fastest growing horticulture markets in the country. Our strengths in natural resources & skilled workforce, best in class incentives through new industrial development scheme are well known and makes J&K an ideal MSME destination," the LG further added.

Highlighting the government's endeavours to empower MSMEs, the LG said that JKTPO is continuously organizing buyers-sellers meetings, exhibitions, capacity building programs to provide entrepreneurs with requisite support for their businesses.

"In the last financial year, J&K Bank was given a target to provide credit facility to the accounts of 60,000 entrepreneurs and we have ensured credit of Rs 3579 crore to 81,238 accounts, very well exceeding the target," the LG noted.

The LG informed that MSMEs from the manufacturing and service sectors contribute 8 percent to the GSDP of Jammu and Kashmir. Our GDP in this financial year is estimated to reach Rs 2,03,716 crore which will be 7.5 percent higher than last financial year, he further observed.

"J&K is making rapid strides in both manufacturing as well as the service sector. Setting up a biotech park at Kathua will help us to exploit the opportunities in sunrise areas and further open up opportunities in the knowledge economy," the LG noted.

Highlighting the need to adopt holistic approach to tackle fast-moving global business scenario, the LG advised all stakeholders to pay special attention to three priorities — sustainability in business, brand-building with focus on market & customer research and quality, time-bound service & value addition.

The LG also visited the stalls of MSMEs & other stakeholders from J&K displaying the local products.

Vivek Bhardwaj, Additional Chief Secretary, Industries & Commerce Department; Sarmad Hafeez, Secretary to the Government, Tourism Department; Rajnish Goenka, Chairman, MSME Development Forum, besides foreign and domestic business delegates, investors, entrepreneurs and members of MSMEs were present on the occasion.



J&K admin approves adoption of revised compassionate appointment scheme

‘Merit-based screening system through an online portal will streamline annual compassionate appointments’

The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Monday approved the adoption of a rehabilitation scheme that will provide compassionate appointment or monetary help to deserving people.

“The Administrative Council, which met here under the chairmanship of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, today approved the adoption of Jammu and Kashmir Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme, 2022,” an official spokesman said.

Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, Advisor to the LG, Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary, and Nitishwar Kumar, Principal Secretary to the LG attended the meeting.

He said the decision is aimed at promoting equity, inclusion and accountability in providing compassionate appointment by introducing a criteria-based assessment for establishing compassion in the bereaved family based on best practices evolved out of experiential learning over the years.

The new scheme will grant appointment or monetary compensation on compassionate grounds to a dependent family member of a government servant, who may die in harness or as a result of militancy-related action or due to enemy action on the Line of Control/International Border within Jammu and Kashmir and is not involved in militancy-related activities or retires on invalid pension, thereby, leaving his family in penury and without any means of livelihood.

The scheme will extend relief to the family of the government servant and save them from financial destitution, the spokesman said.

To bring greater transparency and equity, besides ensuring adequate safeguards against the misuse of the rehabilitation assistance framework, the new scheme has incorporated provisions for receiving online

applications in a centralized manner in the General Administration Department (GAD) on a designated portal.

Under the new scheme, the number of vacancies and the merit list of the eligible candidates will be prepared annually and eligible candidates will be considered purely on the basis of merit obtained with regard to a point-based merit system on quarterly basis. Both the list of vacancies and merit list of candidates will be put out in the public domain to make the process fully transparent and accountable.

The appointment on compassionate grounds will be made for the multi-tasking staff or equivalent or lowest non-gazetted cadre posts in the department.

However, if an applicant is a graduate or has higher qualification, there are provisions to allow discretion for considering appointment in the non-gazetted cadre.

However, the compassionate appointment cases still pending disposal in GAD under the existing SRO-43 rule for various reasons, including relaxation of rules and identification of posts in other departments, will be dealt with in accordance with SRO-43 of 1994, as amended from time to time, the spokesman said.

He also said the new scheme also provides for extending support to the dependants under various self-employment/government sponsored employment generating schemes for obtaining credit as per the laid down norms for setting up a manufacturing unit or a trading venture.

The new scheme will put an end to the uncertainty that plagued the erstwhile Compassionate Appointment Rules due to which cases lingered on for years together. The new scheme is expected to provide immediate succour to NOKs of employees who die in harness, the spokesman said.

Cooperatives giving new impetus to women, youth entrepreneurship in J&K

The J&K administration is making efforts to facilitate development of new women and youth cooperatives by providing them a solid support system to flourish, officials said Sunday.

Government aims to increase the number of Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies by providing much-needed support to the people in every Panchayat. This will substantially increase the credit lending in agriculture and allied sectors, thereby benefits will also flow to small and marginal farmers, an official spokesman said.

He said in order to truly realize the Prime Minister's vision of 'Sahkar se Samridhi', Cooperatives in J&K focus on agri-marketing, food processing, branding, supply of seeds and other innovative activities in dairy and handicrafts.

Government has asked all the stakeholders to take necessary steps via cooperative institutions in making all Panchayats of the UT prosperous and creating village infrastructure, so that by taking inspiration from the past, a prosperous future can be built, the spokesman said.

Government is determined to deepen the cooperative movement as a people-based movement to reach citizens at the grassroots. Cooperative movement was a way of life, and not just a business or credit lending activity, he added.

In a major bid to strengthen cooperatives, the highest 66 new FPOs were registered in 2020-21 besides 306 cooperatives were

registered in the same year, the spokesman informed.

He said as per the statistics of the department, 138 cooperative societies were revived and made functional.

Notably for the first time Super Bazars were brought on GeM portal, computerised bills were introduced in Super Bazars for greater accountability and five Super Bazars have been taken up for modernization, he said.

To infuse new life in Cooperative banks, the government provided the highest capital infusion of Rs 366.91 cr in three district Central cooperative banks, the spokesman added.

Panchayats and Cooperatives as two sides of the same coin, if Panchayat represents grassroots democracy and administrative system, then the cooperatives strengthen their self-reliance, competence and autonomy in at least 20 sectors of the rural system like cottage industries, agriculture and allied activities by raising its economic side. At the same time it protects the interests of the deprived sections.

"Notably, in our UT, more than 63,000 self-help groups are changing the lives of 5.25 lakh women. Government has resolved that 18,000 new self-help groups will be formed so that their potential gets its due place in the economy and development. With the help of cooperatives, new impetus to entrepreneurial women's organizations will be provided," the spokesman said.

J&K Govt fulfilling vision of new, healthy J&K with constant dev of medical infrastructure



J&K Government is taking several reformative measures for the advancement and upgradation of health infrastructure, besides providing affordable healthcare services to people here.

J&K Administration is fulfilling the vision of a new and healthy J&K by developing the medical infrastructure on a constant basis. Five new medical colleges, two AIIMS, nearly 1000 healthcare and wellness centers, five new nursing colleges as well as the start of BSc paramedical courses and with a more than 100% increase in medical seats are contributing towards the development and

advancement of the healthcare sector here

To overcome the shortage of post-graduate doctors and to prepare specialists at that level, Health Department has also started Diploma of National Board Courses in the new and old medical colleges of the districts, which will increase at least 250 seats. MD Psychiatry seats have also been increased in GMC Srinagar recently. The increase in MD (Psychiatry) seats from 8 to 12 in Government Medical College, Srinagar will boost mental healthcare after National Medical Commission (NMC)

approval.

Notably, last year, MBBS seats were increased from 500 to 1100. Around 111 more MBBS/BDS seats and 50 PG seats under EWS have been sanctioned. Besides, 14 dental PG seats were approved. 225 DNB seats in 16 disciplines were also approved. Nearly 600 paramedical seats in nine courses were sanctioned.

This follows the Medical Assessment and Rating Board (MARB) report regarding faculty, their experience, publication, and other infrastructure available at GMC. Srinagar. The admission for new seats will start in the academic year 2022-23.

"It is to inform that MARB reviewed the assessor's report on July 16 regarding faculty, their experience, publication, and other teaching facilities including infrastructure available at GMC Srinagar under Kashmir University, for an increase of seats in MD (psychiatry) for the academic year 2022-23," said Member/President, MARB, National Medical Commission.

NMC asked the GMC to provide all infrastructure facilities in terms of teaching and non-teaching staff, buildings, equipment, and hospital facilities as per NMC norms.

Outlook Traveller Awards-2022: J&K bags award for promoting offbeat destinations, adventure tourism

J&K Tourism has bagged an award for the promotion of off-destinations at the national level at the Outlook Traveller Awards-2022.

The award was presented by Union Minister for Tourism & Culture, G Kisan Reddy to Secretary, Tourism, Sarmad Hafeez at a glittering function here this evening.

The award was given to the Tourism Department for promoting Gurez in the category of offbeat tourism destinations. J&K Tourism also bagged the award for adventure tourism at Gulmarg.

Speaking on the occasion, the Union Tourism Minister said it was satisfying to note that tourism in J&K has seen a turnaround in the last two years and the tourist arrivals this year have crossed a record number. He said under the new film policy, shooting of films in J&K has been revived and is being incentivized.

Complimenting the organizers for holding the award ceremony, Reddy said this would certainly encourage the best practices in the tourism sector. He also complimented the States and UTs which bagged the awards saying it would go a long way in encouraging and promoting tourism in the country.

The Union Minister said that an environment of tourist activities is prevailing in the country and the Union Government is taking steps to further strengthen the sector. He said the Government is contemplating bringing National Tourism Policy in the next budget session.

Earlier, participating in various panel discussions, Sarmad Hafeez dwelt in detail about the measures taken by the J&K administration in broadening the canvas of tourist destinations and attractions across J&K. He said due to the sustained and coordinated efforts of the Tourism Department and stakeholders this year J&K saw record tourist arrivals in many decades.

Director Tourism Kashmir, Dr. G N Itoo, was also present on the occasion.

Those in attendance at today's award ceremony included representatives of various State Tourism Boards/ Departments, International Tourism Boards, Corporates, hospitality, aviation industries besides travel trade representatives from across the country.

The Outlook Traveller Awards are the benchmark of quality in the travel and tourism industry for the last two decades and felicitate the best of the best each year. The awards take a 360° view of the tourism sector and the way it has been growing.

The award jury was headed by Deputy Comptroller & Auditor General, Government of India, Meenakshi Sharma and its other members include Neha Arora, Founder, Planet Apled; Jaideep Bansal, CEO, Global Himalayan Expedition; Vaibhav Kala, Founder, Aquaterra Adventures; Pushpesh Pant, Indian food critic and Chinki Sinha, Editor, Outlook magazine.

Outlook Traveller Awards over the years have attracted everyone associated with the travel and tourism industry. These have included tour operators, influencers, writers, designers, artists, travel tech disruptors, socially prominent people, hoteliers, foreign and state tourism boards, ambassadors, and government officials.

Experts from New Zealand discusses development of sheep husbandry sector in J&K

An expert delegation from New Zealand on Tuesday held a meeting with senior government officials here as part of the efforts to develop the sheep husbandry sector in Jammu and Kashmir, according to officials.

Additional Chief Secretary, agriculture production department, Atal Dulloo chaired the meeting and called for giving a major thrust to mutton production in the Union Territory, the officials said.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration has already signed a memorandum of cooperation with New Zealand for overhauling the sheep husbandry sector in the region through the transfer of technology, research and development, value addition and marketing areas.

The delegates from New Zealand included Consul General and Trade Commissioner, Ralph Hays; Director, Agribusiness Group New Zealand, Stuart Ford; Science Impact Leader, AgResearch Ltd, Warren King and Senior Business Development Manager, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, New Delhi, Sudha Palit, the officials said.

The agreement between the governments, at present, involves the development of model sheep farms, collaboration in the area of fodder production, the addition of value to wool and mutton products and strengthening of disease diagnostics laboratories and vaccine production units.

It also aims at other areas like education of local veterinarians, artificial insemination and improvement of production and productivity of small ruminants through genetics.

Focus is also to be laid on bridging the deficit in domestic mutton production and consumption. At present, J&K procures a major part of its consumption quota from other states.

"We need to work with a vision for maintaining domestic advantage in wool production with the addition of features like processing, branding and marketing also.

"Over the years, we aim to produce a quality breed of sheep while becoming a net exporter of rams (male sheep) to other states," Dulloo said.

The additional chief secretary assured of the administration's inclination towards investing in the development and improvement of farms as well.

He welcomed assistance in the latest technology of artificial insemination and embryo transfer technology (ETT).

Similarly, Dulloo stressed increasing fodder production, incorporating improved disease control measures and capacity building of veterinarians.

He also called for the intervention of experts in exploring untapped sectors like meat and carcass processing.

The visiting delegates shared their aspirations and promised full cooperation for the development of the sheep Husbandry sector in Jammu and Kashmir, the officials said.



Generate employment for 5 lakh youth: CS tells banks

Chief Secretary Dr Arun Kumar Mehta Tuesday asked banks here to target generation of around 5 lakh jobs for the youth of J&K.

He stressed on the banks to be socially more amenable by turning their focus to priority-sector lending. He also asked them to not focus on subsidies only but instead be the platforms to generate the gainful and sustainable employment.

Dr Mehta was speaking in a meeting to review the progress of Self Employment Schemes here in the UT.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary, H&UDD; Principal Secretary, SDD; Commissioner Secretary, L&E; Commissioner Secretary, Social Welfare; Secretary, Tribal Affairs; Secretary, Planning; Secretary, Tourism and YS&S; Secretary, IT; Secretary, Culture; Secretary, Agriculture; Director, Employment; representatives of different banks and many other concerned officers.

The Chief Secretary, according to an official press release, urged all banks to work towards saturation of self-employment schemes. He said the motive should be to reach out to every unemployed youth of the UT and offer them opportunities for sustainable employment under various schemes.

Dr Mehta maintained that a lot of progress has been made in the past in each aspect of employment generation and making the whole process of lending financial assistance speedy and transparent. He advised them to work towards making the benefit reach every eligible person down there.

The Chief Secretary also enquired about the proportion of artisans, weavers and other educated persons covered under different schemes meant for them. He stressed on extending loans as per actual guidelines without creating difficulties for the applicants. He also impressed on creating viable and sustainable units that are profitable for its holders.

Dr Mehta also asked the concerned departments to carry out a mega employment drive preferably in next month in each block so that awareness is created among all the prospective beneficiaries in rural and far flung areas. He advised them to culminate it at panchayat level simultaneously with the 'Back to Village' program so that the coverage of beneficiaries percolates down to each panchayat.



He also reviewed the progress made under respective employment schemes extended by different departments and targets set for them earlier. He implored upon them to regularly review their progress and take instant measures for achieving their targets well on time.

The Chief Secretary was informed that under PMEGP the Department of Industries & Commerce has cleared some 1379 cases sanctioning an amount of Rs 5669.00 lakhs with potential employment generation for 5291 persons. Similarly KVIB had cleared 4462 cases sanctioning Rs 9512.30 lakhs generating employment for more than 35000 persons.

Moreover it was revealed that JKRLM has sanctioned 5400 cases amounting Rs 10400.00 lakhs to 10800 beneficiaries. Under PMEGP (16931 cases), NRLM 2879 cases, NULM (871 cases), JKREGP (447 cases), PMWMY (482 cases), CCS for Artisans and Weavers (1312 cases) has been disbursed by the banks with a total amount of Rs 52580.92 lakhs, as was given out in the meeting.

The meeting was further apprised that the Departments of Labour & Employment, H&UD, Handicrafts & Handloom, Women Development Corporation has sponsored thousands of cases. In the same way many more cases were sponsored under Himayat and by JK SC, ST & OBC Corporation benefitting thousands of poor and marginalized people throughout the length and breadth of J&K.



Pace of execution of dev works increases manifold in J&K in last three years under LG's Admin

GRASSROOTS DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS LIKE PANCHAYATS AND URBAN LOCAL BODIES HAVE BEEN EMPOWERED TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS TO CATER TO THE NEEDS OF COMMON CITIZENS. There are around 20,000 such works/projects under execution presently which have been solely identified by the people...

More than 60,000 developmental projects in J&K completed in last three years

Over the last three years, the pace of execution of developmental schemes across Jammu and Kashmir has increased by five times on account of a resurgent institutional framework development by the present administration under Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha.

In the last two years, the government has endeavoured to develop areas which remained neglected till now. Dalits, tribals and socio-economically backward classes have benefited from an equitable governance system of the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Union Territory has achieved new horizons of success in the field of business, economy, education, culture as well as sports. Jammu and Kashmir has positioned itself as leader from laggard in the world of progress and prosperity with completion of over 60,000 development projects in the past three years.

As per the official details, district CAPEX budget has been increased four-fold to Rs. 22,126 crore for completion of various developmental projects.

“Grassroots democratic institutions like Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies have been empowered to actively participate in the decision-making process to cater to the needs of common citizens. There are around 20,000 such works/projects under execution presently which have been solely identified by the people,” official data reveals.

According to official documents, 66,724 development projects have been completed in the Union Territory from 2019 to January 2022.

The breakup details stated that 9229 projects have been com-

pleted during 2018-19, 12637 in 2019-20, 21943 during 2020-21, exhibiting a steep increase as compared to previous years' achievements while 22975 works have been completed during the financial year 2021-22, till January 2022.

The records added that the “financial reforms and interventions” initiated by the Centre have facilitated completion of such a long list of development projects within the set timelines in the Union Territory.

“Authorization of projects and resources allocation is made through Budget Estimation, Allocation and Monitoring System (BEAMS), which is a real-time and paperless system. Through these interventions, the Union Territory has witnessed an unprecedented rise in completion of development works and projects in three years,” the document reads further.

Similarly, implementation of transformative reforms such as BEAMS which enable online budgetary process and timely release of funds against approved works, online submission of bills through J&K PaySys, Mandatory Administrative Approvals, Technical Sanctions and e-Tendering, digital payments, GFR, GeM and related measures have paced up the development works and brought J&K at par with any other progressive state across the country.

Apart from prioritizing newly sanctioned works, the administration has also focused on languishing projects.

Meanwhile, JKIDFC, a unique model across the country, has achieved tremendous transparency with incorporation of online payment tracking mechanism, tender details/allotment information and geo-tagging of all the projects approved for funding under the languishing scheme of JKIDFC.

The J&K administration linked every project approved under JKIDFC with Google Earth for real-time monitoring which facilitated public viewing on the official website of JKIDFC. These measures had been taken to ensure the quality and timely completion of all these infrastructural projects languishing in the UT for a long time.

J&K proposes last-mile internet connectivity to Panchayats under Bharat-Net

Rural institutions like schools, Anganwadi centres, health centers to be provided with internet connections

Chief Secretary, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta, today took stock of the implementation of “Extending Services of Bharat-Net” to Gram Panchayats in a meeting here.

Dr Mehta emphasised on swift implementation of this mission for the overall benefit of all the rural households especially the students, and other stakeholders. He maintained that high-speed internet services have gain significance in the last few years and especially during the testing times of corona disease

He impressed upon all to ensure the project is completed on time as J&K has already made a mark in digital governance. He said that without extending the services of high-speed internet to all the citizens the objective of digital J&K would not get fulfilled.

It was given in the meeting that infrastructure created under the Bharat-Net project can be utilized for provisioning of broadband/internet services through Wi-Fi Hotspots, Fibre to the Home (FTTH) connections, leased lines, dark fibre, backhaul to mobile towers, etc.

Elucidating it was given out that the project aims to provide affordable broadband services to citizens and institutions in rural and remote areas, towards realization of the vision of ‘Digital India.’

In Jammu & Kashmir, 988 Gram Panchayats (GPs) have been declared service ready by Bharat Broadband Network Ltd. (BBNL) under the Bharat Net project of GoI. The administration here intends to further extend the connectivity of 427 Gram Panchayats to various J&K UT government-owned departments viz school, Anganwadi, Health Centre, Police Station, Post office etc. and also provide private broadband connections (FTTH connections) in the rural areas.

The UT government-owned offices and private FTTH connections in each GPs are likely to be connected via internet connection under Bharat-Net project in Jammu & Kashmir. In this direction asset creation at Gram Panchayat for FTTH rollout shall be created by procuring GPON, OLT, ONT and related accessories which shall be provided by ISP to roll out FTTH service in the village.

Under the project it is proposed to create infrastructure of 350 connections for one Gram Panchayat. Assuming 350 FTTH (Fibre to The Home) broadband connections in each GPs are likely to be connected under Bharat-Net project in J&K UT.

Giving details it was revealed that Bharat-Net connectivity is already established up to 988 Gram panchayats with 427 GPs on OFC in the J&K UT, which will be utilized and it is proposed to provide 350 connections at about 427 GPs in the J&K UT entailing a capital investment of Rs 352.702 crores, in next one year.

Extending Services of Bharat-Net to Last Mile Connectivity (LMC) in 427 GPs is the most important initiatives being rolled out by the government here. Among the benefits of the project are high availability, increased productivity, enhanced security, cost reduction, increased transparency, enhanced connectivity etc, as was

SVAMITVA scheme giving seamless access to revenue records in J&K

The government of Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday said that issuance of property cards under the SVAMITVA Scheme is going on in full swing across all districts of J&K with the objective of empowering villagers and land owners.

“The SVAMITVA is giving seamless access to landowners regarding their revenue records of properties, obviating the dependence on the human interface,” said an official.

“SVAMITVA is like a property card with legal sanctity, an authoritative source reflective of record of ownership/possession. The scheme encompassing the length and breadth of the Union Territory involves the use of the most modern technology for surveys, extraction of data and final compilation of the records for public use. These are the latest initiatives in the government of India’s reforms in Land Records,” he said.

The technology-based scheme is changing the rural landscape in terms of quick and convenient access to the land owners, especially those living in abadi-deh. The initiative also helps in eliminating corruption and hence, it is another step towards people-friendly, transparent, corruption-free governance as promised to the people of J&K.

Notably, Srinagar district has become the first district in the country to achieve 100 percent saturation under the Survey of Villages Abadi & Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas (SVAMITVA) Yojna.

Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha while tweeting on the development said that the Srinagar district has become the first district in the country to achieve 100 percent property cards generation/distribution to the landowners.

SVAMITVA is a Central Sector Scheme of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, launched nationwide by Prime Minister on National Panchayati Raj Day, 24th April 2021 after the successful completion of the pilot phase of the

scheme (2020-2021) in 9 states.

The Scheme helps in the establishment of clear ownership of property in rural inhabited (Abadi) areas, by mapping land parcels using drone technology and providing a ‘Record of Rights’ to village household owners with the issuance of legal ownership cards (Property cards/Title deeds) to the property owners.

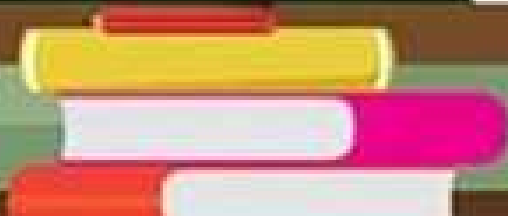
The scheme covers multifarious aspects viz. Facilitating monetisation of properties and enabling bank loan; reducing property-related disputes; comprehensive village-level planning, would be the stepping-stone towards achieving Gram Swaraj in the true sense and making rural India Atmanirbhar. The scheme also helps in the preparation of a better-quality Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) by making use of GIS maps besides the creation of accurate land records for rural planning and reducing property-related disputes.

It also brings financial stability to the citizens in rural India by enabling them to use their property as a financial asset for taking loans and other financial benefits. It also helps in the creation of survey infrastructure and GIS maps that can be leveraged by any department for their use.

Land is an essential resource for any economic activity aimed at the creation of material wealth in the world. The lack of a clearly demarcated Abadi area has led to a high number of land-conflict cases everywhere. As per reports, millions of people suffer the impact of land conflicts across India and the World. The SVAMITVA Scheme aims to address the root cause of these disputes at the local level.

High-resolution digital maps for better Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP) leading to improvement in the infrastructure of schools, community health centres, rivers, street lights, roads, etc by efficient allocation of funds and increased accessibility, is also part of the scheme.

EDUCATION



Govt formulates comprehensive education plan to address specific needs of Tribals

‘Tribal Education getting prime focus under present LG-led Admin’

The present LG-led Administration is giving prime focus on education which can be gauged from the fact that the department of tribal affairs, for the first time, initiated an exercise to assess the state of education viz a viz tribal education and literacy levels prevalent among the tribal population.

Based on such surveys, a comprehensive education plan was formulated to address the specific educational needs of tribals and efforts are being made by the Education department to upgrade the educational institutions across J&K.

The Lieutenant Governor of J&K, Manoj Sinha, on November 25, launched the UT government’s ambitious project of transforming 200 schools into smart schools for tribal communities in Jammu and Kashmir at a cost of Rs 40 crore.

The modernisation of schools started in two phases — the first 100 schools were transformed by March 2022 and the remaining are being done by December 2022. The LG also announced scholarships for 21,000 children from Gad-di, Sippi, Dard and Sheena communities who were deprived of the same for several years.

This was the historic beginning of a new era of educational empowerment of tribals in Jammu and Kashmir. The priority of the present Government is to secure the future of tribal children. Smart schools in tribal and remote areas are being equipped with modern facilities which can develop scientific temper in children and make them future-ready, besides arresting the dropout rate.

Over the last two years, the department under the guidance of the Lieutenant Governor has laid a strong foundation for tribal education to address the gaps, particularly

in planning, inclusive development, and empowerment viz a viz education.


A senior official of the Tribal affairs department said that in 2021 multiple exercises were undertaken to assess the status of education in tribal areas, gather micro database, obtain community feedback, assess the available facilities as well as opportunities, and finally put in place an education plan for tribal population ensuring an inclusive educational landscape in Jammu and Kashmir.

Notably, the first revision of the scholarship was notified in July 2022 with 125-140% increase in scholarship. This enhancement makes the quality of education affordable for tribal students and empowers them to access the best educational institutions and study resource material.

The average slab of scholarship in Group A courses has been increased from Rs. 30,000/- to more than Rs. 70,000/ annum. Likewise, in Group D it is increased from mere `Rs. 12,000 to more than Rs. 27,000/annum. Further, taking into account the emerging requirements of skilling, diversity in courses of higher education, and feedback from several students more than 300 more courses were added to the decade-old list of fewer than 50 courses under which students were eligible for scholarships.

The administration has also formulated a framework for the functioning of smart schools. Members of the tribal communities, Panchayati Raj Institution representatives, and the people associated with voluntary organisations will be involved in the management so that these schools could perform the role of change-makers in our society.

Lives are changed when everything is connected. Tribal Education Plan, scholarships, smart schools will do justice to tribal communities in Jammu and Kashmir who were neglected for decades. These initiatives will also ensure that the members of tribal communities can keep pace with the revolutionary and rapid changes happening around them and connect themselves to the world.



Sports sector of J&K witnessing rapid dev under new Sports Policy

‘Facilities being extended to Panchayat levels’

Jammu and Kashmir Government on Tuesday said that it is establishing state-of-art sports facilities across Jammu and Kashmir with an aim of taking sports to the Panchayat level for budding sportspersons of the UT.

According to a government official, various steps have been taken by the LG’s administration to create a world-class sports infrastructure in J&K. “Recently, sports policy has been introduced to make J&K a powerhouse in sports. Every kind of support is being extended to the local sportspersons who strive hard to make UT and the nation proud in different sports disciplines. The sports activities are being conducted throughout the year while infrastructure work is being executed on a massive scale. The focus is not merely on activities like Cricket and Football but equal importance is being given to games like Volleyball, Kho-Kho, Kabaddi, Water, and Winter Sports which were ignored in the past.”

The sports budget for Jammu and Kashmir is higher than the biggest in several states of the country and infrastructure is being augmented to the highest level and the J&K government is keen to provide a platform to the youth.

Recently, Bakshi stadium which was in dilapidated condition due to the poor policies of earlier regimes was dedicated to the public after being upgraded and revamped at a cost of Rs. 59 crores. “Bakshi Stadium has been a central place of youth for decades, nurturing many dreams and making local sportspersons famous all over the country. This Stadium infused the passion of sports into the lives of millions of people and the legacy has been passed to the new generation,” LG, Manoj Sinha said.

There were clear directions from the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi to develop MA Stadium in Jammu as per ICC Standards and Bakshi Stadium in Srinagar as per FIFA Standards.

Today, the sports sector in UT is witnessing rapid development. World-class facilities and coaching is being extended to the youth at the grassroots level to showcase their talent in various sports disciplines. The officials are redoubling their efforts to make the J&K sporting hub of the country.

Recently Manoj Sinha inaugurated sports infrastructure projects worth Rs 18.10 cr and dedicated the new sports facilities to the local youth. The projects inaugurated include Synthetic Football Turf at Khel Gaon Nagrota worth Rs 5 cr; Mini Stadium at Bhour Camp, Chatha costing Rs 1 cr, and Playfield at Purmandal at a cost of Rs 2 cr. The Mini Stadium at Bhour Camp will benefit 5000 youth by accommodating games like Cricket, Volleyball, and Kabaddi.

Funded under CAPEX, JKIDFC, Khelo India, and PMDP, the inauguration and foundation laying of these projects marks the beginning of the next phase of modernization of sports infra in J&K.

Moving ahead towards developing state-of-the-art sports infrastructure in the UT, the government is creating modern facilities and developing sports culture even in remote areas for talented sportspersons of the UT.

LG administration is working with a mission to take sports to the Panchayat level and provide opportunities to the youth living in far-flung areas. With better training and modern infrastructure, our youths now represent the country in international events.

The Government is providing sports infrastructure and facilities to the young budding sportspersons of the UT. Now, it is the responsibility of the coaches and officials to hone the talent and improve J&K’s medal tally in national and international level competitions.

The government of India has been liberal in providing funds for Education and Sports in Jammu and Kashmir. The combined budget of education and sports of Jammu and Kashmir is Rs 2386 crores, which is way more than various bigger States and UTs across the country.

In the last few months, J&K Sports Council has emerged as a powerful vehicle for the identification of platforms for young talent. Time-bound targets are being fixed for the coaches in different disciplines of various games.

The government has asked the Sports Council to work strategically, identify such places where youth are performing well and develop them as a Special Sports Hub. The Sports Council can also work with other departments such as Rural Development, Police, and Higher Education Department for professional services and technical know-how in the form of convergence in the field of sports.

HR Management vital for efficacious healthcare across J&K

Timely resolution of service issues priority of Deptt

The Government of Jammu and Kashmir apart from establishing a robust healthcare delivery system also focuses on effective human resource management being vital for efficacious health care is provided to the public across J&K.

During the period of the COVID-19 pandemic when everything in the country came to standstill, it was the health system and its dedicated staff members along with front-line workers which worked round the clock to provide all possible assistance to patients affected by the virus.

With the constant and dedicated duties during the pandemic, the morale of the staff members like Medical, paramedical, technical, ministerial, and other allied supportive staff, had to be encouraged. The timely resolution of service issues of these employees with regard to career progressions/promotions, among others was the need of the hour.

In the backdrop of this, an underlying issue regarding the non-availability of updated Service Recruitment Rules of J&K Health & Family Welfare (Subordinate) Service, which obstructed the existing staff members from their rights to avail promotions from the last more than 03 decades, has been resolved on fast track basis.

This initiative paved the way towards removal of stagnation of staff members (Ministerial/Para-

ra-medics) and also introduced a new series of academic and technical qualifications in the updated Recruitment Rules.

The updated cadre strength of existing categories of employees along with newly created/upgraded posts will definitely prove a step forward towards employment generation as well as career progression for all such in-service manpower whose morale was low due to undefined career progression in the old Recruitment Rules.

With the issuance of these Rules, the Health & Medical Education Department has been able to clear promotions of 1093 posts of in-service employees belonging to different categories within a record spell of one month.

The process of conducting Departmental Promotion Committees (DPCs) for the purpose will continue till the backlog position is cleared. Besides, regular DPCs are also being conducted concurrently in other subordinate wings of the H&ME Department like Government Medical Colleges of UT of J&K, Government Dental Colleges and Department of Ayush.

The H&ME Department extends best wishes to all such employees who have been recently promoted/regularized including those whose cases are being considered by the Department on priority for assuming new positions with higher responsibilities and will ensure that desired level of expectations are achieved towards the delivery of better health care services.





OVER 75% OF 37 BRIDGES, 97.6% TUNNELLING WORK ON KATRA-BANIHAL RAILWAY LINK COMPLETED

More than 75 percent of the total 37 bridges and 97.6 percent tunnelling work on the vital Katra-Banihal railway link stands completed, officials of the Northern Railways said, expressing hope that Kashmir will be connected to the rest of the country via train next year.

The Katra-Banihal stretch is part of the prestigious Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) Project which has missed several deadlines in the past amid huge cost escalations since 1997, when the then Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda laid its foundation at Udhampur.

In view of the importance of the USBRL project in providing seamless and hassle-free connectivity, the 272-Km-long railway line project was declared as a 'national project' in 2002.

While the 161 km was commissioned in phases with first phase 118-km Qazigund-Baramulla section commissioned in October 2009 followed by 18-km Banihal-Qazigund in June 2013 and 25-km Udhampur-Katra in July 2014.

"The intervening stretch of the Katra-Banihal section (111 km) is in progress. This is, perhaps, the most difficult new railway line project undertaken in the Indian subcontinent. This section predominantly involves tunnelling of 164 Km (97.57 km main tunnel and 66.4 km of escape tunnel), in addition to construction of 37 bridges on Chenab river and its tributary Anji Khad," an official said.

At present, he said 160.52 Km of tunnelling (95.47 km of main tunnel and 65.05 km of escape tunnel) and 28 bridges,

out of total 37 have been completed, the official said.

He said the work on the project is going on in full swing and "we are hopeful about commissioning the final phase to connect Kashmir with the rest of the country next year."

Referring to the completion of the overarch deck of Chenab railway bridge in Reasi district with the laying of the 'golden joint' on August 13 as a milestone, the official said the "minor" works on the nearly 1.3 km bridge is expected to be completed by November this year.

The paradigmatic bridge is located 359 m above the Chenab riverbed in Kauri village and is 30 m higher than the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Once completed, the bridge will be able to withstand winds with speed up to 260 kmph and will have a lifespan of 120 years, the official said.

The project has other firsts like the longest railway tunnel having overall length of 12.75 km situated between Sumber and Arpinchala in Sangaldan area of Ramban district which has been made through on February 15 and first cable-stayed bridge which when completed would be an engineering marvel of 21st century.

In addition, the official said a 205-km access road has also been completed which provides connectivity to far flung and inaccessible remote areas, leading to socio-economic development of the local residents.

The cumulative expenditure on Katra-Banihal section up to June is Rs 23,071 crore, he said. The officials said the electri-

Govt scraps 'discriminatory' rules, brings all employees on equal-footing in terms of salary

Approves extension of ex-gratia to kin of DDC members Jammu and Kashmir government on Sunday scrapped the Probationer (Condition of Service, Pay and Allowances) and Fixation Rules, 2020, to bring all employees being appointed on equal-footing in terms of salary and other benefits.

The decision was taken by the Administrative Council, which met here under the chairmanship of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.

The Administrative Council approved the scrapping of Jammu and Kashmir Probationer (Condition of Service, Pay and Allowances) and Fixation Rules, 2020, notified vide S.O. 192 of 2020 (successor of S.O. 202 of 2015); with effect from August 01, 2022, an official spokesman said.

Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, Advisor to the LG, J&K Chief Secretary Dr Arun Kumar Mehta, and Nitishwar Kumar, Principal Secretary to the LG, attended the meeting, he said.

The decision will bring all government employees being appointed in the Union territory on an equal footing with their earlier appointed counterparts who may be occupying the same/comparable posts in the cadre, the spokesman said.

A significant number of grievances from the newly appointed employees and in-service candidates who apply for higher posts but

are not given pay protection, will also be alleviated, he said.

Earlier, the Establishment-cum-Selection Committee headed by the chief secretary had found these rules to be discriminatory in nature facing several impediments in their implementation, and had recommended their scrapping, the spokesman said.

Meanwhile, Jammu and Kashmir administration on Sunday approved the extension of ex-gratia relief of Rs 25 lakh to family of all chairpersons, vice-chairpersons and members of District Development Councils (DDCs) in case of death in militancy-related incidents.

The decision was taken by the Administrative Council (AC) which met here under the chairmanship of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, an official spokesperson said.

Earlier, the government has provided similar relief for all elected BDC chairpersons, sarpanches, panches and all elected members of municipal bodies of Jammu and Kashmir.

The decision aims at strengthening the grass roots democracy by providing a sense of security to the elected members of local bodies facing threat from anti-state elements, the spokesperson said.

The ex-gratia relief will act as a guarantee for the subsistence of the family members of the elected representatives who are killed in militancy-related incidents, the official said.

Accelerated Pulses Production Prog to make J&K self-sufficient, boost pulses export

In order to make Jammu and Kashmir self-sufficient and subsequent boost pulses export, the Department of Agriculture recently rolled out the Accelerated Pulses Production Programme (A3P).

A senior official of the department informed that the scheme would come up as the biggest contributor of pulses in the country which otherwise has become heavily dependent on outside states and countries for its pulses requirements.

J&K has huge pulses requirement and dependency on outside states is more the A3P scheme will not only make J&K self-sufficient in terms of pulses but will also help the UT to become a major exporter of pulses production for national and international markets.

The move would help to improve the production level of pulses in J&K and subsequently help in doubling the economy of farmers.

The official said that outside J&K, pulses have a good market and J&K, fortunately, can give satisfactory production of pulses at the national level due to its good weather conditions.

He added that J&K has more opportunities due to better weather conditions and better soil quality which can boost several measures to accelerate the production level of pulses.

Notably, the Bad-e-Nambal area in north Kashmir's Kupwara district never uses any chemical fertilizer due to favorable soil for production and has the distinction of producing a top variety of Rajma due to its fertile soil.

1 kg of Rajma produced in the area can fetch the price of 5 kg of rice.

According to a senior official in the administration, the scheme is aimed to demonstrate plant nutrients and plant protection-centric improved technologies and management practices in compact units of 1000 hectares each for five major pulse crops viz. Bengal gram,



Black gram (Urdbean), Red gram (Arhar), Green gram (Moongbean) and Lentil (Masur).

The scheme is funded by the Union Ministry of Agriculture and implemented under the NFSM-Pulses.

The official added it has been conceptualized to take up the active propagation of key technologies such as Integrated Nutrient Management (INM) and Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

The Department of Agriculture Cooperation and farmer welfare is implementing this program through Commissioners/Directors of Agriculture of pulse-producing states, and the Central Government Institute of ICAR-NCIPM.



Govt launches key initiatives for corruption-free J&K, empowerment of citizens

J&K Government has taken many digital initiatives to provide corruption-free governance in J&K and empower citizens to report any wrongdoings in the departments across Jammu and Kashmir.

Ensuring seamless governance, the General Administration Department, through Information Technology Department, has successfully rolled out e-office in all the administrative departments of Civil Secretariat and office of Heads of Departments. This has resulted in speedy disposal of official business, made real-time file tracking possible thereby enhancing accountability for avoiding any undue delay in disposal of cases. Administrative accountability has been established by having access to pendency at any level through the launch of e-office. More so, it has also helped in striping of expenditure incurred on the practice of physical movement of files.

For facilitating human resource management, the Electronic Vigilance Clearance System (VCS) for issuance of e-vigilance clearances through online mode has been implemented. This has simplified the process of seeking NoC and vigilance clearance and has made it time-bound, efficient and transparent. The issuance of vigilance clearance has become time bound with disposal within 7-10 days time. This has not only eased the process/procedure of promotions/deputations but has minimized person-to-person contact. The system enables real-time checking of pendency and enables employees to track status of their vigilance clearance for any follow-up.

Similarly, online portal for e-filing of property returns (PRS-Portal) mandates filing of property returns by every government employee under Employees Conduct Rules as well as J&K Public Men and Public Servants Declaration of Assets & other Provisions Act, 1983. The portal facilitates access and monitoring of the property details of all the employees, especially while processing vigilance clearance in their favour, besides, assisting the ACB in expeditiously investigating the cases of disproportionate assets.

Likewise, Mobile Application 'Satark Nagrik' and Departmental Vigilance Officers Portal of J&K Anti-Corruption Bureau is one of the comprehensive measures of LG administration for ensuring transparent, accountable, and responsive governance.

An official said that this mobile application is facilitating a seamless flow of information about corruption and enables citizens to submit their grievances with ease and mobility. Any citizen having an android based device can download the application from the play store. A unique ID number is allotted at the time of registration of grievance which later can be used to track the status of the grievance.

Similarly, the Departmental Vigilance Officers (DVO) Portal has been designed to enable an online communication channel

with the DVOs of various departments. In certain cases, the complaints are related to ongoing works, current recruitments, and payments yet to be made against contracts etc. By referring these matters to DVOs, violations/ shortcomings can immediately be rectified and loss to the state exchequer is prevented.

The government has directed the officers to ensure that offline processing of cases for the services offered online should be dispensed with completely and switchover to online mode for better monitoring and transparency with feedback from citizens be ensured.

In order to further boost transparency in public dealings of the Revenue Department, a mechanism of issuing passbooks to people containing information on all their legal land possessions has been evolved. The UT Administration has set the 15th of August as the deadline for completion of the process.

The administration has successfully implemented innovative initiatives for financial discipline which inter alia include BEAMS, online submission of bills through J&K PaySys, mandatory administrative approvals, technical sanctions and e-tendering, digital payments, GFR, GeM and related measures which have greatly helped the financial systems in J&K to be at par with any other developing financial system in the country.

Publication of pictorial e-compendiums related to projects completed under Back to Village, District Capex, UT Capex and JKIDFC broadly reflects government's commitment to engage with the citizens.

Centralised Personnel Information System has been designed to capture employee profiles as well as office profiles in the CPIS database of all the departments, spread over in the entire Jammu & Kashmir. It also envisages keeping up-to-date information of employees, when they are promoted, transferred or retired. It also aims to assign a unique Employee Identification Number to all the employees for future references. Further, this CPIS database can be used for electronic service book and GPF.

The implementation of CPIS is a flagship e-Governance initiative of the Government of Jammu & Kashmir. It gives a thought-provoking idea to everybody, about how to manage personnel information systems in the organization. It also gives clear-cut information about an institution or an office, how many posts are created and how much staff is deployed, an official said.

The CPIS can give information about the excess or shortage of manpower in a particular office with a click of the mouse. The system automates the existing system to the best of its utility and reduces the time-consuming process of compiling information, data, etc which are required very often by the manual to a maximum degree. It also minimizes the errors in labor-intensive and time-consuming processes.

ROAD PROJECTS

Road infrastructure projects revolutionising connectivity, bringing economic prosperity across J&K

The road projects being executed across the length and breadth of Jammu and Kashmir are revolutionizing the connectivity and bringing economic prosperity across the UT.

With the construction of new roads, the travel time from Jammu to Kishtwar has been reduced from 7.5 hrs to 5hrs and travel time from Jammu to Srinagar has been reduced from 7-12 hours to 5.5 hours for LMVs. Similarly travel time from Srinagar to Gulmarg has been reduced from 3 hours to 1.5 hours and layover of Trucks reduced from 24-72 hours to 12 hours.

The statistics are reflecting that macadamization is being done at record level with average road macadamization in J&K increased to 20.6 km per day in last three years as compared to 6.54 km per day before 2019, which reflects the progressing development happening here.

According to official data, road length in J&K has increased to 41,141 kilometres and the percentage of blacktop roads has reached to 74 percent as compared to 66 percent in 2019.

Under Pothole free road programme, a target of 5900 kilometres was made for 2021-22 of which 4600 kilometres of road length has been made pothole-free till date.

Remarkably, Jammu and Kashmir has once again been ranked among top three performing States/UTs at national level for construction of road length per year under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).

J&K Maintained its rank for the second consecutive year as the Public Works Department (R&B) constructed PMGSY road length of 3284 kms during the year 2021-22 and connected 114 habitations through road networks by executing 427 schemes in the year.

Under PMGSY, an average 9 kms of road length was constructed per day, which was slightly higher than the achievement for the year 2020-21 with an average of 8.67 kms per day and 119 habitations were connected under PMGSY with 3167 kms of road length constructed.

Nearly after 15 years, inner roads of Nihalpora village in Baramulla district are being repaired and macadamized. Home to 1500 families, the village was never on the priority list of the successive popular governments. Potholed roads, traffic gridlocks and water-logging were commuting nightmares.

Similarly, the people of Darui Panchayat started celebrating and dancing with joy after the road construction work was taken up

in their village for the first time since Independence. As soon as the JCB machine was installed, the people of the village started dancing to the beats of the drum and exchanged sweets among themselves. The construction work on 2.50 kilometer road has been started at an estimated cost of Rs 2.29 crore.

Vimla Devi, the Sarpanch of the Panchayat had played very important role in getting the road built. Vimla Devi said people were engaged in trying to get this road constructed since 2009 but finally the work started in 2022. "People were trying to get this road constructed since 2009 and finally the work has been started in 2022. This road is being built under the NABARD scheme," she said.

Similarly, Ashok Kumar, Sarpanch Sial Chadda thanks Public Works Department for fulfilling the long pending demand of people for construction of road as they were suffering in absence of a road.

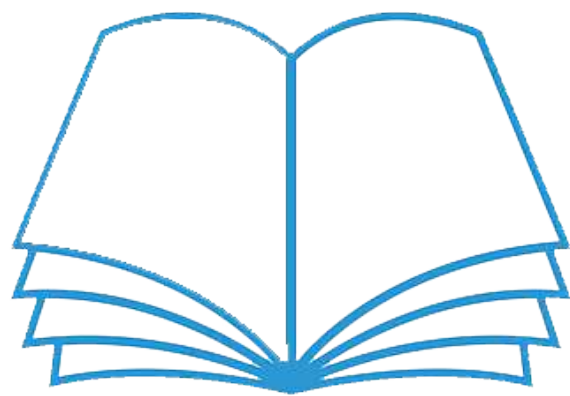
Moreover, four National Highway projects are being completed during 2022. Execution of Delhi-Amritsar Katra Expressway is being taken up. Under Bharat Mala, 10 new road/tunnel projects are being executed. All habitations with over 1000 population (as per the 2011 census) have been provided road connectivity. The provision of road connectivity for the habitations with 500 population by 2022-23 is also being taken up.

Public Works Department of J&K has embarked on a mission to reach out to unconnected habitations with road connectivity, strengthen and expand the intra UT road network, especially in rural & remote areas.

Public Works (R&B) Department has achieved considerable targets and achievements under various schemes/programmes implemented for Construction, improvement/upgradation of roads & bridges, for providing connectivity with special focus on rural areas like Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY), Bridge Programme, Central Road & Infrastructure fund (CRIF), NABARD, Road Sector, Cities & Towns (Macadamization), Languishing Projects, Pothole Free Road Programme, NHAI/NHIDCL/BRO, and other departmental works.

For the 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.





JKPI Publications

WATER SCARCITY AND KASHMIR'S FRESHWATER SPRINGS



ADEELA HAMEED

Groundwater is an incredibly precious resource, to the extent of being titled the 'survival lifeline of civilizations'. This is true because of a number of facts. The first is that groundwater resources are way greater in volume than surface water resources i.e., about three times the volume of the latter. Secondly, the use of water for human consumption, such as for drinking, is mostly from springs rather than rivers, streams or canals.

The largest user of groundwater in the world is India. India utilizes an estimated 251 cubic kilometres of groundwater every year which is more than a quarter of the global total. More than 85% of the drinking water supply and 60% of agriculture is dependent on groundwater. This showcases the importance of groundwater resources in our country.

The indispensability of Freshwater Springs

Approximately 12% of the Earth's continental surface is covered by Karst terrains, i.e. areas characterized by numerous caves, fissures, sinkholes and underground streams. About 25% of drinking water available all over the globe is supplied partially or entirely by freshwater springs, originating from these Karst terrains. Thus, springs form a rich source of fresh water for people worldwide. The importance of upwelling aquifers (FW springs) is understood from the fact that rural and urban populations depend on them for a variety of purposes, making these indispensable to communities. Water from springs is mostly utilized in rural areas where concrete structures don't constrict water flow, and where watersheds are relatively safe from pollution. In these regions, springs are numerous, increasing human dependence proportionately as well.

Springs are associated with mineral-rich water, low frequency of disease-causing organisms, and less incidence of pollution, while in the same rhythm seen as valuable reservoirs for irrigation, drinking, aquaculture, and even utilized for religious purposes. Springs are a refuge for pollution-sensitive organisms, helping them thrive plentifully, as these constitute the least polluted natural resource in densely populated areas. In India, Himalayan communities are hugely dependent on spring water. Freshwater springs thus, play a crucial role in a country's economic development, ensuring its food and water security. Sadly though, spring sustainable development is not given due importance. At the same time, protective legislation for springs is insufficient leading to water abuse in their natural habitat.

Springs in Kashmir – Naags

Kashmir is known for its extensive springs and spring-fed streams. Spring habitats in the Valley have an enormous potential for providing drinking water to the ever-growing population, irrigating fields during droughts, providing adequate and reliable providence to pollutant-sensitive species, catering to fish culture, besides being used for washing, swimming, bathing, and a variety of other ecosystem services including tourism. Since the early 1980s, people in Kashmir started to face an increasing shortage of water earlier unheard of due to modest requirements. The population now, like in other areas of India, is witnessing an enormous growth which in turn pressurizes water resources people are hugely dependent upon. As per the 2021 census, the population of Kashmir valley is recorded at 13,638,010 which represents 1.04% of the total population of India. The growth rate from 2011 to 2018 is recorded at 8.65 percent.

Water requirements for the population of Srinagar city are directly drawn from surface water resources, such as the river Jhelum and water bodies like Dal, Nigeen, Khushalsar, etc. Large parts of Srinagar city have recently been expanded resulting in acute water shortage, forcing water rationing measures. Water shortages stem from inefficient use of freshwater, degradation of available surface water resources by pollution, and non-utilization or under-utilization of groundwater from aquifers. This has resulted in less flow rate of springs, permanent springs turning seasonal, and seasonal springs drying up completely.

Water scarcity amid changing climate and increasing population

In countries with adequate water resources, water scarcity is not uncommon. Although this may be due to a number of factors — collapsed infrastructure and distribution systems, contamination, conflict, or poor management of water resources — it is clear that climate change, as well as human factors, are increasingly denying children their right to safe water and sanitation.

Water scarcity limits access to safe water for drinking and for practising basic hygiene at home, in schools and in healthcare facilities. When water is scarce, sewage systems can fail and the threat of contracting diseases like cholera surges. Scarce water also becomes more expensive.

Water scarcity takes a greater toll on women and children because they are often the ones responsible for collecting it. When water is further away, it requires more time to collect, which often means less time at school. Particularly for girls, a shortage of water in schools impacts student enrolment, attendance and performance. Carrying water long distances is also an enormous physical burden and can expose children to safety risks and exploitation.

Recommendations

Springs are disappearing at an alarming rate globally, and most of that loss goes unrecognized. Kashmir Valley is no exception. The situation is direr than ever in light of climate change predictions for the Himalayas. The number of aquifers reaching unsustainable levels of exploitation is accelerating. If such a trend continues, in 20 years about 60% of all aquifers in India will approach critical status. Freshwater springs in Kashmir, as well, aren't handled virtuously and need attention keeping in view that these water reservoirs have the potential to fulfil the water demands of our population.

As the factors driving water scarcity are complex and vary widely across countries and regions, all stakeholders should work at multiple levels to introduce context-specific technologies that increase access to safe water and address the impacts of water scarcity. The focus should be on:

Identifying new water resources: Assessing the availability of water resources using various technologies, including remote sensing and geophysical surveys and field investigations.

Improving the efficiency of water resources: Rehabilitating urban water distribution networks and treatment systems to reduce water leakage and contamination, promoting wastewater reuse for agriculture to protect groundwater.

Planning for urban scarcity: Planning for future water needs by identifying available resources to reduce the risk of cities running out of water.

Expanding technologies to ensure climate resilience: Supporting and developing climate-resilient water sources, including the use of deeper groundwater reserves through solar-powered water networks. Advance water storage through small-scale retention structures managed aquifer recharge (where water is pumped into underground reserves to improve its quality), and rainwater harvesting are some other good options.

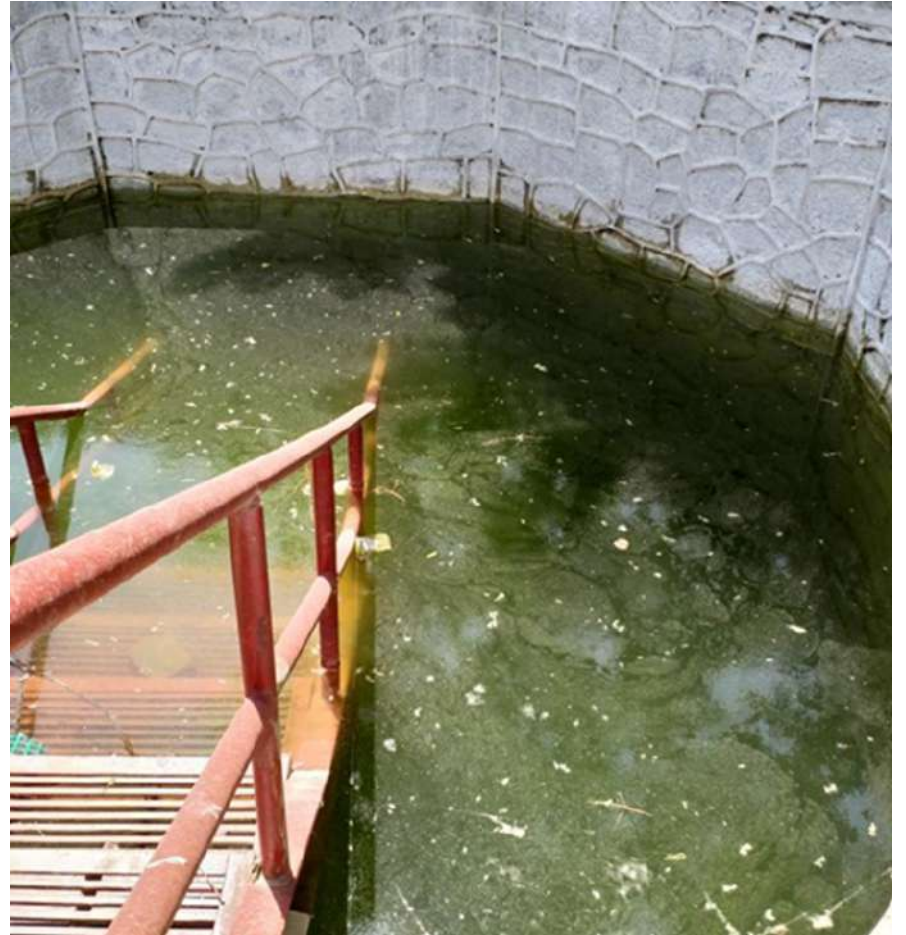
Changing behaviours: Working with schools and communities to promote an understanding of the value of water and the importance of its protection, including by supporting environmental clubs in schools.

Planning national water needs: Working with key stakeholders at national and sub-national levels to understand the water requirements for domestic use and for health and sanitation, and advocating to ensure that this is reflected in national planning considerations.

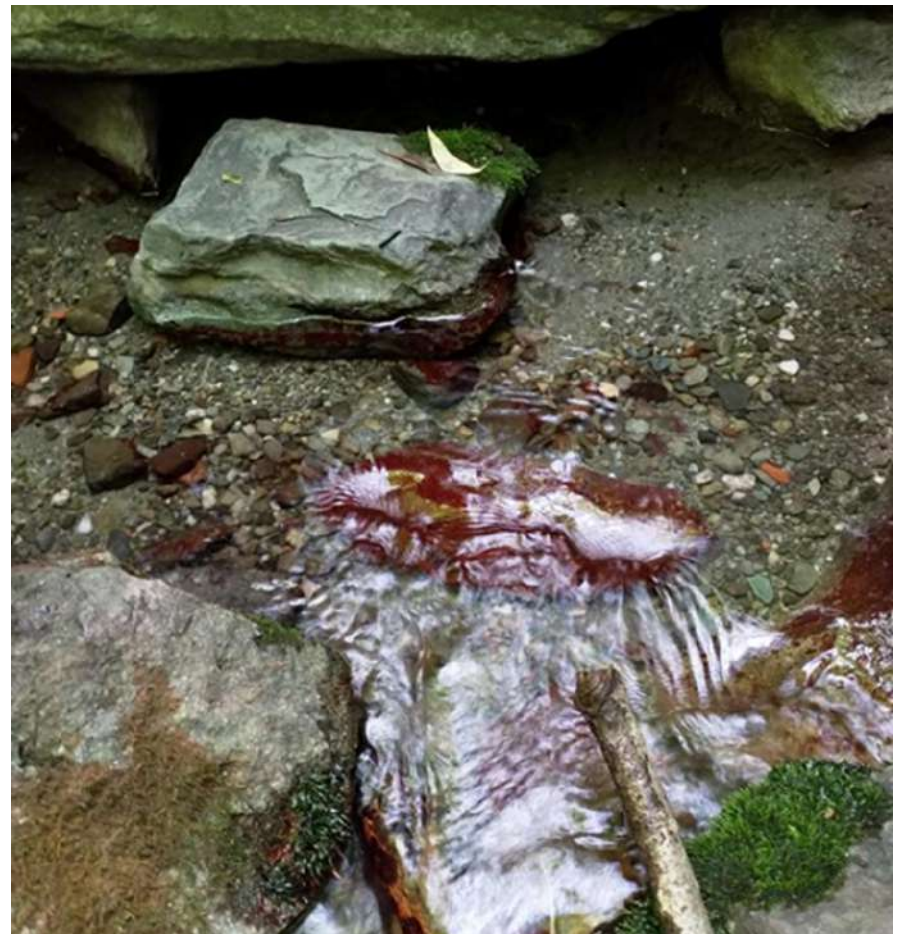
Supporting the WASH sector: Developing technical guidance, manuals and online training programmes for WASH (Washing, Sanitation, and Hygiene) practitioners to improve

standards for water access.

Spring in a protected environment



Polluted spring near an urban locality



Environmental crisis on the Korean Peninsula



ANAMITRA BANERJEE

Hyping missile threats have caused the Korean peninsula to fall prey to a state of exigency. Seoul finds cues about the encroaching perils incoming from their immediate neighbor regularly. The likeliness of North Korea's capabilities over nukes is congruous but the call for scientific-technological advances fails to keep with the ascertaining supremacy politically as well as militarily. The impetus to attack South Korea does not hold any credibility in contemporary times. Decoding the strategies and blueprint over Disarmament and Nuclear Proliferation Treaties, the boom in military operations, drills, and the exaggerated cautionary of first strikes remains a catastrophic proposal. The heavy development and increased attention towards the missile defense system do not toss away the fair shake of a missile attack by Kim Jong-un's regime.

The series of missile launches have earned apprehensiveness and reprobation from the international community. The Japanese government has waved the flag to its imperial coast guard to look out for any indication of further developments of the missiles. The US Indo-Pacific Command and South Korea on the other hand, are trying to gather all possible intel following the nuclear tests, which is critical for the holistic development of the Korean peninsula. With hostility and jitters underway, the dubiousity by the analysts paints a different narrative. Carrying out such experimentation to see how the wind blows indicates North Korean dictatorship, grinding its nose to suffice the bare minimum target goals domestically, and proving its' strategic political influence in matters of power in increasingly dynamic global geopolitics.

The astriction over the neoteric events related to the multiple accounts of ballistic missile launches by DPRK has drawn the international community to ponder upon the long-banned activities by UNSC. Marking the ninth missile test launch of this year, DPRK has been symmetrically carrying out hypersonic missile experiments with a high-efficiency rate routinely. The recent development of nukes tests has come in a fortnight before South Korea conducts its democratic presidential election, whose believed abstraction of North Korea's power politics maneuvering happens to be a primordial issue.

Nuclear Weapons Tests and Environmental Consequences

Promulgating missile threats and nukes might be implausible but the menace of Climate change is at grubstake. Possessing severe menaces towards the lives of many, studies show the height of indiscretion and absurdity to do away with carcinogenic diseases and other related ailments as just a mere affliction of life. The Korean Peninsula has experienced the buffeted yellow dust from China, causing conditions of severe smog and respiratory maladies. The desert dust is non-analogous compared to the abhorrent amalgamation of droughts along with torrential rains that remained hazardous and almost wiped out Korean agriculture in both countries. Whilst the pandemic is in progress, the South Korean air particulate index is foreboding given the excessive percentage of microparticles as an upshot byproduct, released by outmoded factories, and traditional power plants are driven by coal in China and North Korea.

The mad drive for political and armed security has driven the Korean factions away from the grounds of mutual planning for a sustainable regional biosphere. Although, the plutocratic economy of the South has enough money bags to lead potential sustainable

game-changing economy reflecting the lowest level of pollution, the administration security policy of Seoul does not scout out the analysis behind declining water levels, failed aquifers, or hike in contagious arid and barren fallow percentage over China and North Korea. The astigmatic and precarious procedures can only elucidate the need for acquiring military assets from suppliers then provide solutions to variegated issues.

The transformation in Korean security issues on climate change and various environment-related disasters must call for immediate scrutiny in the adaptation of the cultural economy within the Korean peninsula. The infrastructure obligates an investment worth fifty years to thrive sustainably for its continuity in the longer run. Such expenditure proposes a hefty vested interest to gauge a diversion in purchasing more solar panels for a stable environment in the longer run, as compared to its 'casino approach' to its GDP. The Korean economy has been grappled with unprecedented demurs with a sharp increase in its aging population. The old withstanding mindset in the older generation fails to grasp the legal connotation pertaining to the policies of heavy industries like iron & steel, aluminum, automobile sector, petrochemicals, and others, whose growth is stagnant in itself. The economic breakthrough for the Korean economy seems absurd considering the slow death and declining opportunities in this sector. The immediate effect of naphtha and heavy-metal supported industries remains unexplored to date while scrutinizing the catastrophic environmental hazards caused by its direct impact. The perception of well-built roads and modernization have caught appraisal amidst the mass, ignoring the eradication of lurking resource-rich farmlands. The Korean population like most South Asians is taught about the demolition of green cover in states like Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Russia, China, without paying heed to the climatic challenges of the future. The affliction done on a global scale is irreplaceable despite attempts being made for afforestation. If not regulated accurately, all kinds of individual deeds on the global ecological community may leave serious ramifications for future generations to dwell by.

The covid pandemic coupled with several natural disasters has put the North Korean nation in a cliff-hanging situation as Kim Jong Un continues to contest for nukes in the world geopolitics. However, picking one's brain, it is still difficult to comprehend the million-dollar question: how will these nuclear weapons affect our ecological and environmental system? Nuclear tests have already facilitated 80% destruction in greenery and soil fertility, around the regions of Punggye-Ri. According to North Korean defectors, the groundwater table also dropped, thereby causing the wells to dry up. Nukes involve a heavy discharge of radioactive particulates which if mixed with air, soil and water will endanger human lives. Though Pyongyang and Beijing ascertain the level of radioactivity to be under control, it does hold a fair share of future threats under the conditions of increased nuclear experimentation.

2020 recorded the maximum amount of rainfall count in four provinces, during the early months of summer. The data is rather intimidating, given the last four decades hardly reported heavy levels of precipitation. The same year also saw DPRK being hit by four massive typhoons which caused havoc to the economy, in particular both infrastructure and agriculture. The intense flooding due to heavy torrential downpours led Pyongyang to adopt several measures to combat climate change in contemporary times. North Korea's Kangwon, North Hwanghae, South Hwanghae, North Pyongan, and South Pyongan were the most adversely affected – causing the 'breadbasket' stability of DPRK to go haywire. The U.N's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) indicated in 2020 North Korea experiencing extreme food shortages while being engulfed in heavy flooding. Adding the nation to its list of forty-five vulnerable states entailing aid and assistance, FAO stated, North Korea could only provide a yearly yield of nearly 70% of the six million tons of sustenance that it requires annually – which also impelled its citizens to give up its domesticated animals and pets to meet the dearth of food. Knocking off the regular supply of raw materials, the DPRK also witnessed severe crippling of its infrastructure throughout the

length and breadth of its national territory. Buildings, Homes, and other property holdings were reported to be in ruins or showed considerable damage as told by North Korean public broadcasting representatives. The loss was huge as many of these buildings were newly constructed, aging not more than half a decade ago. This indicates signs of heavily influenced indoctrination taken up by the North Korean government to push the country forward towards a continued path of industrialization and urbanization over the past years, leaving behind and ignoring other prospects of growth and sustainability.

There are some positive signs, however.

Emphasizing the dire need to improve the current condition of the country, the supreme leader asserted North Korea's land management authorities to come up with better strategies and if required to alter them, given the floods have washed away the critical foundational structures, especially harboring on the eastern coast of the country. The poor economy proposed several environmental schemes and protocols to protect the nation sustainably from nature's wrath. Newly fangled baby steps into the world of progress, it is questionable if North Korea can keep its

promises and continue to provide a greener society to its people. The government had introduced educative methods to create awareness amongst people, about typhoons, and climate change along with measures to curb or reduce them. The North Korean Workers' Party set its sights on achieving the highest levels of success to combat the impasse, soon after the catastrophe hit.

Kim Jong-un's initiatives to solemnly sensitize the impacts of natural disasters at stages and levels of government is surprising, but he is making it at large, to set up rehabilitation and restoration centers, especially for the disaster-stricken South and North Hamgyong provinces. He further encouraged diving into the deep root cause to understand the repercussion of such climate instabilities – which were broadly addressed under the theme of 'single-minded unity' of his nation. The threats to climate hazards have increased given the abnormal conditions are largely at bay but it is necessary for the North Korean nation to solemnly pursue a framework to improve watershed management systems, erosional control, tidal embankment projects, and construction of dams as an integral part of North Korea's ardent immediate Five-Year plan.



Vaccine Diplomacy of India in the COVID-19 Pandemic



RAHUL WANKHEDE

Introduction

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः ।

सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।

सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु ।

मा कश्चित् दुःख भाग्भवेत् ॥

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

May all sentient beings be at peace, may no one suffer
from illness,
May all see what is auspicious,
may no one suffer.
Om, peace, peace, peace.

This altruistic shloka from an ancient Sanskrit text reflects the broadness and depth of thinking of our ancestors. Bharat being one of the oldest civilizations has a rich culture; with health and wellness being an important aspects of it. This land gave the science of Ayurveda, Yoga, and Sadhana (meditation) to the world. The beauty lies in the fact that these traditions have stayed till date, without any single agency or person patronizing or enforcing it down on someone else and the knowledge has been shared happily with the outside world without asking for any credit, or claims of authority.

That's an important lesson for today's world – create something that adds value to other lives without expecting any benefits in return. So, when a deadly invisible virus struck the world, the people of Bharat were as clueless and unprepared for the calamity as any other country. The scientific community joined hands with the private sector to develop preventive tools against the virus and then it was decided by government support to extend the help to other countries. Most of the nations who asked for help were badly affected by the virus, lacked the technical knowledge and funds to make a vaccine, and were totally at the mercy of vaccine suppliers. Some were not even in a position to buy the doses at market prices.

But the subconscious tradition of helping out others in times of distress did not die out in this country. We played our cards well, taking a bird's eye view of the entire situation highlighting the fact that either all of us together will triumph over the virus or none of us would ever. It was a brave decision on their part to do so, looking at our huge population which wasn't yet vaccinated. But how was India able to work this out is an interesting story. This analysis attempts to look at all the important aspects of this entire process and how it unfolded. It is not an expert piece of writing on

the subject but a genuine attempt to bring out nuances of the entire process of “vaccine diplomacy” from a student's perspective. All the information mentioned in this paper has been aptly cited and references mentioned for further readings on the subject.

What is Vaccine Diplomacy

‘Vaccine diplomacy’ is the use of vaccines to improve a country's diplomatic relations with other countries. Though the term is being used popularly today, the act of vaccine diplomacy has been there for centuries. It includes sharing medicines, trained personnel, and scientific knowledge to support and further foreign policy goals, unlike traditional diplomatic tricks. This is very important since the world is dealing with a tiny invisible virus and not every nation has the capability to counter it effectively. This imbalance creates an opportunity for one state and dependency for the other. Vaccines have been used as a bargaining tool to further national interests by nations in conflict even in the past. Globalization has created a huge pharmaceutical industry and vaccines form a crucial component of this, as they are used before the disease strikes you.

“Prevention is better than cure”, is achieved in practice through vaccinations. Since this directly affects the life of a common man there's enough scope to channelize it the way we want, in the interest of self and others. A good understanding of history will surely help here.

Historical Background

Ancient Sanskrit texts mention about microbes (sukshma jeev jantu) living in all kinds of environments like water, fire, marshes, etc. Some yadnas (fire sacrifice) were also prescribed as a preventive measure from them. The word vishanu has been used for viruses and jeevanu for bacteria, where anu means atomic size. Acharya Sushrut has mentioned microbes causing diseases, which today we know by the names of Typhoid and Cholera.

Today, these texts just survive in bits and pieces scattered across museums and libraries and we have not yet known them completely, for possible remedies. An online news report mentions corona-like viruses being described in ancient texts by Acharya Sushrut. Viruses have created huge destruction many times in the past – be it through the Europeans who killed Native Americans or the spread of epidemics of plague and smallpox or the Spanish invasion of South America that killed millions of native tribal people. Uses of viruses to wipe out the local populations was a popular strategy used by colonizing powers like Britain back then, could the same be said about China in present times is a controversy, beyond the scope of this paper.

All these incidents have forced humanity to relook at the concept of national security as well, in a much broader sense. Advanced research has ensured that these micro-organisms can be created or manipulated in labs under controlled environments – but their risk of going out of control is always there and since we yet do not have complete knowledge about them – situations like the one we are facing now are created. The credit for making the first-ever vaccine goes to Edward Jenner who made the smallpox vaccine in 1796.

Jenner is quoted to have said “The sciences are never at war” and convinced Napoleon to help the British by supplying vaccines, with whom they were at war.

During both world wars, vaccines were supplied to the USA through Cuba and other countries. One interesting aspect of the present pandemic was that the world came together to help each other and fight the virus highlighting the idea of collective freedom. Global supply chains, funds, data, and resource-sharing mechanisms were used to their maximum to counter the virus effectively. Here as well Indian behavior proved to be an exception as we went for ‘vaccine diplomacy’ rather than ‘vaccine nationalism’.

How did we do it – Role of Government

The virus genome sequencing was done by many labs the world over and was uploaded to a global database called GISAID by Germany.

Once this was known, vaccine research was started in April-May of 2020, by private firms as well as government labs. In our case, the National Institute of Virology Pune, AIIMS, ICMR, etc. were leading the research efforts on vaccine making, which was almost completed in six months, and the data was shared with vaccine makers.

The government took over the role of supplying research funds, training medical teams, gathering global data, and other macro management activities that also included accepting requests from foreign countries for vaccines. Ministries of Health, External Affairs, Finance, and even Defence were roped in for coordinated operations. The NDMA Act and the Epidemics Act were enforced to control the situation more effectively.

Pricing of vaccines and increasing production of PPE kits, masks, sanitizers, etc. was also supervised by the government. Digital technology (Arogya Setu, CoWin) was widely used to analyze data, and monitor healthcare services, and resource distribution. This project set a benchmark as one of its kind ever digital health initiative in the world. Some foreign countries also requested India to allow them to use this technology for carrying out their own vaccination drives.

Armed forces, police, railways, paramilitary forces, etc. were also deployed at many places to provide the necessary facilities. The experiences of the first wave were used to make more comprehensive strategies and it was a tricky situation for the government to balance domestic needs with foreign assistance. Since Indian vaccines were the lowest priced and more effective, the world looked towards India as the only hope. This opportunity was used quite well by the government which has been following a neighborhood-centric policy. The table below shows the number of countries and total vaccines supplied to them by India.

Around 35000 crore rupees were also sanctioned by the government in its annual budget for the year 2020 for its multi-phased vaccination drive. With its advanced cutting-edge healthcare facilities and reputation as a health tourism destination, India attracts thousands of people from the world over, at a fraction of what it costs in the West. So it was quite obvious that many countries would look up to India for supplying a few million vaccine doses (India being the largest vaccine producer in the world). Once vaccine production started, number of doses to be used for domestic purposes and those to be sent outside the country were decided upon and help requests were grouped into three as mentioned in the table below:

Total Countries	Grants Supply	Commercial Supply	Under COVAX	Total in Lakhs
95	107.15	357.92	198.628	663.698

The initiative was named “Vaccine Maitri”. Prices for domestic use were kept lower than the export doses to cover the production costs. SAARC countries were the first to receive their packages, mostly as grants. Supplies were done as per the client demand and this helped many countries like Bhutan to vaccinate their entire population within almost a month.

While some rich countries were busy bargaining for prices, signing advance contracts directly with vaccine producers, Bharat was quietly on its mission to help as much as possible. The government also worked on traditional medical systems (AYUSH system) along with modern medical knowledge to understand the virus and minimize its impact.

Before the vaccine production started India had supplied food, medicines, PPE kits, etc. to many countries and those supply chains were used for sending out vaccines. It was a good synergetic

operation on the part of all stakeholders. The Indian Navy, Airforce, and Air India did a commendable job in transporting back our diaspora and distributing relief material to foreign countries.

How did we do it – Role of Non-State Actors :

Serum Institute (the largest vaccine maker in the world) was already in touch with Oxford scientists for many years for the malaria vaccine program. As soon as the genome sequence for COVID-19 became available both of them started research work on vaccine making. AstraZeneca, a British firm was also roped in and Serum agreed to supply 1 billion doses to Britain and a few million doses later on as a part of global vaccine alliances. The initial plan was to develop one billion doses.

Bharat Biotech tied up with ICMR and NIV to make an mRNA-based vaccine. Both vaccines were ready within a few months and were supplied to the central governments as per orders. The government had blocked foreign countries from signing direct orders with these companies.

The vaccines were also supplied to the global alliance, COVAX as a part of Serum’s agreements. A huge stockpile of vaccines was created by Serum Institute for human trials, which when successful was used for the first vaccination drive in India. It was a huge entrepreneurial risk on their part as the losses would have been billions of dollars if the trials had failed.

By late March 2021, India had produced 125 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines and had exported 55 million doses. Private firms including start-ups and MSMEs also got engaged in making medical devices which reduced the demand-supply gap in a short time. The excess goods were then exported to other countries. Since the Indian medicines and devices were of good quality and lower priced, it became easy to supply the huge demands well within time.

This took care of the required funding and encouraged further development. But the process also led to overburdening of the entire healthcare infrastructure in the country.

Vaccines & Geopolitics

As the virus spread all over the world it was evident that the first country to make a credible vaccine would get an advantage over the remaining ones to vaccinate their populations and use the vaccine as a bargaining tool.

Russia was the first to announce successful trials of its Sputnik vaccine which was used for their population and later exported to countries like Hungary. This was seen by the European Union as a challenge to European unity.

The “vaccine competition” increased as the Chinese President announced a healthy silk road as a part of the BRI initiative. Chinese vaccines were rejected by Brazil as they wanted to conduct trials on the Brazilian population and had only 50% efficacy.

Several Latin American nations got Chinese vaccines for free, but countries such as Honduras and Guatemala that have good relations with Taiwan did not (for obvious political reasons).

Meanwhile, India had already dispatched millions of doses abroad, with no expectation of reciprocity or political bargaining in a fair and transparent manner. India also joined hands with South Africa to urge the WTO to waive off patent rights on vaccines and raw materials required to make them; an initiative later supported by the USA also.

All these efforts did not go unnoticed as the UN Secretary-General praised India for its good work. A significant gesture was to send two lakh vaccine doses separately to the UN Peace Keeping Forces which earned a lot of goodwill and respect. Indian vaccines proved to be effective in all the countries with no side effects.

By May 2021, over 6.6 crore doses had been supplied under various agreements by India to more than 95 countries. Many countries heaved a sigh of relief as Indians became the first responders in this crisis thereby highlighting our age-old philosophy of “Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam”. This was in tune with our cultural philosophy of doing what is needed the most, in times

of crisis, without expectations.

The Positive Aspects

India gained huge soft power, influence, goodwill, and respect from its proactive vaccine diplomacy. As first responders, we were able to help as much as we could and without any strings attached. Optimum use of all the available data and resources was done and the nation worked as one single unit. This will surely help us in the long term to gain votes at UNSC and other international platforms. Recipient countries could clearly see through the vaccine hoardings and malpractices by other countries as compared to India's transparent and straightforward help. It generated favorable public opinion even in Pakistan where Indian vaccines were supplied, notwithstanding the mutual political rivalries.

The process also highlighted the potential and capacity of our private sector and the way it works when given a free hand, but with strict regulation. The UNO was able to vaccinate Syrian people through the Vaccine Maitri policy, as Syria was facing a dire situation compounded by winterization and food insecurity.

The pandemic also opened up new areas of research, business modeling, and capacity building for India. It also strengthened our position as a dominant player in South Asian geopolitics. The world acknowledged this small shift in the balance of power and influence, quite happily. It could also help counter the propaganda of anti-India forces in our neighborhood. India's help was reciprocated by many countries very liberally in the second wave when we needed help and had to stop vaccine exports, without an official request for doing so.

Negative Aspects – Losses & Lessons

A recent RTI reply has revealed that the Central government does not have data on how the number of doses supplied to each country was decided and there was no fixed criteria on the same.

A Kerala High Court affidavit filed by the Centre also mentions that only 58% of the total vaccines produced were actually reaching the common people.

The virus proved to be more dangerous as a result of ignoring core issues like population growth, lack of public health infrastructure & budget spending for a long time. The government has also been criticized for supplying vaccines before inoculating its own population, especially in case of them being given away as free grants. Differential pricing of the vaccine also saw controversy. Mismanagement of resources and the lack of a single decision-making body increased people's hardships. Technological development is not going to solve our management issues and we need to take a more comprehensive view of the same.

Also, soft power has a short shelf life unless backed by hard power – consistent efforts to maintain that goodwill. The failure to create a strong anti-China sentiment and the apathy shown toward tracing the origins of the virus also deserve some attention. A more proactive approach was expected on the government's part to invite manufacturing companies moving out of China which mostly went

to Vietnam, Singapore, and other countries. The 'One China Policy' of India has also come under scrutiny due to increasing border tensions with China.

The vaccination success is a result of collaboration with the West, and not 'self-reliance' or the much-hyped 'AatmaNirbhar Bharat'. It must be remembered that the vaccine research was done originally by Oxford University while Serum Institute only had the know-how of how to produce the vaccines. The serum has been criticized in the past for not paying attention to basic research and profiteering from vaccine sales.

Serum Institute of India (SII), which produces Covishield and Novavax vaccines, had also raised concerns about raw material shortages. Though the Indian pharmaceuticals are lower priced and of good quality, we do not have patent rights over most of them – we only have the paid licenses – even for the life-saving drugs.

In the case of Bharat Biotech, the government gave a paltry sum of just 65 crore rupees for vaccine research while other countries were spending billions of dollars, quite liberally. The bureaucratic laziness was exposed as no official orders had been placed by the government with Serum or Bharat Biotech till November 2020, and the companies made their own calculations for stockpiling and vaccine prices.

This led to further delays in starting our vaccination drive. Also opening up vaccinations for all age groups without considering the vaccine production capacities and their shelf life created procedural hurdles and wastage of precious resources. The rampant use of drugs used for other diseases has also come under scrutiny after the Indian Medical Association disapproved of their usage in the second wave.

The pandemic is not going away anytime soon and we need to be cautious about the same. Issues of mismanagement and lack of coordination were clearly visible in vaccine allocations, lack of SOPs, and the multitude of agencies giving out contradictory orders. The experience of the three waves seems to be lost somewhere leading to misinformation and confusion among the masses. The role of social media as a double-edged weapon once again was highlighted as it was used to help those in need, but also saw widespread rumors and all kinds of fake treatments being prescribed by users.

Conclusion

Billions of such Corona-like microorganisms exist, most of them have been around since the planet was formed and we must not create situations that will bring us into conflict with them. The coronavirus has turned the world upside down and caused a lot of destruction. The world would never be the same again as the virus has changed our living patterns.

It has also burst the bubble of our individuality and made us realize that we are not the rulers of planet Earth, but just one of its billion residents, and have to live with various organisms that we don't even know, exist. So it's better to adopt more sensible and eco-friendly lifestyles and take care of the only home we have in this universe. That would make this planet a better place to live in.

INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS



BILAL DAR

