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

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PM asks J&K youth to leave behind old challenges, benefit from new possibilities



New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday described Jammu and Kashmir as the pride of every Indian, and said that it is time to leave behind the old challenges and take full benefit of new possibilities.

Addressing the Jammu and Kashmir Rozgar Mela through video conferencing, he also said that there is a need to work with a new approach and new thinking for fast-paced development.

“We are committed to taking benefits of development equally to all sections and citizens,” Modi said.

“Jammu and Kashmir is the pride of every Indian. Together we have to take Jammu and Kashmir to new heights,” he said. “This decade of the 21st century is the most important decade in the history of Jammu and Kashmir. Now is the time to leave the old challenges behind, and take full advantage of the new possibilities.”

Modi congratulated 3,000 young people who received appointment letters to work in the government in 20 different places in Jammu and Kashmir. These youngsters will get opportunities to serve in various departments like the PWD, health department, food and civil supplies department, animal husbandry, Jal Shakti, and education-culture, he added.

The prime minister further said that preparations are in full swing to hand out more than 700 appointment letters in other departments in the coming days.

Referring to a record increase in the number of

tourists visiting Jammu and Kashmir, the prime minister said the tourism sector in the state received a boost due to the infrastructural developments and increased connectivity.

“It is our endeavour that the benefits of government schemes reach every section of society without any discrimination,” the prime minister remarked.

He also informed that efforts are on to strengthen the health and education infrastructure in Jammu and Kashmir with the opening of two new AIIMS, seven new medical colleges, two state cancer institutes and 15 nursing colleges.

He said efforts are underway to improve connectivity to Kashmir by trains.

The prime minister further said the youth of Jammu and Kashmir were coming forward in large numbers for the development of their state and their people.

“It is our youth who will write a new story of development in Jammu and Kashmir,” Modi said.

He said “30,000 people have been recruited for various government jobs since 2019 and nearly 20,000 of these posts have been filled in the last one-and-a-half years only”

The prime minister said the entire team of the Jammu and Kashmir administration, especially Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and his team, must be credited for this commendable work.

“The mantra of ‘Yogyata Se Rozgar’ (employment



It is our youth who will write a new story of development in Jammu and Kashmir...

with competence), which the team has followed, is instilling new confidence in the youth of the state,” Modi said.

Referring to several steps taken by the central government to promote employment and self-employment, he said employment fairs being organised in different parts of the country from October 22 will see more than 10 lakh appointment letters being awarded by the central government in the next few months.

As various states like Jammu and Kashmir are also associated with this campaign, this number is going to increase even more, he added.

“To increase employment in Jammu and Kashmir, we have also expanded the business environment here. Our new industrial policy and business reforms action plan has paved the way for ease of doing business. This has given a tremendous impetus to investment here,” the prime minister said.

With the increase in investment in Jammu and Kashmir, new employment opportunities are being created for the youth and the pace at which work is being done on development-related projects will change the entire economy here, Modi said.

He further said work was underway at a fast pace for train connectivity to Kashmir, while international flights from Srinagar to Sharjah have already started.

“Flights have started from Jammu and Kashmir even at night. Farmers here have also benefited a great deal from the increasing connectivity. It is now easier for apple farmers of Jammu and Kashmir to send their produce

outside,” Modi said.

“The way the government is working on promoting transport through drones, fruit-producing farmers here are also going to get special help,” he said.

Modi said the way new employment and self-employment opportunities have opened up in the Union territory, no one could have imagined it a few years ago.

“It is our endeavour that the benefits of government schemes reach every section of the society without any discrimination. We are committed to take equal benefits of development to all sections, to all people.

“With this model of holistic development, along with government jobs, other employment options are also being prepared,” the prime minister said.

Speaking on how the people of Jammu and Kashmir have always emphasised and appreciated transparency, he urged the youth who are coming into government services to make it a priority.

The prime minister recalled, “Whenever I used to meet the people of Jammu and Kashmir earlier, I always felt their pain. It was the pain of corruption in the system.”

“People of Jammu and Kashmir hate corruption and are fed up with it,” he said, and praised LG Manoj Sinha and his team for working hard to end the menace of corruption.

“It is the responsibility of the youth who are now becoming a part of the state government to give new energy to the efforts of transparency and honest governance by becoming true companions of Manoj Sinha,” the prime minister said.





HM inaugurates, lays foundation of 263 development projects worth Rs 1960 crore in Jammu

Jammu: Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of 263 development projects worth Rs.1960 crore in Jammu today.

A statement issued by Press Information Bureau (PIB) said that these include the inauguration of 82 projects of around Rs 500 crore and foundation stone laying of 181 projects of around Rs 1460 crore.

Speaking on the occasion, Amit Shah said that the country can never forget the contributions of Shri Syama Prasad Mookerjee and Shri Premnath Dogra because if it were not for the two of them, Jammu & Kashmir would never have had a permanent association with India.

He said that Syama Prasad Mookerjee was the first person to sacrifice his life for abolishing Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir and the strong movement led by Shri Premnath Dogra on the issue had shaken the government in the region.

He said, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken forward the movement led by these two great personalities to its logical end.

The Union Home Minister said that due to the rule of three families, Jammu and Kashmir had been left far behind other states in terms of development, but after 2014, Prime Minister Modi has ensured that Jammu and Kashmir is developed and move together with other states of the country.

The Home Minister said that today people in Jammu and Kashmir have 24 hours power supply in their homes and this is a big change. He said that democracy becomes strong only when the people welcome the change.

The Union Home Minister said that 14 projects of Urban Development Department costing Rs 31 crore, construction of 48 roads costing Rs 402 crore, Jal Jeevan Mission costing Rs 168 crore and 41 schemes worth Rs 1112 crore have been launched to connect every village of Jammu with road. He said

that about 77 lakh cards under Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana have been issued. Under the Saubhagya scheme, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has worked to provide electricity to 8 lakh 57 thousand such houses where electricity was not available even after 75 years of independence.

He said that this journey of development is an answer to those who used to ask what has happened after the abrogation of Article 370. He said that it is a great achievement to have one thousand PACS in Jammu and Kashmir because it is beneficial for farmers. He said that those who want development have faith in the developmental journey, while those who are involved in corruption have nothing to do with development.

The Home Minister said that for the first time, it is Prime Minister Modi, who has worked to recognize Kashmiri, Dogri, Urdu and Hindi as official languages because if the language of governance is local then the administration becomes more accountable.

The Union Home Minister said that under the Prime Minister's Development Package, about 63 projects have been initiated in Jammu at a cost of Rs.80,000 crore.

The work of Kiru Project in Hydro Power Electricity at a cost of Rs 4,287 crore is under progress. Work on the Kar scheme worth Rs 4,633 crore, Rs 2,793 crore for Shahpur Kundi and the Rs 11,908 crore Poonch power project will start soon.

"We do not make empty promises, but want to end corruption and terrorism and ensure that Jammu and Kashmir reaches top position in the race for development in the country," he said.

Several dignitaries including the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj Sinha, Union Minister Jitendra Singh and the Union Home Secretary were present on the occasion.

B2V is govt's endeavour to realize vision of Gram Swaraj: LG

Says it facilitates communication, cooperation and coordination between govt and people

Budgam: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Sunday said that the Back to Village programme is an endeavour to realize the vision of Gram Swaraj as it facilitates communication, cooperation and coordination between government and the people.

Sinha made these remarks while addressing an event in connection with the ongoing Back to Village (B2V) programme at Sheikhpora area of Budgam district, an official press release said.

"Back to Village is the government's endeavour to realize the vision of Gram Swaraj, and facilitate communication, cooperation and coordination between government and the people," said the LG.

"More than 25,000 officers are making field visits across the UT to receive feedback from the public on various schemes being implemented by the government. The visiting officers will ensure 100 percent saturation of welfare schemes and achieve the targets of self-employment and skill development," he added.

"Progress and prosperity of the common man, doorstep delivery of government services and establishing peace are the priorities of the government," the LG observed.

"For decades, corruption flourished in service delivery and had widened the gap between people's expectations and implementation. It is our utmost duty, our ultimate responsibility to bridge the gaps between public expectations and government delivery mechanisms. We are determined to bring transparency, accountability and inclusiveness in the governance system to meet the people's aspirations," the LG said.

"With deliverables reaching the doorsteps of the people, every officer, common citizen and public representatives who are the driving forces of good governance must turn this Back to Village initiative into an opportunity for economic development and social change of rural J&K," he observed.

"This spirit of Back to Village should be nurtured and further strengthened in our culture to make Jammu Kashmir a living example of equal rights, equal opportunities," the LG added.

The LG also said that the action-oriented deliverables of B2V-IV with the realistic assessment of the ground realities are aimed at connecting youth with self-employment and skill development programmes, strengthening the foundation of Panchayati Raj institutions, making every panchayat drug-free and ensuring that the last man in the queue reaps the benefit of government schemes.

"The UT government has brought a new revolution in youth empowerment in the last two years. From job seekers, today our youth have become job providers," the LG said.

He assured support and financial assistance for every youth who aspires to be an entrepreneur and wants to start his or her own business enterprise.



Under the ongoing B2V programme, "we have set a target to identify 15 youth from every panchayat for self employment assistance and 20 youth from every panchayat for skill training," he informed.

The LG urged the public representatives to play their important role in making the youth a partner in the development process, besides building a harmonized society.

"Peace is the only way to usher into a bright and prosperous future. Society must identify and isolate the divisive forces and their sympathizers who, on behalf of neighboring country are trying to create a sense of fear by targeting innocent civilians," said the LG.

The LG asked the visiting officers to take feedback from the people regarding the functioning of village-level workers and Patwari offices. He also underlined the need to make collective efforts towards achieving "Nasha Mukta and Swachh Panchayats".

The LG appealed to the youth to not get addicted with online gaming and further called for spreading awareness against online gambling.

Nazir Ahmad Khan, chairman, District Development Council, Budgam, while speaking on the occasion, expressed gratitude to the LG-led UT administration for doorstep delivery of public services and reaching out to the people through initiatives like B2V, the press release said.

S.F Hamid, Deputy Commissioner Budgam gave a detailed briefing on the efforts of the district administration to saturate the deliverables of the fourth edition of the B2V.

During his visit, the LG inspected the stalls and counters set up by different departments for extending public services and spreading awareness of government schemes.

The LG also distributed wheelchairs, hearing aids, sports kits, land passbooks, sanction letters among beneficiaries of various schemes.

Pandurang K Pole, Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir; Vijay Kumar ADGP Kashmir; Tahir Saleem, SSP Budgam, besides Ghulam Hassan Khan, BDC chairman Budgam, PRI members, senior officers, youth and people in large numbers were present on the occasion.

J&K Govt realizing the vision of making J&K a powerhouse of sporting talent

Unprecedented progress being witnessed in the establishment of world-class sports infrastructure, facilities across J&K

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 05: The growing sports culture in J&K is reflected in the remarkable revolution happening across Jammu and Kashmir in different sports disciplines.

In the last three years, the government has ensured unprecedented progress in the establishment of world-class infrastructure, career progression as well as future of the players. The new policies and initiatives of the government has established an enabling environment for sportspersons which was non-existent for the last 70 years.

Earlier, merely two to three lakh youth used to get opportunities for participation in sports every year, but J&K Government 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 the 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 also 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.

Sports give a new identity to the youth and the Sports Council

and the UT administration are ensuring that every player gets an opportunity to play with better infrastructure and earn the identity of a champion.

My Youth My Pride' in 22 disciplines in the Kashmir division and 18 in the Jammu division programme turned out to be a solid forum for sportspersons to showcase their talent. It has inculcated a winner's instinct among youth and kindled hopes of an ascent in a sporting performance in national and international games.

Notably, the J&K Sports Council has successfully completed many key infrastructure projects which are playing an essential role in training the youth in different sports. J&K UT has regained confidence and created an equitable and inclusive sports and recreation culture with modern infrastructure and training which is comparable to the best in the country.

With the help of veteran sportspersons, schools, and coaches, the Sports Council is working to ensure the young generation gets to play a variety of sports and everyone has the opportunity to develop a strong skill-set.

It is important to note that the new sports policy is aimed at promoting sports in UT by developing sports infrastructure and incentivizing sportspersons to excel in their respective games. The policy incorporates various annual awards like an award for excellence in sports for 10 sportspeople, J&K Khel Protsahana Award for sports association, two veterans/experienced sportspersons/organizers or referees, Parshuram Award for five best coaches in different disciplines.

The sports policy announces special cash awards to the winners in the Olympics, Asian Games, and Commonwealth Games among other tournaments in the range of Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1 crore. Further, the winners in all recognized national competitions and National School Games in various sports disciplines will be granted specified scholarships.

Special emphasis has also been laid to meet the sporting needs of the specially-abled sportspersons through sufficient infrastructure and training facilities.

Remarkably, the UT Government is making dedicated efforts to develop sports infrastructure and engage more youth in sports activities here, to realize the vision of making J&K- a powerhouse of sporting talent.





Path-breaking initiatives lay foundations of golden period across J&K

Pace of execution of developmental schemes increased five times in last three years

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 04: The path-breaking initiatives of the Government launched in various sectors in the last three are laying the foundations of the golden period across Jammu and Kashmir.

Over the last three years, the pace of execution of developmental schemes has increased five times on account of the resurgent institutional framework.

Similarly, grassroots-level 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.

In the last two years, the government has endeavoured to develop areas that had remained neglected till now. Dalits, tribals, and socio-economically backward classes have benefited from an equitable governance system, and 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 society, nation, and the entire humanity. The youth of Jammu and Kashmir today aspire for an equitable society free from poverty, unemployment, and exploitation. They want a society that challenges and harnesses their creativity.

The Union Government and J&K Administration are making every effort to make impossible things possible so that the youth of Jammu and Kashmir achieve their goals.

J&K Sports Council and Youth Services and Sports Department are making every effort in J&K to reach out to the youth and provide them a platform so that they can make J&K and the entire country proud in the field of sports.


The Jammu and Kashmir administration is formulating policies that engage youth in the governance process and ensure participation in their on-ground implementation.

The targeted schemes under 'Mission Youth' have been crafted to empower the youth. It provides opportunities for youth to become ambassadors of innovation, peace, progress, and sports. 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.

J&K administration has taken many steps to create infrastructure, schemes, and policies to speed up economic development and to meet the aspirations of youth so they can contribute to society and achieve self-growth. The easily accessible online platforms act as an interface between trained and skilled workforce and Industry requirements in J&K.

Jammu and Kashmir administration is determined to provide quality education, skill training, and better employment to the youth.

Keeping in view the industries to be set up in J&K under the New Industrial Scheme, special focus is being given to the training of local youth to fulfill the needs of a skilled workforce and create ample job opportunities for youth here.



AVSAR Scheme provides national platform for marketing to Artisans of J&K

Strengthens economic conditions of local artisan community

SRINAGAR: UMEED Market Place setup under AVSAR (Airport as Venue for Skilled Artisans Of The Region) Scheme of Airport Authority of India at Srinagar and Jammu airports is helping artisans to get exposed to the national market and strengthen the economic conditions of the local artisan community.

These outlets at airports exhibit products from all 20 districts and the initiative is supporting local art and artisans of Self Help Groups of J&K Rural Livelihood Mission. These outlets form a platform for marketing local products directly to customers. An area of 100-200 square feet has been earmarked at each AAI-operated airport.

The products of Self Help Groups get exposed to the national market, strengthen the local artisan community and provide sufficient promotional avenues for their products.

The marketplace at both Airports is giving huge visibility to the members of SHGs and promoting their products to a wider spectrum, reaching out to the larger population and making rural handicraft products available at reasonable prices to the passengers.

More than five lakh women benefit every year from stalls and counters offered to them for 15 days on a rotational basis. It also serves as a point for passengers to place bulk orders and request customized demands for corporate gifting as well.

The initiative strengthens SHGs by allotting space at AAI Airports to provide huge visibility to these small groups and prepare them to promote/market their products to the wider

spectrum, reaching out to the larger population.

The “AVSAR” scheme has also been launched with an aim to encourage the talent of women, artisans and craftsmen and provide them with the right opportunities. Under AVSAR, an opportunity to help the indigent to mobilize their households into functionally effective self-earned groups for self-reliance and self-dependence has been provided.

Syed Darakhsa of Budgam is the founder of the 10-member successful women self-help artisans’ group sponsored by JKRLM for its start-up and deals with handicrafts. Darakhsa says they had also been provided with an opportunity to sell their handmade products at Srinagar Airport under the AVSAR scheme for 15 days generating revenue worth Rs 9 lacs.

She says that it was only possible with the help of financial aid of JKRLM Department Budgam that her group was able to sell their products at various sales outlets.

Nayeema Bano is another example of a successful SHG group under UMEED with the name of AALISHAN in Chadoora Budgam. Her Self help group deals with the packaging of dry fruits and papier-mâché work on plates, cups, vases, and decoration pieces such as miniature Samovar, Shikara, and similar items.

Naveema says that a platform was provided to their SHG for 15 days at Srinagar Airport under the AVSAR scheme wherein they even managed to earn a profit of Rs. 2 lac in a single day.

“This was only possible due to JKRLM who trained her SHG in the packaging of dry fruits, papier-mâché work and marketing skills,” she said.

In her message to the youth, she said that having originality, creativity, and focus without obsessing over what others are doing, are the keys to success.

JKRLM is reaching out to rural poor families and links them to sustainable livelihood opportunities till they come out of poverty and start enjoying a decent quality life.

Srinagar district selected for National e-Governance Gold award

Srinagar: The Srinagar district has achieved a major milestone by getting selected for the National e-Governance Gold Award for Project/Initiative 'Gaash' under the category of "Excellence in District Level Initiative in e-Governance" of the National Awards for e-Governance Scheme 2021-2022, an official press release informed Monday.

The Gaash project is an e-Learning initiative of the District Administration Srinagar with special emphasis on gamified learning in the age group 12-18. With the introduction of the project a number of students as well as teachers showed enhanced interest in the project resulting in an overall improvement in academic performance, the press release said.

It said through the project Gaash, the students were able to understand basic concepts in science and mathematics very easily in comparison to normal classroom transactions.

Speaking about the project Gaash, the DC Srinagar said that the project has been very helpful in making Education more effective while being enjoyable through gamification of conceptual content. He said it will also provide a comprehensive understanding of learning outcomes for all stakeholders in education—schools, parents and students, besides empowering students with cutting-edge edu-technology to help them realise their full potential.

The DC also said that the effort is factored by the use of digital technology pursuing next-generation reforms and innovations by adopting emerging technologies and use of ICT Management.

Meanwhile, the Lieutenant Governor,



Manoj Sinha in his Tweet has congratulated the Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz Asad and his team for getting selected for the project Gaash for National e-Governance GOLD AWARD under the category 'Excellence in District Level Initiative in e-Governance.'

In his Tweet, the LG has said: "A well-deserved Gold for Team @srinagaradmin in e-Governance." The tweet further added, "Congratulations and best wishes for outstanding work @asadamajaz and officials for translating the grand vision of digitally empowered society into reality"

J&K youth turning into Agripreneurs with govt support

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir government has taken innovative measures and policy decisions to increase the income of farmers and encourage the youth to adopt agriculture as a medium of employment.

Over the past two years, the government has shifted to the improved farming system on scientific lines and market-oriented policies in order to make agriculture and allied sector a sustainable and profitable economic activity

Braving all the challenges of agricultural reform, the ranking of J&K in monthly farm income has improved and the UT is standing tall among top five states and union territories.

J&K has limitless potential in agriculture and concerted efforts by the government are opening up doors of opportunity for small and marginal farmers. Never before had high-density plantation investment in agro-based industries taken place at the kind of speed witnessed in the last two years.

The J&K government has focused on creating umbrella groups for selling local and small-scale products, besides holding brainstorming sessions on the innovations happening in various categories of

startups in agriculture such as agro-processing, artificial intelligence, digital agriculture, agricultural mechanization, waste to wealth, dairy, fisheries, and other entrepreneurship programs.

Green Agriculture Revolution, and the contribution of Agricultural Universities, Institutions and Krishi Vigyan Kendras has changed the way of farming in an innovative way by extending the benefits of modern technologies to the farmers.

The government is developing strategies and credible mechanisms for upscaling of farmers-led innovations and further strengthening the spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat and making J&K 'AatmaNirbhar' (self-reliant) in agriculture sector, besides a host of measures for achieving faster growth in the agriculture sector along-with providing sustainable income and livelihood to farmers have also initiated.

J&K today has thousands of Agripreneurs, champion farmers whose lives were changed with the support of the UT administration.

Even many women agripreneurs encouraged others to take up farming and earn a respectable income.



Govt to create adequate vacancies, recruit with full transparency: CS

JAMMU: A ceremonial function on account of Rozgar Mela was today held at Convention Centre Jammu where the Chief Secretary, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta, handed over appointment letters to the candidates selected by the J&K Services Selection Board.

On the occasion, a video message from Prime Minister Narendra Modi was also played. In the message, the Prime Minister said that youth have a pivotal role in the development of Jammu and Kashmir.

He mentioned that employment opportunities are going to increase due to an increase in investments coming to UT. There has been more than 30000 recruitments made in the government sector after 2019 in J&K. He also appreciated the UT administration for creating ample employment opportunities for its youth.

The Chief Secretary along with the Additional Chief Secretary, Home; Principal Secretary, Jal Shakti; Principal Secretary Information & HED; Comm Secretary Labour & Employment; Commissioner Secretary Forests; Commissioner Secretary Revenue; Divisional Commissioner Jammu; Secretary, GAD distributed appointment letters to the candidates selected in various government departments by the recruitment board.

On the occasion, the Chief Secretary congratulated the appointees who have been selected as per their merit in various government departments. He appreciated the appointees whose fathers were farmers and labourers and encouraged all to work hard as merit will be the sole criterion to get selected.

He said that the priority of the J&K government is to ensure a transparent recruitment process and these appointments were done with full transparency in a fast-track manner. "Our priority is to ensure that not a single person is favoured in terms of securing government jobs," he said. "The era of backdoor appointments into government jobs has ended," he maintained.

He also said that the process of verifications which earlier took months is now completed online within days. He said that in J&K's history maximum recruitments had been done in the last two years in which recruitment for over 30000 posts has been made since 2019. He said that the creation of new vacancies in government departments is also in progress.

Speaking about the 'Be Rozgar Se Swarozgar Scheme' the Chief Secretary said that the scheme has been launched to provide employment opportunities to unemployed youth. He pointed out that for Back to Village Phase-4 (B2V4) the officers have been directed to aware the people about the scheme so that they can apply for starting their own enterprises. He said our target is to provide employment to 10 lakh youth under SwarozgarYojna. He urged people to come forward and avail the benefits of the scheme and become job givers instead job seekers.

On the occasion, the candidates also shared their experiences/ struggle for getting government jobs and also extended their gratitude to the Lieutenant Governor for creating a feasible environment where they were able to dream big and achieve higher. They thanked his administration for providing them the employment opportunities based on merit and performance only.

These candidates have been appointed to different posts in GAD, Skill Development Department, Labour Department, Animal and Sheep Husbandry, Jal Shakti, Agriculture, Finance, and School Education Departments.

Those who were also present include senior functionaries from Civil and Police administration including Deputy Commissioners, SSPs, SPs, HoDs of different departments from Jammu Division, and other officers and officials of concerned departments.

MoHUA approves Rs 1665.10 cr action plan for J&K under AMRUT 2.0



Srinagar: The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), in its fifth Apex committee meeting, approved UT Water Action Plan (UTWAP) for 153 projects amounting Rs 1665.10 crore for 78 ULBs of J&K under Atal Mission for Rejuvenation of Urban Transformation (AMRUT) 2.0, an official press release informed Saturday.

It said Principal Secretary, H&UDD, Dheeraj Gupta, made a presentation on

the action plan to the Apex Committee meeting held under the chairmanship of Union Secretary MoHUA, Manoj Joshi.

The UTWAP will be covering 99 projects under Water Supply, four under Sewerage and Seepage Management besides 50 water-bodies, the press release said.

It was informed that out of the total approved allocation of Rs. 1665.00 crore, an amount of Rs. 744.18 has been

earmarked under CAPEX Budget of the Housing and Urban Development Department for providing round-the-clock quality water supply, universal households water tap connections to all the urban areas of J&K and coverage of households under Sewerage and Seepage Management in three Mission Cities of AMRUT including Srinagar, Jammu, and Anantnag.

Besides, under AMRUT 2.0 about 2.25 lakh new tap household connections would be provided and more than 4 lakh connections would be augmented. Likewise, 72872 sewage connections in three Mission Cities of Srinagar, Jammu, and Anantnag shall be provided and 54 MLD capacities of Sewage treatment plants will be augmented under AMRUT 2.0.

Pertinently, AMRUT 2.0 has been designed to provide universal coverage of water supply through functional taps to all households in all the statutory towns of the country and coverage of sewerage/seepage management in AMRUT cities by 2025-26.

The meeting was also attended by the Commissioners of Jammu Municipal Corporation and Srinagar Municipal

UMEED helping J&K women to become progressive, self-sufficient entrepreneurs

SRINAGAR: Jammu & Kashmir Rural Livelihoods Mission (JKRLM) is creating sustainable livelihood opportunities and nurturing rural women to make them self-sufficient and enjoy a decent quality of life.

JKRLM also known as UMEED is turning the wheel of transformation for J&K women to become progressive and self-employed entrepreneurs. UMEED has the potential to give wings to the aspirations of rural women who dream of becoming economically independent.

JKRLM (Umeed) has the mandate to reach out to 66 percent of the rural population across the erstwhile 125 blocks linking them to sustainable livelihood opportunities. The Mission aims to reduce poverty by building strong grassroots institutions for the poor, engaging them in gainful livelihood interventions, and ensuring appreciable improvement in their income on a sustainable basis.

Women Haat Srinagar provides a platform for SHG members to exhibit their products and services. Every year a minimum of 5000 women get a chance to exhibit their products there.

The enterprise of Sunita Devi of village Bal Argi,

Block Budhal of District Rajouri is a fine source of inspiration for many rural women. Despite having no financial backup, Sunita started a school in the far-flung area up to 8th standard with an enrolment of more than 150 students with the help of JKRLM/UMEED and earns handsome income from this venture.

Similarly, 23-year old Khair un Nissa of Gongoo village of Pulwama district, who owns an automatic milk collection centre, a dairy farm, a fooder shop, and poly hi-tech has become an inspiration after handholding from UMEED. With the help of a self-help group under UMEED, Khair un Nissa started with an automatic milk collection center and then forayed into other businesses after she started earning from the milk collection centre. She credits her success to JKRLM due to which she was able to start her ventures.

Through UMEED, hundreds of women are not only scripting their success stories in Jammu and Kashmir but are motivating others to come out of poverty and become successful entrepreneurs. Umeed is immensely helping women entrepreneurs to exhibit and market their products.



Berozgar se Swarozgar

Govt identifies 181 villages for development under TVDP to empower youth, strengthen rural economy

Srinagar: To strengthen rural economy and empower the youth and women by direct and indirect employment opportunities, Government of Jammu and Kashmir has identified 181 villages having picturesque beauty and cultural significance for transformation into tourist destinations under Tourist Villages Development Program (TVDP).

Under Mission Youth's initiative, registered youth and Self Help Groups are provided an opportunity to be a part of the government's endeavour to boost rural tourism in J&K.

The youth-led sustainable tourism initiative will strengthen the rural economy and community entrepreneurship, empowering youth and women by providing direct and indirect employment opportunities. This step will showcase the landscapes, indigenous knowledge systems, cultural diversity and heritage, local values and traditions, besides encouraging film shooting and offering financial incentives as well as ensuring a digital platform for all these villages.

Mission Youth is working in collaboration with the Tourism department for utilizing the available resources in the development of these villages as tourist villages. The government will also develop basic infrastructure in these villages under the close supervision of the Task Force which has already been constituted and any group willing to be part of the Government's initiative will be given Rs 10 lakh as financial assistance for self-employment activities in the tourism sector.

Further, an amount of Rs one lakh will be given for the creation of a homestay facility and there will be a subsidy of Rs 50,000. This step will go a long way in attracting tourists to those areas which remained unexplored till date.

Moreover, up to Rs 8-10 lakh incentive will be provided for movie/song shootings in these villages, also aimed at the promotion of these rural tourist destinations. Preference will be given to local registered artists having sufficient experience in the grant

of assistance for shootings in the identified villages.

Similarly, a dedicated portal – AVSAR-‘Connect to Opportunities Initiative’ - has been provisioned to facilitate our youth with real-time information flow notifying students about pre-placement activities and job opportunities. All ITIs and other technical institutions in the UT were on-boarded in the program for achieving the best outcomes for our youth.

The easily accessible online platform would act as an interface between a trained and skilled workforce and will also deal with industry requirements in J&K. Under the New Industrial Scheme, special focus is given to training local youth to fulfill the needs of a skilled workforce.

Another programme “Sahyta” has been rolled out to provide a special financial assistance for youth in distress. Financial assistance of one lakh is being provided under the scheme to youth in distress for setting up solo self-employment units.

Under a sector specific scheme for dental professionals, customised financial support is being provided to dentists for setting up dental clinics. An amount of 8 lakh is provided as financial assistance under this scheme for setting up their venture.

Another scheme “Rise Together” envisions promoting community-based entrepreneurship optimally to generate jobs, income and promote the spirit of social service among new-age young entrepreneurs in J&K. Under the scheme, the eligible youth groups are provided with financial assistance to the extent of Rs 20 lakh comprising of upfront subsidy component minimum of Rs 2.5 lakh or 10 percent of the project cost and a loan provided by the bank to the extent of Rs 17.50 lakh.

With all these initiatives, the government has endeavoured to make the interest and empowerment of youth a top priority. The government envisions reaching out to all the young population of Jammu & Kashmir within the next five and making it possible for them to be actually a propelling force for the socio-economic transformation of Jammu & Kashmir.

Various schemes, policies launched to meet aspirations of J&K youth

Mumkin, Tejaswini schemes fulfilling dreams of aspiring entrepreneurs of J&K

SRINAGAR: J&K Government has taken many steps to create infrastructure, schemes, and policies to speed up economic development, and to meet the aspirations of youth so that they can contribute to society and achieve self-growth.

Under the Aegis of Mission Youth, the Mumkin scheme has been launched by Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, a customized livelihood generation scheme for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir.

Under the scheme, unemployed youth are facilitated to procure small commercial vehicles on a subsidized basis to establish a sustainable livelihood in the transport sector.

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

Apart from this, Mission Youth, J&K provides an amount of Rs 80,000 or 10 percent for the on-road price of the vehicle (whichever is lesser) as an upfront subsidy and the vehicle manufacturers (scheme partner of government) provides an upfront special discount, not less than the amount of subsidy. To make the scheme implementation completely transparent and fast, a module has been developed on the JK-e-Services portal for operating the scheme digitally.

Similarly, for young ambitious women, the 'Tejaswani scheme' has been launched by Government which provides financial assistance for setting up gainful self-employment ventures, suited to their skills, training, aptitude, and local conditions.

The UT administration is also facilitating soft finance for setting up new enterprises or for the expansion and modernization of existing ventures for income generation. Tejaswini scheme provides financial assistance to young women of 18 to 35 years of age.

Under the scheme, female entrepreneurs are facilitated to avail financial assistance under Mudra from J&K Bank to the extent of Rs 5 lakh. Mission Youth J&K is also providing an amount of Rs 50,000 or 10% of the project cost as an upfront subsidy. Besides, an interest subvention of up to 60 thousand rupees is also being sponsored by the government as a special incentive thus making repayment of loans technically interest-free for the young female entrepreneurs who apply for assistance under the scheme.

The scheme intends to provide assistance to all eligible young women who are domiciles of J&K and have a qualification of matriculation and above. It also caters to enterprises where women entrepreneurs hold not less than 50% of financial holding, besides providing assistance to set up women-centric businesses and micro start-ups.

Also, the 'Spurring Entrepreneurship Initiative' programme is built on the idea of the Youth Enterprise with Innovation (YouWiN) and Champion for Innovation initiative, which aims to inspire young people, especially young women, to start and grow innovative businesses.

Dentists are receiving tailored financial help for opening dental clinics under the sector-specific programme for dental professionals. Under this programme, around eight lakh rupees is given as financial support for starting their business. Under the Mission Youth scheme, the administration has announced the provision of financial assistance of Rs 8 lakh to unemployed dental surgeons to set up their clinics.

An amount of Rs 8 lakh shall be provided as financial assistance out of which Rs 2 lakh shall be provided as Grant-in-aid and the rest of the amount Rs 6 lakh shall be financed by the bank as a start-up loan.

While no margin money will be required, financial assistance can be availed individually as well as on a group basis. The scheme is being launched to provide a source of employment to hundreds of dental surgeons and dental technicians.



Govt engaging J&K youth as partners in governance through Youth Clubs

Around 4290 clubs established across J&K, more than 7 cr provided as grant-in-aid

SRINAGAR: The government of Jammu & Kashmir has conceived a pioneering initiative of youth clubs to engage and empower youth as partners in governance under the aegis of Mission Youth.

The clubs established in 2021 aim to offer the youth of J&K an opportunity to become change-makers and around 4,290 clubs have been formed. The volunteers in youth clubs are trained to work through real challenges and make meaningful changes. These volunteers develop a civic identity as leaders and change-makers and become socially more socially active.

The volunteers in these clubs are being trained in all aspects of government schemes and are part of emergency and crisis management plans and subsequently involved in planning and decision-making. The clubs serve as the focal point for positive engagement of the youth and endeavour to strive that they do not fall for radical propaganda and other social issues that trouble our youth.

An amount of 7.25 Cr has been provided as a grant in aid for specified activities of the youth clubs in the last financial year and Youth Engagement programs have been convened in all districts through these youth clubs and more than 2 lakh youth have been associated with the program.

Aqib, a youth volunteer from Pulwama said that they were always feeling alienated, from the system but after joining Youth we are feeling part of the system and governance. He said they are supporting Government in the drug de-addiction campaign in every Panchayat of the district. "We will make Pulwama Drug free district within the next few months," he said.

In the Poonch district, the Youth volunteers feel jubilant about their participation in the socio-economic expansion of their district. "The process of developmental planning and governance apparatus was never as much participatory as made by this novel initiative of the Government," said Rameez from Poonch. "Our youth volunteers organized scores of community-oriented activities during last year. We were able to plant more than 30000 saplings including Chinars in the district in a single go," he added.

Similarly in the Budgam district, youth volunteers are participating actively in every welfare program of the Government. The mega Covid vaccination and deworming program in the district was organized by Youth Volunteers in collaboration with Health authorities. "We ensured to reach every child of every household in every Panchayat," said Mehjabeen, one of the lead members of the Youth Volunteer Program.



J&K emerging as top investment destination in India

Investment projects worth Rs 10,000 crore under execution, proposals to the tune of Rs 60,000 crore being processed

Srinagar: Investment projects worth Rs 10,000 crore are under execution in Jammu and Kashmir while proposals to the tune of Rs 60,000 crore are being processed, which reflects the successful campaign of the Union Territory government to attract investors.

Since Independence, Jammu and Kashmir had received private investments to the tune of Rs 14,000 crore only. However, after the introduction of the new Industrial Development Scheme and personal interest taken by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the UT has received investment proposals worth Rs 56,000 crore in just about one year's time.

The spokesman said there is a huge rush of investments in Jammu and Kashmir by private players from the country as well as abroad. Several builders have also shown keen interest in investments here during a real estate summit.

Jammu and Kashmir is set to become the top investment destination in the

country as it races up to various infrastructure projects and is reaching out to foreign and domestic investors through several forums and industrial summits.

The administration has also received dozens of proposals for establishing healthcare projects in the two medi-cities of the Union Territory.

These include Dubai-based businesses like EMAAR Group, Noon.com, Al Maya Group, GL Employment, MATU Investments, and others.

Jammu and Kashmir has a huge potential to emerge as a powerhouse of prosperity with the progressive industrial policy which has brought investment of almost four times in just three years compared to what was received in the last 72 years. The golden period of industrial development of Jammu and Kashmir has been ushered in through the new Industrial Development Policy of the Prime Minister.

The spokesman further said the days

of struggle for entrepreneurs are over and youngsters who desire to establish their own ventures are supported by the government through various schemes and provided all possible assistance to chase their dreams.

In 'Naya' (new) J&K, the investment ecosystem has changed a lot after the abrogation of Article 370, and thousands of budding entrepreneurs are setting up their own units and are emerging as role models.

New industrial estates are coming up and during the past two years, more than 3,300 applications have been approved, with letters of intent issued in favour of 1,879 applicants.

Lease deeds have been executed in favour of 260 applicants while 1,230 acres of land have so far been allotted to prospective unit holders. These unit holders have in turn deposited a sum of Rs 217 crore into the government exchequer as their lease dues.

J&K bags top awards under PMAY-URBAN during IUHC 2022



Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir has won top awards in implementation of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-Urban) during three-day India Urban Housing Conclave 2022 (IUHC 2022) organized by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in Rajkot, Gujarat, an official press release informed here.

The conclave was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the 19th of October, 2022.

J&K has won two awards including 'Overall best performing Union Territory and best performing UT for implementation of Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHCs).

Principal Secretary, H&UDD, Dheeraj Gupta received the award on behalf of the UT government.

The conclave included an exhibition of departmental stalls highlighting the achievements and best practices adopted across the states and UTs in the implementation of the Mission.

PMAY-U is a flagship Mission of the Government of India being implemented by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) which addresses urban housing shortage among the EWS/LIG and MIG categories including the slum dwellers by ensuring a pucca house to all eligible urban households by the year 2022, when Nation completes 75 years of Independence.

Pertinently, J&K has achieved 100 percent saturation in the implementation of the PMAY Mission. About 44,701 beneficiaries have been identified and approved under BLC component, out of which, 44630 dwelling units have been grounded and will be completed within the prescribed time schedule.

The UT government has for the first time introduced a new initiative wherein interest-free loan/subsidy is being provided for an amount of Rs. 2.00 lakh per beneficiary for construction of dwelling unit under BLC component. Besides, 336 houses are being reconstructed under Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHCs) at Sunjwan, Jammu while 968 flats are being constructed at Bhalwal and lower Roopnagar Jammu under Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP) component.

Also, a Demonstration Housing Project (DHP) under Technology Sub-Mission (TSM) of the Mission has been taken up at Bhalwal, Jammu. The technology to be used for DHP is EPS Core Panels. After completion, J&K Housing Board will not only gainfully utilize the structure but will also showcase it as the latest proven alternate/green technology solution suitable to the geo-climatic & hazardous conditions of Jammu region.

The Government of Jammu & Kashmir is committed towards ensuring that there is no urban houseless in the Union Territory by March 2023.

J&K govt includes 15 more castes in reservation for socially backward classes

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir government on Saturday issued a notification including 15 more castes that would now benefit through the 4 percent reservation in jobs etc for socially backward classes.

As per the notification, 15 more castes have been included in the list of socially backward castes in Jammu and Kashmir.

The now included social castes are Waghey (Chopan), Ghirath/Bhati/Chang community, Jat community, Saini community, Markabans/PonyWalas, Sochi community, Christian Biradari (converted from Hindu Valmiki), Sunar/Swarankar Teeli (Hindu Teeli along with already existing Muslim Teli), Perna/Kouro(Kaurav), Bojru/Decount/Dubdabay Brahmin Gorkans, Gorkhas, West Pakistani refugees (excluding SCs) and Acharyasa.

Certain modifications have also been made in the existing social castes by subsisting their names.

According to the notification, potters (Kumahars), shoe repairers (working without the aid of machines), Bangies Khakrobes (sweepers), barbers, washermen and Dooms have been respectively replaced by Kumahars, Mo-



chi, Bangies Khakrobes, Hajjam Atrai, Dhobi, and Dooms (excluding SCs).

The social caste list has been redrawn on the recommendations of the Jammu and Kashmir Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Commission which was constituted by J&K Government in 2020. Former High Court Judge, G. D Sharma heads the three-member panel.

The other significant change made in the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Rules is that the words "Pahari speaking people (PSP)" have been subsumed with "Pahari ethnic people".



Tejaswini scheme weaves success stories of women empowerment

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government is empowering and encouraging young women through an ambitious 'Tejaswani scheme' by providing financial assistance for setting up gainful self-employment ventures, suited to their skills, training, aptitude, and local conditions.

The UT administration is also facilitating soft finance for setting up new enterprises or for the expansion and modernization of existing ventures for income generation.

Pertinently, the scheme was launched by Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, in June 2021

The broad aim of this start-up funding programme for adolescents and young women of UT is to make them empowered and self-dependent through their own business ventures. 'Tejaswini scheme provides financial assistance to the young women of 18 to 35 years of age.'

Under the scheme, female entrepreneurs are facilitated to avail financial assistance under Mudra from J&K Bank to the extent of Rs 5 lakh.

An official said that Mission Youth J&K is providing an amount of Rs 50,000 or 10% of the project cost as an upfront subsidy. Besides, an interest subvention of up to 60 thousand rupees is also being sponsored by the government as a special incentive thus making repayment of loans technically interest-free for the young female entrepreneurs who apply for assistance under the scheme.

The scheme intends to provide assistance to all eligible young

women who are domiciles of J&K and have a qualification of matriculation and above. It also caters to enterprises where women entrepreneurs hold not less than 50% of financial holding, besides providing assistance to set up women-centric businesses and micro start-ups.

Pertinently, Mission Youth has conceptualized this scheme for young women of J&K to uplift the status of women in society in view of low female participation in various entrepreneurial and livelihood generation activities.

In the financial year 2021-22, Mission Youth had sponsored more than 2000 cases of women entrepreneurs under the scheme during the current financial year with a budgetary component of Rs 12 crore as a government subsidy.

The government also helps young aspiring women entrepreneurs in the acquisition of fixed assets (plant and machinery, equipment, furniture, and fixtures) and meet the working capital needs for the purchase of various products and equipment, etc.

Women entrepreneurs are also being provided EDP training through JKEDI to impart them with basic skills about running their business ventures

Notably, the scheme has the distinction of being the first of its kind under which repayment of financial assistance will be interest-free up to a certain extent. It has been specifically modeled to ensure that businesses set up by these young women turn into viable and flourishing enterprises.

JK Govt revamps ARI & Trainings deptt with emerging technologies

SRINAGAR: In an initiative towards promoting e-governance to improve performance and efficacy with better utilization of limited resources, ARI and Trainings department has revamped its functioning with the introduction of all emerging technologies like digitization of different services, new and updated departmental websites besides the provisioning of various services through online mode.

The department has also overhauled

the functioning of the Government Press by equipping it with modern machinery and switching over to digital printing processes thereby catering to the need for quality printing jobs of various departments. The Government Presses have also introduced Bar Code, QR Code, and variable data printing techniques.


In order to enhance efficiency and work culture among employees, the department has cleared Service Recruitment Rules in respect of 18 departments. Moreover, the Service Recruitment Rules of 19 departments are at the final stage of completion. This updation of Service Recruitment Rules will attract the best human resource, ensure uniformity in the service rules, minimize the incidence of litigations and thus make sure that the government departments cater to the needs of the general populace in a more efficient and proactive manner.

Similarly, administrative inspections of 22 departments including the major

head of departments have been conducted till date. Besides, the calendar for administrative inspection of another 35 departments has been issued. 'Administrative Inspections ensure that field offices are compliant with the rules and regulations of the land and thus help in better public service delivery system.'

In another achievement, migration of 33 MBBS students has been sanctioned by the department in a time-bound and transparent manner. Besides, the department of Stationery and Office Supplies has been winded up, which had become redundant, and Government e-Market Place (GeM Portal) has been introduced.

The department has conducted an extensive Administrative Inspection exercise across the UT of J&K regarding provisioning of online services and its integration with Rapid Assessment System (RAS) covering a total of 1694 government offices in all 20 districts of the UT.



J&K's entire workforce to get Rs 2 lakh insurance cover

Srinagar: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Monday issued directions to extend Rs two lakh insurance cover to the entire workforce including those in the unorganized sector.

The premium of the insurance would be borne by the Department of Labour and Employment, an official press release said.

It said Sinha issued these directions while chairing a review meeting of the Labour & Employment Department today at the Civil Secretariat.

During the meeting, the LG said that the government is committed for social and economic justice to the workforce in the unorganised sector and every effort are being made to protect the interests of labour, for their welfare, necessary skill development and to improve their capability, the press release informed.

He also stressed that dedicated efforts be made to saturate self-employment schemes, and asked the department for organizing a mega job fairs at Jammu & Srinagar.

Enquiring about the steps put in place by the department to ensure there is no bonded labour and child labour case in J&K, the LG asked the department to ensure J&K is free from bonded and child labour by regular inspections and conducting surveys. He directed for starting a helpline for unorganised workforce.

“Department must ensure there is no case of exploitation of unorganized workers. Proper employment planning and flexibility in labour deployment in the backdrop of changing market conditions should be the priority,” said the LG.

The LG impressed upon the senior officers of the Labour and Employment Department for the welfare and support of the unorganized workforce and their children.

“Health, safety and social security benefits like financial assistance should be top priority. Department should also ensure that all possible assistance for children’s education and scholar-

ships is extended within a fixed timeline,” the LG directed the officers.

Reviewing the employment sector of the department, the LG emphasized on integrated planning by bringing all departments on a single platform and working in convergence for effective and efficient employment related services.

Facilitate employment opportunities through national job fairs, and an IEC campaign should be launched to generate awareness among the target population, said the LG.

The LG directed the department for registration of the entire unorganized workforce and transition of all accounts of J&K EPFO to Central EPFO at the earliest.

Industries in the UT should employ a local skilled workforce and trained ITI professionals. Department should carry out assessment of career counseling sessions every six months, the LG told the officers.

Directions were also issued to activate ‘labour sarais’ (night shelters), their proper functioning and completing the under construction shelters at the earliest; resolving all 974 pending court cases under various Labour Acts in stipulated time frame and conducting regular meetings of Advisory Boards pertaining to Labour and Employment Department, besides proper functioning of ESI scheme.

The LG was briefed about the functioning and roles of the department via a Powerpoint presentation by Sarita Chauhan, Commissioner Secretary, Labour & Employment Department.

Dr Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary; Munir-ul-Islam, Chief Executive Officer/Secretary, J&K Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board; Nisar Ahmad Wani, Director Employment, J&K; Abdul Rashid War, Labour Commissioner Jammu and Kashmir, besides other concerned officers of the department were present.

New land laws acting as cushion for development across J&K

SRINAGAR: The new land laws are being hailed by the people of Jammu and Kashmir as a major step towards the development and progress of the entire J&K.

The new land laws introduced in Jammu and Kashmir replaced some outdated, regressive, intrinsically contradictory land laws with a set of modern, progressive, and people-friendly provisions. The historic initiative of the government is revamping agriculture and allied sectors besides ensuring holistic development of all sectors.

Nearly one year after the abrogation of Article 370, a temporary provision in the Constitution, the Centre abolished the 7-decade-old “Big Land Estates Abolition Act 1950,” under which the erstwhile princely state witnessed the redistribution of land to end the Zamindari system.

In October 2020, the Centre notified the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Adaptation of Central Laws) Third Order, enabling a host of new changes to the erstwhile state.

The implementation of the new law opened up Jammu and Kashmir to the world as it provided that anyone who wanted to buy non-agricultural land in J&K didn't require a permanent resident certificate.

The Union Home Ministry also notified the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016, paving the way for the acquisition of land in J&K by all Indian citizens. Prior to the implementation of this Act, the Article 35-A of J&K Constitution, which was scrapped on August 5, 2019, placed prohibitions on the sale of land to those who were non-state subjects.

Notably, after the new land reforms were introduced and implemented, the J&K Government organized the first-ever real estate summit in Jammu in December 2021 in which 39 Memorandum of Understanding worth Rs 18,300 crore were signed with the country's real estate investors for the development of housing and commercial projects in the Union Territory.

Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha also held consultations with top officials and team from the Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI) including the members of



its elected council, president and vice-presidents, office-bearers of Economic Growth and Development Dialogue (LEAD) and town planning consultants to chalk out the modalities for the second Real Estate Summit to be held in Srinagar.

The land reforms and the digitisation of land records in Jammu and Kashmir have proven to be major steps towards systematic growth of urban and rural areas in J&K.

The aim of the Government is to create robust urban infrastructure, and improve the system of public service delivery for quality living. Experts are studying the model of other cities to create affordable, inclusive, ecologically sustainable housing equipped with the best essential basic services for the common man.

The efforts are on to transform the landscape of real estate across 'Naya Jammu and Kashmir' and the people are supporting each and every move of the government to transform the Himalayan region, which remained deprived of progress and prosperity due to Article 370 remaining in vogue for 70-years.

Jammu and Kashmir Government also assured protections and safeguards for the land rights after the introduction of new land laws in the Union Territory.

The new land laws will not only afford protection to over 90% of the land in J&K from being alienated but will also help revamp the agriculture sector, foster rapid industrialization, aid economic growth and create jobs in J&K.

The designation of land for industrial purposes will open up greater employment avenues for the youth who have always yearned for the industrial revolution in J&K so that they can get better employment opportunities.

J&K youth derive success from Mumkin scheme

SRINAGAR: The Government of Jammu and Kashmir said that the Mumkin scheme of Mission Youth has successfully engaged and channelized energy of the youth of Jammu and Kashmir through the systematic livelihood generation programme in the transport sector.

Union Territory Administration in partnership with Ashok Leyland has moved towards achieving the vision of the Prime Minister to provide sustainable livelihood to youth under the “MUMKIN” scheme for the Transport Sector.

With this partnership, the government aims to move towards the creation of a better socio-economic ecosystem, self-employment opportunities, and elimination of poverty in J&K.

As part of the “MUMKIN” initiative, the Lieutenant Governor distributed highly subsidized small commercial vehicles among the first batch of young beneficiaries from across the Union Territory to mark the beginning of the government's commitment towards

livelihood generation for youth.

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

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

Muzafar Wani of Ramban is thankful to the administration for providing him with a vehicle that helped him to secure a respectable livelihood that could fulfill the needs of his family.

Wani is satisfied with the earnings after owning a vehicle under Mumkin Scheme.

Similarly, the economic status of Riyaz Raqeeb of Srinagar was elevated after receiving a Mahindra Pickup Vehicle under the 'Mumkin' scheme.

Hatib Javaid of Shopian was working as a daily wage labourer and could hardly bear the expenses of his family with meager earning.

The awareness programme of the Mumkin scheme which he attended gave him a ray of hope for realizing his dream of owning a vehicle.



COVID FATALITY RATE DECLINES in Kashmir, despite new variants appearing, spreading rapidly

SRINAGAR: As per a research study titled 'Case Fatality Rate, Mortality Trends during Pandemic in Kashmir' published in 'Asian Journal of Medical Sciences' (AJMS), the researchers after undertaking an in-depth analysis of the subject came to a conclusion that the Covid Case Fatality Rate, in Kashmir declined with time despite new variants appearing and spreading rapidly.

The research on the topic was conducted by Tahir Ahmad Magray, Incharge Divisional Covid Control Room Kashmir (DCCRK); Dr Umar Nazir, Dr Rouf Hussain Rather, Dr Feroz Ahmad Wani all Medical Officers who worked at DCCRK to give an overview of the entire situation as a result of Covid-19 pandemic, which disturbed life cycle, unleashed fear, consumed millions of lives across the world and brought nations on knees by halting normal activities.

Although the pandemic is almost over and receding back in its severity, it merited a case study to evaluate and examine how the worst nightmare in the contemporary epoch acted and what happened during successive waves and multiple trends that were felt by people here in a geographically isolated region of Kashmir Division.

As Divisional Covid Control Room Kashmir was established and made functional with resourceful persons and experts for instant dissemination of relevant information to the administration for containment measures, the team stationed there also dedicated their energy and time to collect data and monitor the overall situation and came up with a research study.

What happened during the entire span of the Pandemic, Tahir Ahmad Magray, Dr Umar Nazir, Dr Rouf Hussain Rather, and Dr Feroz Ahmad Wani conducted a research study on Demographic and Mortality Trends across three COVID-19 waves in the Kashmir Division, which was published by Asian Journal of Medical Sciences (AJMS).

The study finds that the Case Fatality Rate declined with time despite new variants appearing which spread at a very fast rate; mortality remained higher in the elderly and in males in all three waves.

The study published by AJMS reveals that during the three waves, Kashmir Division witnessed 274307 COVID-19 cases and 2334 deaths. The trend of COVID-19 case incidence in the Kashmir division followed a pattern similar to India with two

exceptions.

First, the peak of all the waves in our division occurred approximately 12- 14 days later than the country. Second, there was relatively less burden of cases during the first wave corresponding to Kashmir's regional lockdown. The second wave had exponential growth of cases and the world's largest peak and an absolute number of cases.

The percentage of cases was higher (47% of the total cases) during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic which can be attributed to the fact that the dominant mutant strain (delta) was more transmissible, more virulent, and was escaping the immune system of our body.

"Simultaneously the lockdown measures were seen as less effective due to various socio-economic constraints among the masses which made them have complacency in adapting COVID-appropriate behavior during the second wave," researchers argue.

Lately, during the third wave, the percentage of cases again came down (26.2%) despite the highly transmissible mutant variant of the virus because the population was less susceptible this time as most of the people had been infected during the first two waves of the pandemic.

The researchers claim that an overall CFR of 0.85% was observed in our population with a maximum case fatality of 1.67% in the first wave followed by 0.79% in the second wave and only 0.13% in the third wave.

"We also found that the mortality from this COVID-19 pandemic was seen highest 64% (1493) in the age group 60 years and above, followed by 30.6% (715) in the age group of 41-60 years, 4.8% (113) in the age group of 21-40 years and only 0.6% (13) occurred in the age group of 0-20 years," researchers study says.

The entire paper can be accessed for study online at this link <https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/AJMS/issue/view/2777> published on October 01, 2022.

The previously same group of experts published a paper on "Comparison of rapid antigen testing and RT-PCR in the diagnosis of COVID-19 in Kashmir division", which was published by the International Journal of Advances in Medicine which can be accessed via <https://www.ijmedicine.com/index.php/ijam/article/view/3406>.



Govt working on multi-pronged strategy for revival, holistic dev of Sericulture sector across J&K

SRINAGAR: J&K Government is working on a multipronged strategy for the revival and holistic development of the Sericulture sector across Jammu and Kashmir.

The futuristic roadmap for holistic growth of agriculture and allied sectors will help in ensuring product quality as well as quantity with the boost in global demand. J&K government is working on area expansion under mulberry plantations to increase leaf availability for rearers. The Forest Department and Sericulture Department are working jointly for achieving J&K's green mission and creating avenues of market infrastructures to provide a platform and facilitate the cocoon growers in selling their produce in their vicinity.

Recently at an event, Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha urged all associated with the silk industry to come out of the past and look to the future. "Our prime objective is to make the lives of farmers associated with this dream fabric better and to ensure uniqueness, beauty, and ingenuity, which are the hallmark of J&K's crafts, dominate the global market," the LG said.

Sinha said that under the guidance of Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, the Government endeavours to provide training, technology inputs, IT tools, and other infrastructure support required for the transformation of sericulture.

The Government is taking various measures for making this sector viable. There is a need to safeguard skills handed down from generation to generation and make this sector financially more attractive.

The Government is giving importance to the adoption of the latest technological advancements in silk to reduce the dependence on imported silk. One of the three essential centres in the country for Research and Development, Training, Transfer of Technology, and IT Intervention has been set up at Kashmir's Pampore.

CSB IS PROMOTING BIVOLTINE PRODUCTION PROGRAM EXTENDING TECHNICAL SUPPORT THROUGH 6 CLUSTERS (INCLUDING 2 MEGA CLUSTERS), besides extending state of the art of soil testing facilities. Due to the continuous efforts of the Institute and technology intervention, the average yield of bivoltine cocoons has been enhanced significantly.

To cater to the research, training and extension needs of Jammu & Kashmir, Central Silk Board (CSB) has set up the Central Sericultural Research and Training Institute (CSR&TI) at Pampore, to revive earlier activities of the CSB in J&K. The institute is actively involved in Research & Development and human resource development through its network of two Regional Sericulture Research Stations (RSRS) and 8 Research Extension Centers, of which one RSRS at Jammu, two RECs at Barnoti and Lamberi are functioning. Besides, P4 Basic Seed Farm (BSF) Manasbal in J&K is catering to R&D and extension needs.

High yielding silkworm hybrids like Dun 17 x Dun 18, Dun 6 x Dun22, SH6 x NB4D2, SOH1 and improved mulberry varieties like S140, S146 and PPR1 have been developed by CSR&TI, Pampore to increase the farmers' income through sericulture.

CSB is promoting bivoltine production program extending technical support through 6 clusters (including 2 mega clusters), besides extending state of the art of soil testing facilities. Due to the continuous efforts of the Institute and technology intervention, the average yield of bivoltine cocoons has been enhanced significantly.

Notably, the Silk Samagra Yojana launched in 2017-18 under the guidance of the PM has proved to be a game-changer in making sericulture sustainable by supporting the country's as well as J&K's silk industry in an integrated manner. Jammu and Kashmir administration has increased the revolving fund from Rs 70 lakh to Rs 3.50 crore. In Silk Samagra Phase-I, about 900 silkworm rearers directly benefited and about 618 rearing houses were also established. Central Silk Board has allocated Rs 35 crore for J&K under Silk Samagra Phase-II benefitting around 27,000 families involved in sericulture across the UT.

J&K takes lead in achieving Amrit Sarovar Mission targets

1953 Amrit Sarovars completed across UT, ranks 2nd in country in implementation of Mission

SRINAGAR: J&K has not only achieved the milestone of being first to establish at least 75 Amrit Sarovars in each of its districts as per the aspirations of the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi but also achieved more than the target set for two years.

As per the mission guidelines, J&K had to complete 300 Amrit Sarovars before August 15th, 2022, and 1500 Amrit Sarovars by August 15th, 2023. However, the UT completed 1490 Amrit Sarovars by the 15th of August this year and hoisted National Flags over them on the occasion of Independence Day.

According to official details, the UT has completed the work on 1953 Amrit Sarovars and figures at 2nd rank in terms of completion of Amrit Sarovars featuring just after the much bigger state of Uttar Pradesh.

The UT of J&K had started implementing the scheme in a mission mode and a UT-level committee under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary with the participation of departments like Forest, Culture, Revenue, and Jal Shakti was constituted for apex-level monitoring and implementation of the scheme.

The UT is endeavouring to create and beautify more Amrit Sarovars and the Finance Department has released Rs 50 crore for the rejuvenation/creation of these Amrit Sarovars.

Notably, the Mission Amrit Sarovar was launched by



Prime Minister on National Panchayati Raj Day on the 24th of April this year in Palli Gram Panchayat in District Samba of J&K and at the national level, Palli Panchayat had taken a lead by rejuvenating the existing pond (Sarovar) in the village to coincide with the visit of the Prime Minister on April 24, 2022.

Each of these Amrit Sarovar have an area of one acre with a water holding capacity of 10,000 cubic meters.

As per official details, Amrit Sarovar Mission across the country has been launched with a whole-of-government approach in which 6 ministries or Departments like the Department of Rural Development, Department of Land resources, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Department of Water Resources, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate changes will be the partners. Apart from these departments, Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Application and Geo-informatics (BISAG-N) has been engaged as a Technical Partner for the Mission.

The Mission works through the States or UTs and districts, refocusing on various schemes such as Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, XV Finance Commission Grants, PMKSY sub-schemes such as Watershed Development Component, Har Khet Ko Pani besides States or UTs' own schemes.

The Mission also encourages mobilisation of citizen and non-govt resources for supplementing these efforts. People's participation in the Mission is the focal point. Local freedom fighters, their family members, martyrs' family members, Padma awardees, and citizens of the local area wherein an Amrit Sarovar is to be constructed were engaged at all stages.

All the Amrit Sarovars were completed in a planned manner with the use of technology at every stage of the execution. Water structure Users' Associations were also formed and imparted required training for better development of the Amrit Sarovars.

Youth of Baramulla taking up fish farming to defy unemployment

BARAMULLA: The youth of Baramulla have defied all odds by carving a niche for themselves by setting up fish farming units to earn for themselves and create jobs for others.

Baramulla has been bestowed with famous water bodies having great potential for fisheries. Angling and fish farming is fast emerging as a potential sector for providing a vocation for the rural youth.

The number of fish farmers in the private sector have increased manifold with hundreds of people getting attracted to this trade in Baramulla District.

Giving an insight into this new attraction being explored by the local youth to generate income and employment, the Director Fisheries, Irshad Ahmad Shah said that the government has strengthened the fisheries sector to make it a useful instrument of economic growth, especially in district Baramulla.

He said a number of developmental and welfare schemes have been launched for providing assistance to rural unemployed youth for taking up fish culture. Fish farming especially trout with improvised technology applications is proving to be a bulging economic indicator besides supplementing protein in the diet.

The fisheries department is extending technical know-how in this regard so that they can produce quality products and get remunerative prices and the fish growers all over the district are employing this latest technical knowledge in fish culture to boom production.

He said the experts interact with the fish growers regularly to boost fish farming in the district. "During last year the department under the Centrally sponsored schemes (CSS)/Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampadha Yojna (PMMSY) has constructed 18 No's of Trout Units, 01 No of Carp Unit and 01 No of Biofloc Unit in the District," said the Director.

Under Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampadha Yojna (PMMSY), the department provides a subsidy of Rs 2.20 lacs for the construction of the Trout Unit for the general category, and for women/ST/SC category the subsidy component is 3.30 lacs for the establishment of Trout Unit.

For the establishment of the Carp pond the department under Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampadha Yojna (PMMSY) is providing a subsidy component of 0.74 lacs and for the women/ST/SC category, the subsidy component is 1.10 lacs.



Rs 10,000 Cr worth investment projects under execution in J&K

DCs to be incentivized for attracting new investments, creating jobs

Srinagar: Chief Secretary Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta today took a detailed review of the Industries & Commerce department besides taking stock of the investments being made here in the UT of J&K.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary, Industries & Commerce; Directors of Industries, Jammu/Kashmir; Directors of Handloom & Handicrafts, Jammu/Kashmir; MD SIDCO & SICOP, MD JKTPO and many other concerned officers.

While taking stock of the investment proposals made through the single window clearance system the Chief Secretary was apprised that out of the investment proposals totalling more than Rs 60,000 crore, industrial units worth around Rs 10,000 crore are already under different phases of execution here in the UT, an official press release informed.

Elaborating it was given out that after allotment of land in favour of these unit holders they had in turn deposited a sum of Rs 217 cr into the government exchequer as their lease dues.

Dr Mehta impressed upon the officers to strictly adhere to the single window system and timelines to ensure that industrial units get established smoothly and creates employment opportunities for our youth besides strengthening the economy.

The Chief Secretary emphasized that the remaining reform points out of 352 recommended by BARP for industrial development should be implemented within this month.

Dr Mehta further said that the administration would incentivize the good work put up by the Deputy Commissioners in attracting new investments in their districts. He further stated that all DCs would be evaluated on a few parameters of creating an enabling environment for investments.

The Chief Secretary also emphasized on making the Kashmir Haat and Jammu Haat vibrant trade centres. He asked the concerned Directors to take measures to turn them into business hubs round the year. He also stated that Rural Haats should be established at Panchayat level with upscaling at block and district level.

The meeting was informed that more than 3,300 applications has been approved by HLLAC with Letter of Intent (LoI) issued in favour of 1,879 applicants and lease deeds executed by 260 applicants. It was also made out that in 111 industrial estates 9,869 Kanals of land has so far been allotted to the prospective unit holders.

Regarding new estates it was said that 37 DPRs had been prepared by SIDCO and SICOP worth more than Rs 2,200 crore besides receiving applications for two private estates also. The meeting also discussed the dozens of proposals received by the department for establishing health care projects in the two medi-cities of J&K.

The meeting also deliberated upon the progress made on investments made by foreign companies in the UT. It had detailed discussion on various proposals made by these companies after signing of MoU with the UT administration. These include Dubai based businesses like EMAAR Group, Noon.com, Al Maya Group, GL Employment, MATU Investments and others.



Govt realizing vision of making J&K a powerhouse of sporting talent

Srinagar: The growing sports culture in J&K is reflected in the remarkable revolution happening across the Union Territory in different sports disciplines, said a government official.

In the last three years, the government has ensured unprecedented progress in the establishment of world-class infrastructure, career progression as well as future of the players. The new policies and initiatives of the government has established an enabling environment for sportspersons which was non-existent for the last 70 years.

Earlier, merely two to three lakh youth used to get opportunities for participation in sports every year, but J&K Government 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 the 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 also 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.

Sports give a new identity to the youth and the Sports Council and the UT administration are ensuring that every player gets an opportunity to play with better infrastructure and earn the identity of a champion.

My Youth My Pride' in 22 disciplines in the Kash-

mir division and 18 in the Jammu division programme turned out to be a solid forum for sportspersons to showcase their talent. It has inculcated a winner's instinct among youth and kindled hopes of an ascent in a sporting performance in national and international games.

Notably, the J&K Sports Council has successfully completed many key infrastructure projects which are playing an essential role in training the youth in different sports. J&K UT has regained confidence and created an equitable and inclusive sports and recreation culture with modern infrastructure and training which is comparable to the best in the country.

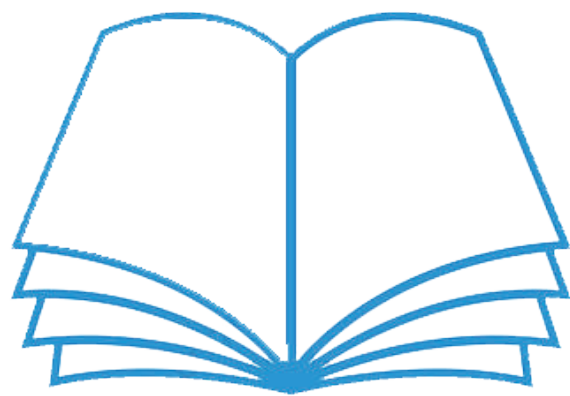
With the help of veteran sportspersons, schools, and coaches, the Sports Council is working to ensure the young generation gets to play a variety of sports and everyone has the opportunity to develop a strong skill-set.

It is important to note that the new sports policy is aimed at promoting sports in UT by developing sports infrastructure and incentivizing sportspersons to excel in their respective games. The policy incorporates various annual awards like an award for excellence in sports for 10 sportspeople, J&K Khel Protsahana Award for sports association, two veterans/experienced sportspersons/organizers or referees, Parshuram Award for five best coaches in different disciplines.

The sports policy announces special cash awards to the winners in the Olympics, Asian Games, and Commonwealth Games among other tournaments in the range of Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1 crore. Further, the winners in all recognized national competitions and National School Games in various sports disciplines will be granted specified scholarships.

Special emphasis has also been laid to meet the sporting needs of the specially-abled sportspersons through sufficient infrastructure and training facilities.

Remarkably, the UT Government is making dedicated efforts to develop sports infrastructure and engage more youth in sports activities here, to realize the vision of making J&K- a powerhouse of sporting talent.



JKPI Publications

CLIMATE CHANGE – CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTUS OF KASHMIR APPLE INDUSTRY



ZAHOOR AHMAD DAR

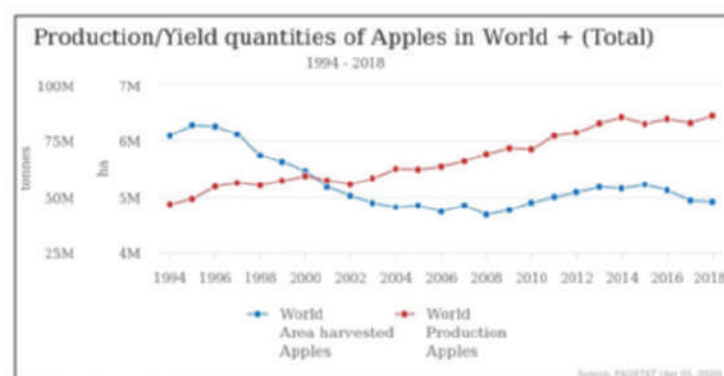
The possibility of having no apple trees might have deprived the world of Newton's laws of gravitation or Steve Jobs' Apple Company. Who says the apple is just a fruit, it represents a paradigm shift in scientific thinking. This article is not going to excavate the technological or revolutionary history associated with apples rather this article is an attempt to assess the impact of climate change on the apple industry in Kashmir from an economic and livelihood perspective.

Climate change, a universal phenomenon, is a major concern for the food and nutritional security of the growing population, expected to be 9.5 billion by the end of 2050. Climate change as a whole is a term described as a shift in worldwide weather phenomena linked with an increase in global average temperatures, which may be due to external forcing or natural internal processes, or to the anthropogenic changes in the composition of the atmosphere or in land use.

With climate change already showing up its cataclysmic face no sector of the economy will be spared. Apple industry is one such sector in Kashmir that is facing the toughest challenges of extreme variations in weather, resulting in low productivity and profitability.

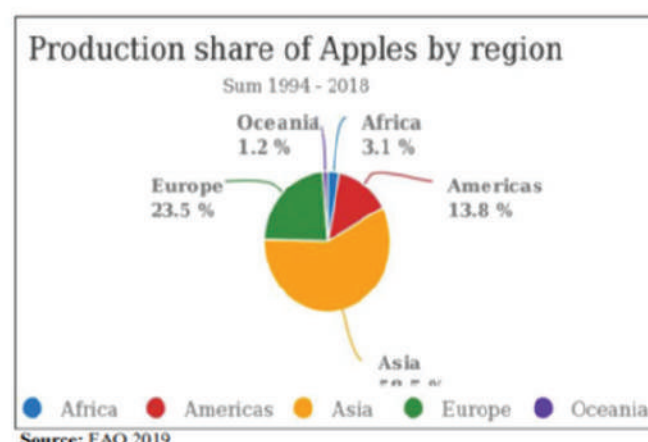
IMMINENT CHALLENGES

The leading continents/countries for apple production are presented in Fig 1. Asia ranks number one in terms of the production of apples and China and India lead in production, yield, and area (fig 1). The



Source: FAO, 2019

Fig 1: Production and Yield of Apples in world



Source: FAO 2019

Fig 2: Production share of Apples by region

production share of some regions is shown in Fig 2.

Almost 80% of India's apples are grown in Kashmir but due to the early snowfalls in the valley farmers lose half their crops. Orchards in the Kashmir valley, which is encircled by the Pir Panjal and Greater Himalaya mountains, are predicted to become unsustainable in the next few years as the climate crisis affects crop output. Weather patterns in the region have gradually changed over the past twenty years, and they have worsened in the last five.

Unusual pattern of rainfall: According to the meteorological department of Jammu and Kashmir between March 1 and April 21, 2022, Kashmir received only 43 millimeter (mm) of rainfall against the average normal precipitation of 209 mm, indicating a deficiency of around 80%, which led to the drought-like situation. The region's

apple and other crops thrive on the rains at this time. In the first five months of 2022, J&K only received 345 mm of rainfall when it should have received an average normal rainfall of 559 mm. This indicates a deficiency of around 40%.

Unusual snowfall patterns: A recent study claims that climate change in the valley reveals that early summer winds were causing great damage to flowering fruit trees. A similar study finds that winter weather patterns have changed significantly, with recent snowfalls of less than one meter compared with more than two meters in previous years. Kashmir Valley's Apple Orchards are facing adverse impacts of climate change. The valley has witnessed early snowfall due to which farmers have lost around 40% of their crops every year. The Kashmir valley experienced its first snowfall of the year in October 2021. The bulk of farmers hadn't finished harvesting their crops at that time. According to researchers, 4 to 40% of the apple orchards and other produce were devastated.

A recent study portrays an abysmal picture of the apple industry. Research conducted by Irfan Rashid and others suggests that the apple orchards of the valley might not sustain if these climatic conditions prevail. Experts have plotted the snowfall distribution and snow depths during the snowstorm events in November 2018 and November 2019 by combining remotely sensed data and field observations. Using ERA-5 re-analysis climate datasets to investigate the causes of these erratic snowfall events points to an early arrival of Western Disturbances (WD) to the area, the paper claims. Satellite data analysis reveals that the apple orchards cover roughly 9.8% (1329 km²) of the entire surface of Kashmir Valley, out of which 32.6% were mild to severely damaged by snow.

ECONOMIC LOSS

Apple cultivation is the mainstay of Kashmir's economy (along with tourism and handicrafts) with revenue of ₹ 1,200 crore a year, as per the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India. Horticulture contributes over 8% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Union territory.

Apple cultivation in India is dominated by Kashmir, which produces 78% of India's total annual output of around 25-26 lakh metric tonnes (MT). The apple industry, which employs 3.5 million people and contributes 10% to Kashmir's GDP, is the state's largest employer, generating 400 man-days of labour annually per hectare.

From employment generation to being one of the biggest sources of livelihood in Kashmir, the apple industry plays a quintessential role in Kashmir's economy. The area under apple cultivation has increased from 46,190 hectares to 1332,810 hectares between 1974 and 2009. However, production is currently in danger due to the region's unusual storms, rain, and snowfall.

The areas in South Kashmir, with an estimated 264 km² of damaged land, suffered the most from the unexpected snowfall, followed by North Kashmir (151 km²) and Central Kashmir (18 km²). Official data by Kashmir's department of horticulture says, 5bn rupees were lost from harvests in 2018. This jumped to 22.5 billion rupees in 2019, the year Kashmir saw the most snowfall in 60

years. According to one of the studies, large economic losses related to the early arrival of Western Disturbances effectively brought the horticulture industry to a standstill in 2018 and 2019. The table underneath shows the apple production for 2018-19 and 2019-20.

Apple production for years 2018-19 and 2019-20

Year	Production (in Mts.)
1. 2019-20	147130
2. 2018-19	1851723

Source: Directorate of Horticulture, Kashmir

ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION: ITALIAN SPECIES AS ALTERNATIVE

The introduction of high-density Italian apple species has been proposed as a remedy for apple cultivation under the current climate challenge. In order to avoid the damage caused by an early snowfall, Kashmiri apple growers can now harvest the fruit in August rather than having to wait until October or November, thanks to the Italian high-density apple nursery.

In light of these findings, the state administration has been encouraging high-density plants. The government has expanded subsidies and programmes to aid the Italian nursery. The high-density nursery is nimble and begins bearing fruit in the second year of the plantation, whereas a standard apple tree could start bearing fruit after at least ten years. With only a few feet between each plant, plantations occur in great density, increasing the density of yield. The apples are juicier than typical apples and have a deep crimson color. According to researchers, switching to high-density Italian could save the sector.

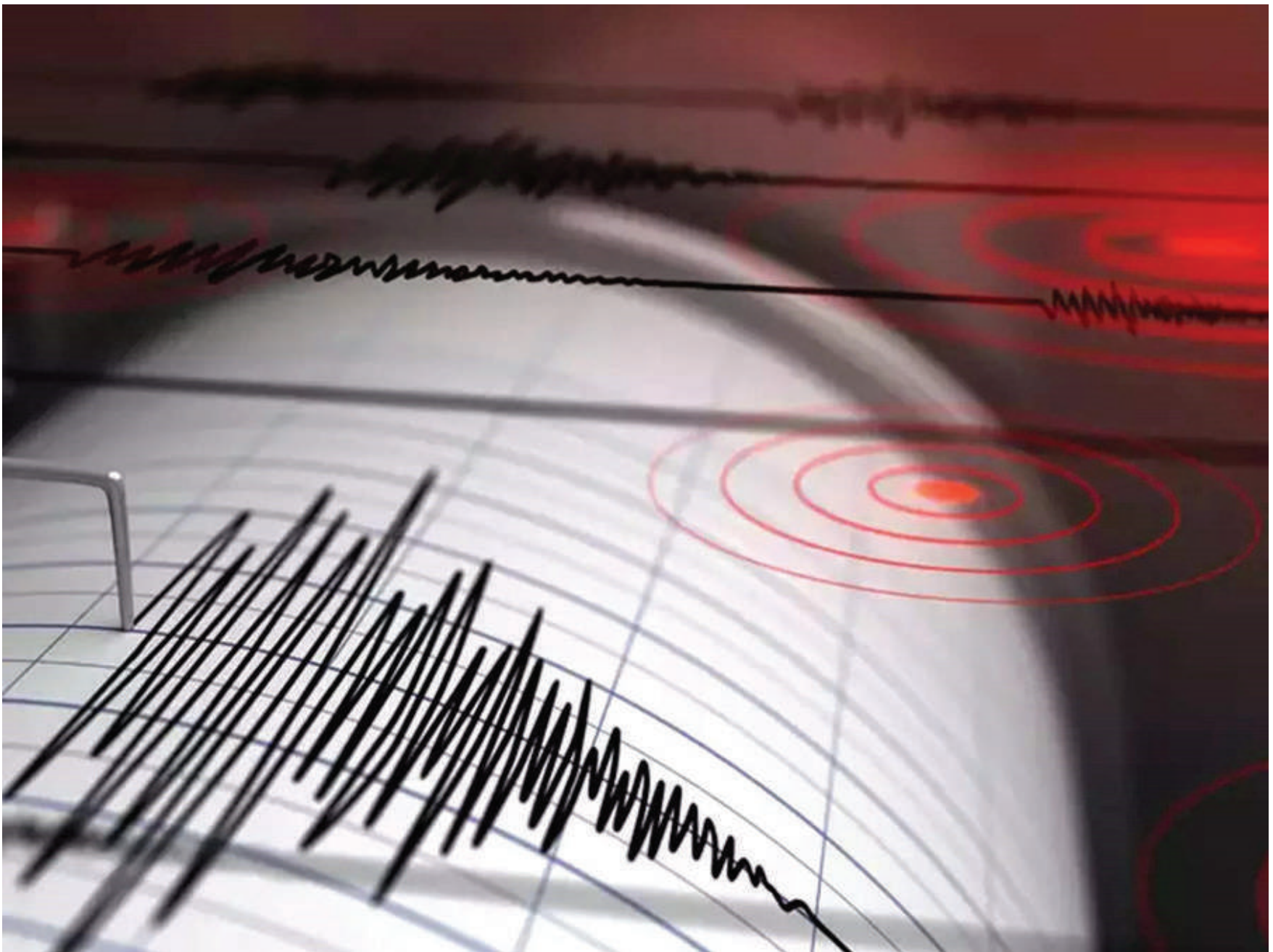
The use of drip irrigation, which aids in localized water distribution and directs water along constrained plant rows, is another crucial aspect of Italian orchards. The new orchard techniques, according to experts, have completely changed the game in terms of water conservation. The construction of the contemporary orchard, with its roof and irrigation system, does need some investment, but this can be offset by government incentives.

CONCLUSION

In India, apple is grown in Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Arunachal Pradesh, and these regions no longer remain unaffected by climate change. There is a dire need to develop adaptive strategies and look for climate-resilient apple cultivars. In this connection, apple cultivation is currently undergoing a significant shift from traditional to high-density, which involves an altogether different way of modern farming. The government has been promoting subsidy schemes to encourage farmers to buy and market new varieties. Nonetheless, eradicating the climate catastrophe from its source is more crucial and effective. Reliable weather forecasting technologies must be developed in order to overcome climate uncertainties.



How prepared is Kashmir Valley for high-intensity earthquakes?



ADEELA HAMEED

Earth scientists have cautioned against the possibility of an earthquake on a 100 kms stretch from Jammu – Pathankot and underneath to Kishtwar. “The impact of the possible earthquake cannot be changed although the scientists were not sure when it would happen. Asking the people not to panic but to construct resilience structures as per the prescribed codes,” the experts said.

“We cannot tell when such an earthquake will happen, but we can start to prepare for it. The vulnerability of cities, people, and property to such earthquakes can be reduced and requires the collaboration and participation of scientists, administrators, policymakers, and the public,” they said

The Kashmir Valley lies in Seismic Zone V, which relates to a Very High-Risk Area, as far as the intensity and magnitude of earthquakes are considered. Though the origin may vary, from Afghanistan to Kashmir Himalayan region, the damage it brings forth involves all areas surrounding the epicenter (the point of origin of an earthquake).

Kashmir is prone to earthquakes because the fault line – an area along two plate boundaries that continuously move against each other – it harbors is agitated. Being the region along which this line passes makes the Valley more vulnerable to great intensity and high magnitude earthquakes, although incidents of smaller types also occur intermittently.

Japan is prone to different types of earthquakes, given its proximity to the Ring of Fire and the fact that it houses an active volcano, Fujiyama. The San Andreas Fault in California, USA, is another very high-risk zone because of tectonic plates (plates on which the Earth’s crust rests) continually sliding over each other. Similarly, Kashmir rests between the smaller Indian plate and the larger Eurasian plate that is also persistently in motion. It was because of the collision of these plates that the Himalayas were formed. And now with each movement, these great mountain ranges are increasing in height, although at the same time devastation ensues in the low-lying areas, such as our valleys.

HISTORY OF EARTHQUAKES IN THE VALLEY

Though very less information is available about the number and type of earthquakes that shook our Valley before the 1800s, the development of technology and rigorous research allowed us to efficiently know about episodes that happened after. If Persian records are to be believed, the earthquake of 1555 was responsible for a complete geographic exchange of two villages along the river Veshaw. When the ground shook, the villages of Hussainabad and Hassanabad, located along the banks of this river, interchanged their places. The most disastrous event in the 19th century took

place in 1885. With its epicenter at Baramulla, this natural calamity is believed to wipe out about 67% of the total population of the region. About 3600 deaths were reported. The neighboring district of Srinagar was also affected.

Although since then numerous occurrences of earthquakes were experienced, both of high and low magnitude, in terms of lives lost and damage caused, the earthquake that shook the Valley in October 2005 afflicted people the most. More than 76,000 lives were lost, from Muzaffarabad in PoK to the erstwhile state of J&K. The earthquake recorded 7.6 on the Richter scale. Millions were left homeless, structures were leveled to the ground, and the region was completely cut-off from the world. Hopelessness and misery were dispensed to the whole region in a matter of seconds. Even now, frequent earthquakes of low intensity are continually striking the region. And people are unaware of what these might lead to. Thus, disaster preparedness is the need of the hour.

CAN WE PREDICT EARTHQUAKES?

There are no proper means to predict earthquakes at present even though it is possible to know the magnitude and intensity with which the earthquake can strike a region with stressed fault lines. Some scientists have developed seismographs that determine the oncoming earthquake a minute to 30 seconds before impact. However, this time interval is insignificant for alerting the population that is to be potentially affected. This technique can, on the other hand, be utilized for those industries or plants which harbour toxic or nuclear raw material. These few seconds can be utilized for disengaging machinery to render the plant inactive. Nevertheless, an earthquake of greater magnitude can, at any rate, cause devastation to the entire complex. Although, it is possible to know the type of earthquake and associated damage depending on the type of boundary, a region's proximity to water bodies, the presence of nuclear plants nearby, and integrity as well as elevation of structures constructed in a region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a need for a paradigm shift to address disaster management from a relief centric to a multidimensional, preparedness-oriented approach. Most disaster management plans have focused on the post-disaster period of rescue, rehabilitation, and reconstruction (RRR). As the probability of earthquakes occurring in Kashmir valley is high, the authorities need to revise guidelines and strategies, both at the national as well as state levels, to include the prevention of colossal damage at the onset of disaster (mitigation) rather than over-emphasizing rehabilitation of the affected after it strikes.

For the effectiveness of disaster preparedness, mitigation, recovery, and response, the need of the hour is to implement the following measures on a priority basis:

Safety audit of buildings, in terms of, resilience to the impending hazards and requirement of retrofitting of critical infrastructure.

Strictly adhere to existing and state-of-the-art building codes, and the constitution of teams for review and enforcement of these codes for government, semi-government, corporation, and private residential buildings completed or under construction in urban and rural areas. Compilation of details of existing contingency plans to deal with disaster and emergency situations.

Capacity building of stakeholders, service providers, and first and second-line incident respondents with backup mechanisms under SDMA and NDMA.

Firming up details of search and rescue equipment required at the village, tehsil, district, and state level for disaster mitigation measures.

Firming up district disaster mitigation management plans for critical departments and constructing the multi-layered incident response teams backed up by emergency response centers for each district and department.

Introduction of disaster management as a subject at school, college, and university levels, and conducting mass awareness programs at block, district, and state levels.



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Alignment of the building codes in accordance with the provisions of the Disaster Management Act, Sendai Framework, and state plan.

To ensure the effective implementation of the Sendai Framework, monitoring indicators, and infrastructure development schemes of the NDMA at the state and district levels.

More geological and geotechnical investigations are to be carried out to document the active, near-source seismogenic structure which would help in formulating safer design decisions.

Mainstreaming the Disaster Risk Reduction in development programs through training activities, coordinating mock exercises, and training concerned officials for capacity building for better preparedness and effective response measures. Hospitals, health centers, fire stations along with the police are to be prepared. Holding safety drills to be adept in any situation.

Community contingency strategies are prepared by people themselves by identifying their vulnerabilities and preparing action plans to equip themselves for future disasters.

Creation of awareness about Disaster Risk Management by offering awareness and information campaigns at the community level, which in the long run will help in developing disaster-resilient societies.

Although the NDMA act of 2005 lays guidelines for the establishment of Disaster Management Authorities at the national, state, and district levels, no ground evaluation of such authorities is present in the Kashmir region. The State Disaster Management Authority was established in Jammu and Kashmir way back in 2005 and J&K State Disaster Management Policy was ordained in 2011, yet no practical measures have been implemented so far. The authority has acted as a watchdog for natural catastrophes for rescue rather than mitigation and preparedness.

An efficient disaster management and mitigation scheme can only develop through the experiences of all stakeholders participating in the mitigation and preparedness process, not just the government. Although natural calamities cannot be stopped proper strategies and mitigation measures would substantially decrease the level of hazard and damage. So when disaster strikes, all systems would already be properly placed. Earthquakes are chronic to the Valley, as time and again have been researched and experienced. The only preparation for the disaster can ensure our relative safety.

Fixing Security in Jammu and Kashmir



DANISH IQBAL

The focus of the political and security functionaries comes to the fore, every time a major security lapse happens in Jammu and Kashmir, and soon as the news hoopla dies down, so does the debate. In the last three decades, successive governments have tried to build an exhaustive security architecture that would contain the elements antithetical to peace but have failed to deliver any substantial results. And one of the chief reasons, for failing to build a security network, is that these governments viewed security as a component of their political dividend and not just purely a professional job free from electoral ramifications. Thousands of lives were snuffed out, yet those were just the stats only important in the calculus of their electoral victories. People's sorrow over the decades and the severe brevity with which it was articulated in some of the international bestsellers did not motivate the erstwhile rulers of Jammu and Kashmir to genuinely put an end to the violence and instead they chose to glorify violent discourses so the territory of the ruling class remains unchallenged. A manageable degree of violence was allowed to prevail so that they could blackmail their masters in New Delhi and in the absence of their rule, Kashmir could mean a serious assault on the sovereignty of India. They succeeded in their bidding in New Delhi to not disturb the status quo and their demands were repeatedly agreed upon. Back home in Kashmir, they would create a sustained campaign to chide the idea of India and motivate an innocent gullible Kashmiri that in the absence of their government Kashmir will go into total control of India. The staid academic conferences, held in various parts of the world, over the tragedy of Kashmir, were blatantly dusted off as a matter too trivial to debate. This phenomenon of the politics of blackmail delivered a complex economic and political structure that served only the minuscule elite of the state. The politics thrived in the deep chasm that prevailed between New Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir. This was the structural flaw in the security policy of the erstwhile state and did not leave any scope for improvement in the components that came afterward. The era finally drew to a close three years ago.

Three years after the groundbreaking changes in Jammu and Kashmir, peace has not returned. Although, an occasional calm does appear but for a spell too brief to be called normal. In a year, a dozen people belonging to the minority community, two dozen elected representatives were killed, and most recently a Director General rank official of the Jammu and Kashmir police was mercilessly murdered, ironically at a time when the Union Home Minister was at a place in Jammu not far from the house where the ghastly crime was commissioned. As I write this piece, another Kashmiri Pandith has been gunned down while two nonlocal laborers were blasted while they were sleeping in a far-off village called Harmain in the district Shopian, south of Srinagar. These incidents have been occurring for decades and are highly unlikely to disappear in the near future. In the aftermath of such incidents, the government conveniently revamps its security policy but remains always entrenched within the web of complex rule-based procedural structure as reflected from the ground affairs. This is exactly where the new government carrying a new attitude in its demeanor is almost if not fully walking the same road as the earlier governments. Therefore, to truly revamp the security in Jammu and Kashmir, New Delhi needs to take a complete break from the traditional approaches and bring to the fore a policy that will accommodate the multiplicity of realities of life in Kashmir. The most dominant reality that stares at you is that security is intricately linked to politics and any attempt to segregate it from politics has often translated into a public outburst as has repeatedly happened in the absence of sincere political engagement. The overarching problem of identity crises – one that is an old problem and would continue to be at the root of political and security concerns. To bring it to the proper assessment, the government in New Delhi needs to employ a range of professionals – ranging from political scientists to sociologists, from historians to psychologists and facilitate the evolution of an eclectic security model that will address the complex aspects of the problem in Kashmir. The traditional approach of dealing with Jammu and Kashmir must therefore immediately stop – the approach to conveniently label the anxieties of people as 'law and order' and leaving the solution to naïve thirty-year-old Indian Police Service officers amounts to belittling the complexity of Jammu and Kashmir and committing travesty with the emotions and energies of the people who to a large extent have shown an eagerness to work for the peace, progress, and development of India. In hard words and meaning no disrespect to the institution of the Indian Police Service – outsourcing security entirely to a group of young Indian Police Service officers who have been just out of college from some far-off city in the country and giving them the responsibility of managing complex districts of Kashmir is the fallacy of interpretation and shallowness of vision on part of the top security brass in New Delhi

who advises the Prime Minister on Kashmir. It would be also expecting too much from a thirty-year-old new boy in the service to understand the layers of security history that often lie beneath the manifestation of killing. On the contrary, an extensive security grid needs to be built not necessarily to be manifested in terms of hard power but could be created in the most subtle designs. In my opinion, the local police officers who come from the state police service should be taken into confidence and given autonomy in advising on the situation. In the universities, colleges, and schools, a vast number of the population could be streamlined into a thought process that might not be strictly within the government-defined contours but could be afforded by the flexibility and the vastness of the Indian constitution. For such an exercise, the government needs to bring professors with world-class education back to the universities and colleges of Kashmir who are willing to work in the national interest. New Delhi can use its global economic clout and its rising start-up boom to usher the youth of Jammu and Kashmir into upward economic mobility. It's always in the prevalence of governance paralysis that the frustration of youth has translated their concerns into entering the extra-constitutional territories. This should however in no way suggest that economics should cover the political sentiment underlying at the core of Kashmiri youth. This is rather to suggest that the vast possibilities within the national mainstream could afford to engage with the sentiment and deliver on the dream that the majority of youth in Kashmir envision for their homeland. A large number of youth have to be convinced that the constituents of their envisioned political identity can be accommodated in the politics that could be exhibited within the constitution of India. Those possibilities need to be campaigned extensively about by the youth leaders who can strongly, brilliantly, and convincingly speak and not just the mediocre self-proclaimed spokespersons who do more damage to the idea of India in Kashmir than any good.

It's also time for the Government of India to seriously take into consideration the various influential lobbies which have come up in clusters across the various cities of the United States to whip up anger amongst the innocent Kashmiri youth against India. These lobbies comprising mostly professors and students regularly appear in the different forms of media to concoct the facts out of their contexts so that the content sells across the elite news websites and paves the way for their career growth. What implication their work has in Srinagar is something they are least bothered about. For them, Kashmir is a two-month summer trip while the revolution that they glorify on social and print media has to be pursued by the poor man's son. The killings, the mourning, the pain, the PSAs, the UAPAs, and a long list of pathos that come with the harsher side of 'revolution' have to be exclusively reserved for the poor children of the valley who could not afford to take the plane to foreign lands. Also for them, security does not matter, governance does not matter and the everyday grievances of life are too small to be addressed by them. According to their whims and wishes, the government in Srinagar should give up and leave Kashmir in flames so that they would have merry fun in their fancy articles and academic conferences. New Delhi pays a heavy cost on its internal security in lieu of a desire to appear liberal to the authorities in the United States. Lately, there has been a temptation to take recourse into the operational means to stop the internal security fallout as a result of this foreign incitement. But again that would be a wrong decision. The way forward is to counter the narrative with another narrative. And the best way for pursuing it would open up space in top Indian Universities for those who can exhibit intellectual appropriation of the national agenda. The agenda of peace, progress, and security. Intervening in the problem with a security mindset often does more damage to the image of India internationally than solving any problem.

The government in Srinagar needs to build close coordination between the security and other departments so that the synergy taps into the everyday aspirations of the youth. The system needs to be in a perceptive, razor-sharp state so that the perceived heroism hitherto seen in violence changes into nation building exercise. The gradual process would eventually wipe out the seeds of violent tendencies and start stigmatizing the concept of violence. Eventually, there will be a steep fall in the social sanctity

that society has conventionally accorded to violence. This way a natural, purely organic onslaught against the violence would begin whose shelf life would last into the foreseeable future, and Jammu and Kashmir would have normalcy worth the name.

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Evolution of India-Israel Relations: From Ancient Times till Present



RAHUL WANKHEDE

India and Israel share a deep and multi-dimensional relationship that dates back to around 2000 BC as was proven by the Tel Megiddo excavations that shed light on Indian trade relations with areas around the Mediterranean. Geographical analysis suggests that the authors of the Old Testament knew about India, where the trade of animals such as monkeys and peacocks existed. Judaism was one of the first foreign religions to arrive in India in recorded history and Indian Jews are a religious minority, but unlike many parts of the world, have historically lived in India without a single instance of persecution.

While some allegedly arrived during the time of the Kingdom of Judah others are seen by some as descendants of Israel's Ten Lost Tribes. According to Chaim Menachem Rabin, the first recorded contact between the two civilizations was during the reign of King Solomon, in the 10th century BCE. Since then, Jewish emigrants have settled in various parts of India over many centuries: those in Kochi, trace their origin back to the time of King Solomon and are called Cochini Jews; Paradesi Jews migrated to Kochi during the 15th and 16th centuries following the expulsion of Jews from Spain.

The trade relations between both cultures can be traced back to 1,000 BCE and even earlier to the times of the Babylonian and Sindhu-Saraswati civilizations. Linguistic similarities between the Semitic and Indo-Aryan languages also point toward a long history of contact. Judea was a transit route in the trade between the Roman Empire and India during the Roman rule in Judea as is known from the fact that expensive garments in the Temple in Jerusalem were imported from India via Alexandria.

In medieval times the Persian Empire ruled the territories from the Mediterranean to the Indus, thereby forging close links

between the two nations. The medieval era saw both these cultures being ruled by Islamic rulers (Afghans and Mughals in India, with Ottoman Turks in West Asia), which was then followed by a considerable period of colonial rule under the British Empire. Direct bilateral engagements began between the two only after the achievement of political independence and the establishment of both nations as a State.

Non-Reciprocal Phase (1948–1992)

Pre-partition politics saw the movement to support Khilafat by Gandhiji which was seen as instrumental in mobilizing the Indian Muslims for the Indian freedom struggle. Naturally, the attitude towards the Turkish empire and Palestinians got shaped by these beliefs which continued even after Indian independence. India got formal independence on 15th August 1947 and Israel got it on 4 May 1948, following World War II, only after difficult struggles against British colonial rule amidst considerable bloodshed, undergoing painful partitions, and harrowing population transfers. And in both cases, independence was led by pragmatic nationalists, – Mapai in Israel and Indian National Congress in India. Three months after achieving its independence, India opposed the 1947 UN partition proposal calling for the establishment of a Jewish state. In 1949, India voted against Israel's UN membership. Although on September 17, 1950, it recognized Israel, India maintained a distant relation; permitting Israel to open a consulate in Mumbai, while refusing the opening of an embassy in New Delhi. India's position on the establishment of the State of Israel was affected by many factors, including India's own partition on religious lines, and India's relationship with other nations; a perception that Israel was a state based on religion, analogous to Pakistan. But even then, PM Nehru remained much admired and retained the aura of a principled and progressive international statesman amongst the Israeli population.

The baggage of India's leadership of the non-alignment movement, the desire for the Arab bloc's neutrality on Kashmir, and the sentiments of the Muslim electorate at home all loomed large over the incipient partnership and establishing overtly visible relations between the two countries. Additionally, India did not want to jeopardize the large diaspora working in Arab countries who were instrumental to maintain the forex reserves for India; as also the energy security of the oil-dependent Indian economy, at a time when the world was experiencing 'oil shocks'.

After its foundation in 1968, the first Chief of R&AW, R.N. Kao

was advised by the then PM Indira Gandhi to cultivate links with Mossad as a counter to the rising China-Pakistan-North Korea axis. The year 1971 also saw Israel standing in support of India in the war with Pakistan.

Israel has thus been pragmatic about the Indian decision to chart out an independent and non-prescriptive policy in the region – a mark of supportive diplomacy and pragmatism on the part of the hardcore realists that the Israelis are, as they realize very well the Indian concerns and geopolitical compulsions. Other factors influencing India's foreign policy on Israel back then were:

1. Support for the Palestinian cause,
2. Tilt towards the USSR during the Cold War,
3. Desire to counter Pakistan's influence with the Arab states,
4. Cold war politics with close relations with the Soviet bloc and the Arab world, while Israel was an ally of the United States and NATO.

The end of the Cold War led to the beginning of a series of bilateral activities between both nations.

1992 onwards till present

The 1991 Madrid Middle East peace conference created a window for India to finally move to upgrade ties, immediately following China's example in agreeing with Israel to the reciprocal opening of embassies and an exchange of ambassadors.

Israel and India established full diplomatic relations on January 29, 1992, which have evolved since then into a multi-faceted strategic partnership. Bilateral cooperation has expanded across the board to defense, intelligence, counterterrorism, cyber, innovation, investment, trade, agri-science, water management, green energy, space, water conservation, traditional medicines, film production, space technology, and innovation, and many other sectors, thereby forming a strategic relationship as India is increasingly becoming central to Israel's foreign policy.

In 1998, Israel was one of the select few nations, that did not condemn India's Pokhran nuclear tests. Later, it also shared intelligence during the Kargil conflict in 1999 and provided disaster relief during the 2001 Bhuj earthquake. These steps put Israel in a better position among the Indian decision-makers and citizens. Israel thus received a more prominent positioning in the redefining of India's foreign policy orientation under the Vajpayee government. From 1999 to 2009, military business between the two nations had risen to around US\$9 billion.

New Delhi had found in the Israeli defense industry, a useful source of weapons, one that could supply it with advanced military technology thereby diversifying the otherwise Russian-dependent Indian arms market. India is the largest buyer of Israeli defense

equipment today and Israel is the second-largest supplier of military equipment to India after Russia. As of 2020, India was its largest recipient acquiring 43 percent of Israel's total arms exports.

The rise of Islamist extremism and terrorism in both countries has generated a strong strategic alliance between the two with increased strategic cooperation in areas of counter-terrorism, de-radicalization, and intelligence sharing since the Manmohan Singh government. These favorable outcomes are also underwritten by tremendous strategic patience on the Israeli side. Weapons sales and agricultural aid were considered long-term equities that would, eventually, pay off, despite India's lack of political reciprocity.

Even though the rhetoric of friendship, trust, and cooperation along with civilizational links usually covers the media narrative of Indo-Israel relations, the fact of the matter is, it is based purely on realism and a mature understanding of each other's requirements and compulsions. Overall it is a win-win partnership between these two emerging regional powers, as India is the world's biggest democracy and Israel is the largest democracy in the Middle East. The mutual perception among citizens of both countries is also highly favorable of each other, based on a blend of ideology, pragmatism, and geopolitical alignments. Some of the visible hallmarks of this are:

1. As of 2014, India is Israel's tenth-largest trade partner and import source, and seventh-largest export destination.
2. Yoga and spiritual practices have a very huge following amongst the Israeli population.
3. Saudi Arabia has given an air travel concession to Indian and Israeli flights to fly over its airspace, which was earlier not allowed; probably the only one-of-it's-kind relaxation not given to any other country.
4. More than 40,000 Indian tourists visited Israel in 2018, while India has always been a favorite destination for Israelis, especially youngsters.

Apart from this, the new Middle Eastern Quad – a strategic group of the U.S., India, Israel, and the UAE – has opened avenues for both sides to enhance strategic interaction. With the signing of the 2020 Abrahamic Accords, UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco normalized relations with Israel granting India more flexibility in West Asia.

This opportunity to lock in more substantial and institutionalized cooperation is celebrated, though the bilateral relationship is yet to grow to its full potential and this is the right time to put in place a framework for a people-centric course for bilateral engagements, one that can withstand any future domestic political swings or the ideological variations between political parties in both countries, and continues benefitting the populations on both sides.



The season of Apple Harvesting

