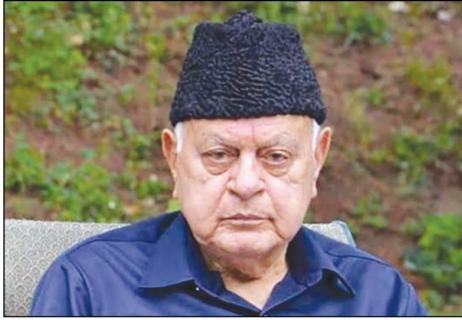


Dr. Farooq extends Navreh, Navratri greetings

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference President Dr. Farooq Abdullah Thursday extended warm greetings to the people on the auspicious occasion of Navratri and Navreh. In his message, Dr Farooq described the festival as a reflection of Jammu and Kashmir's rich cultural heritage and composite traditions. He said that Navreh symbolizes renewal, hope, and the enduring spirit of harmony that has long defined the cultural ethos of Kashmir. He expressed hope that the festival would be celebrated in the true spirit of brotherhood, unity, and gaiety, and would further strengthen communal harmony among the people. He added that such occasions serve as a reminder of the region's pluralistic identity and its



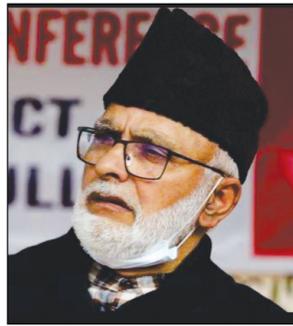
tradition of peaceful coexistence. He also prayed for lasting peace, progress, and prosperity in Jammu and Kashmir and the country as a whole. Meanwhile, several senior party leaders including Ali Muhammad Sagar, Shammi Oberoi, Nasir Aslam Wani, Tanvir Sadiq, Choudhary Muhammad Ramzan, Mian

Altaf Ahmad, Sakina Ito, Shameema Firdous, Sajjad Kichloo, Imran Nabi Dar, Showkat Mir, Rattan Lal Gupta also extended their greetings to the people on the festive occasion. They expressed hope that the celebrations would usher in an era of peace, prosperity, and well-being for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Sagar demands early Statehood restoration

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: The Jammu & Kashmir National Conference General Secretary Haji Ali Muhammad Sagar Thursday asserted that the party remains unwavering in its commitment to serve every section of society, even within the constraints of the existing limited administrative framework. In a statement released from the party headquarters Nawa-e-Subha, Sagar said that despite restricted powers, NC govt has consistently worked to address the concerns and aspirations of the people across regions and communities. "Our commitment is not defined by the powers we hold, but by the trust people have reposed in us. We are duty-bound to deliver, even within these limitations," he said. However, he made it clear that the restoration of full statehood is crucial for unlocking the true potential of governance in Jammu and Kashmir. "An elected government with full



statehood will have the necessary authority, flexibility, and institutional strength to accelerate development, ensure accountability, and deliver justice more effectively. The pace and scale of progress will be significantly enhanced," Sagar emphasized. Referring to repeated assurances, Sagar reminded that both the Prime Minister and the Home Min-

ister have publicly committed inside and outside Parliament to restoring statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. "These assurances are on record and have raised expectations among the people. People did their bit by participating in Lok Sabha and Legislative assembly elections, it's for the Union govt now to deliver on their promises. It is time that these commitments are translated into reality without further delay," he stated. He added that the restoration of statehood is not merely a political demand but a democratic necessity. "The people of Jammu and Kashmir deserve a government that is fully empowered to respond to their needs. Half-measures cannot substitute full democratic rights," he said. Reiterating the party's resolve, Sagar said the party will continue to raise the voice of the people and push for the restoration of statehood while ensuring that governance, even within constraints, remains people-centric, inclusive, and responsive.

Police arrests 3 gamblers in Sopore

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SOPORE: In a continued drive against social evils and illegal activities, J&K Police in Sopore have arrested three gamblers and seized cash and playing cards from their possession. Acting on specific information, J&K Police conducted a raid in the Amargarh area of Sopore and apprehended three persons involved in illegal card gambling. A police team reached the spot and apprehended the following individuals: Mushtaq Ahmad Sofi, son of Ghulam Nabi Sofi, resident of Naseem Bagh Sopore, Lateef Ahmad Khan-dai, son of Ghulam Qadir Khanday, resident of MET Road Sopore and Mudasiir Ahmad Malik, son of Mushtaq Ahmad Malik, resident of Sangrama Sopore. During the raid, stake money amounting Rs 5,100 along with playing cards was recovered and seized on the spot. Accordingly, FIR No. 32/2026 under Section 13 of the Gambling Act has been registered at Police Station Sopore, and further investigation is underway. Police reiterates its commitment to maintaining public order and urges citizens to cooperate with the police by reporting any illegal activities in their surroundings.

DC Indu reviews Semi Ring Road works at Sumbal



EARTH NEWS SERVICE

BANDIPORA: Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chhib, today conducted an extensive field visit to Wangipora Sumbal to inspect NHAI works, Naninara Bridge, Hajin and Chandergir areas to review ongoing works, assess ground conditions, and examine issues related to infrastructure and land subsidence. During the visit to Wangipora Sumbal, the DC inspected the progress of works under the Semi Ring Road Phase II project being executed by

NHAI. She took stock of on-site developments and reviewed bottlenecks affecting execution. It was informed that a major issue concerning a graveyard along the alignment has restricted the road width to two lanes at a particular stretch. The DC directed the concerned agencies to resolve the issue in coordination with stakeholders while ensuring minimal disruption to the project timeline. She also stressed the need for accelerating work by deploying adequate manpower and machinery and maintaining close coordination among

departments. At Naninara Bridge, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed the ongoing works and assessed the structural condition. Taking note of the prevailing weather conditions and the sensitive nature of the works, she said that the alternate route will remain closed for all types of vehicular movement, including two-wheelers, for another one week. She appreciated the efforts of the R&B Sub-Division Sumbal for their work, along with the support of SDM Sumbal and the District Administration. On the occasion, the DC acknowledged the

inconvenience faced by the public and appealed for patience and cooperation, emphasizing that the quality and safety of the structure remain the top priority. The DC also visited Hajin and Chandergir, where she inspected areas affected by land subsidence. She directed the concerned departments to carry out detailed assessments and ensure coordinated, time-bound measures to mitigate risks and safeguard affected areas. She reiterated the need for a long-term and sustainable solution to address the issue.

During her visit, the Deputy Commissioner interacted with local residents, listened to their concerns, and assured them of all possible support from the administration. She emphasized that public cooperation is essential for timely completion of works and effective resolution of ongoing issues. The Deputy Commissioner was accompanied by Additional Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Zaffar Hussain Shawl; Sub-Divisional Magistrate Sumbal, Executive Engineers, Tehsildar Sumbal and other concerned officers.

20% of adults in Jammu, 12% in Kashmir affected by diabetes

SRINAGAR: With diabetes cases witnessing a speedy rise across Jammu and Kashmir, health experts are raising concerns over what they describe as a "silent epidemic" in the region. Nearly 20 per cent of adults in Jammu and around 10-12 per cent in Kashmir are living with Diabetes Mellitus. Doctors say that while medication plays an important role, diet and lifestyle remain the cornerstone of effective diabetes management.

As per the 2023 guidelines issued by the Indian Council of Medical Research, over 10.1 crore people in India are currently affected by diabetes, making it one of the fastest-growing health challenges in the country.

"Diabetes is a long-term condition where blood sugar levels remain elevated either due to insufficient insulin production or the body's inability to use it effectively," said Dr Murtaza, a senior physician. "If not managed properly, it can lead to serious complications including nerve damage, kidney disease, and cardiovascular problems."

He said a well-planned diet can significantly help in stabilising blood sugar levels, maintaining a healthy weight, and preventing complications. "Incorporating foods with a low glycemic index, rich in fibre and nutrients, is crucial for better glucose control," he said. Experts recommend a diet built around complex carbohydrates - whole grains, legumes and vegetables - to avoid sudden sugar spikes. Fibre-rich foods slow glucose absorption and improve digestion, while proteins such as fish, poultry, tofu, eggs and pulses help maintain muscle health and satiety. Healthy fats from nuts, seeds and olive oil should be used in moderation. Eating smaller, balanced meals at consistent times helps regulate calorie intake and stabilise blood sugar levels.

For a practical daily plan, doctors suggest fresh fruits such as guava or papaya in the morning; moong dal or grilled chicken with mixed vegetable curry, cucumber salad for lunch; and grilled or steamed fish with leafy greens such as methi or spinach, a small portion of red rice or one phulka, and warm low-fat milk with turmeric for dinner. Roasted chickpeas or boiled egg whites with unsweetened herbal tea make for a healthy snack. Doctors advise choosing whole grains over refined carbohydrates, limiting high glycaemic foods such as white rice and potatoes, avoiding deep-fried and sugar-laden foods and staying hydrated with water, buttermilk or herbal teas.

"The key lies in balanced meals, mindful portions and smart food choices," said Dr Muzaffar Ahmad. "Healthy eating does not mean compromising on taste; it means making better choices." With cases rising steadily across J&K, health professionals are urging people to adopt preventive measures early, stressing that lifestyle changes today can prevent serious complications tomorrow.

7-Day Scientific Training for Beekeepers culminates at Agriculture Complex Lalmandi

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: Directorate of Agriculture Kashmir today successfully concluded a comprehensive seven-day training program on Scientific Beekeeping for beekeepers from the Kashmir Division. The valedictory function was held at the Agriculture Complex, Lalmandi, Srinagar.

The training program, which commenced on March 13, 2026, was inaugurated by Director Agriculture Kashmir, Sartaj Ahmad Shah. It was designed to promote beekeeping as a sustainable livelihood option and to equip participants, both existing and aspiring beekeepers, with modern, scientific techniques in apiculture.

The sessions covered critical topics including colony management, disease prevention and control, advanced honey extraction methods, value addition to hive products, and strategies to enhance pollination services for improved yields in horticultural and oilseed crops.

The program formed part of the department's broader initiative to

strengthen beekeeping practices across the Kashmir Valley, thereby boosting honey production, supporting rural employment, and contributing to agricultural sustainability through better pollination.

During the valedictory ceremony, Joint Director Inputs, Sohan Singh distributed certificates of participation among the enthusiastic beekeepers who successfully completed the training.

Participants shared their feedback, expressing gratitude to the Directorate of Agriculture Kashmir for organizing such an informative and practical program. They highlighted how the sessions provided valuable insights into scientific methods that would help them improve hive productivity, manage colonies more effectively, and increase their income through enhanced beekeeping practices.

The concluding event underscored the department's commitment to capacity building and empowering local beekeepers with knowledge aligned with contemporary apicultural advancements.

GMC Srinagar sets benchmark with NABL Accreditation for Biochemistry Lab

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: In a major development, the Biochemistry Diagnostic Laboratory, Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar & Associated SMHS Hospital has secured accreditation from the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) in accordance with the international standard ISO 15189:2022.

NABL, a constituent board of the Quality Council of India, certifies laboratories for quality and technical competence, ensuring accurate and reliable diagnostic services. The accreditation, granted for a period of four years till 2030 covers an extensive scope of routine and advanced biochemical and immunological investigations, including blood



glucose, electrolytes, renal function tests, Liver Function Tests (LFT), Kidney Function Tests (KFT), glycated hemoglobin (HbA1c), lipid profile, thyroid function tests, enzyme assays, advanced hormone assays, tumor (cancer) markers, and other specialized parameters, all validated as per international standards. Prof. Iffat Hassan, Prin-

cipal/Dean, Govt Medical College Srinagar appreciated the efforts of the faculty and laboratory staff of the department of Biochemistry and emphasized continued commitment to high-quality diagnostic services.

Head, Department of Biochemistry, Prof. Sabiya Majid stated that this is the first large Government laboratory in the

Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir to achieve NABL accreditation of this scale and it reflects the dedicated teamwork of faculty and technical staff, making the laboratory a path-breaker in delivering quality diagnostic services in the region. The Biochemistry Lab is a state-of-the-art fully automated facility equipped with advanced machinery, testing equipment, and robotic intervention, enabling it to conduct approximately 30 lakh tests annually with accuracy and efficiency. The lab's quality management system and technical competence were key factors in securing the accreditation. GMC Srinagar reaffirms its commitment to maintaining and expanding its NABL-accredited scope in line with global best practices.

Slow sales but hope lingers as Rajpora bakers await Eid rush for Sheermal

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: Despite a noticeable slowdown in sales this year so far, traditional bakers in Rajpora area of south Kashmir's Pulwama district continue to remain optimistic that business will pick up as Eid approaches. The region, located a few kilometres from Pulwama town, is widely known for its iconic delicacy—Sheermal—which continues to hold a special place in Kashmir's festive culture.

Sheermal, a round, slightly thick flatbread with a distinct textured surface, is typically garnished with sesame seeds, giving it a unique flavour and appearance. It is commonly relished with traditional beverages like Sheer Chai (salt tea) and Kehwa, making it an indispensable part of celebrations and social gatherings across the Valley. In Rajpora, the age-old tradition of baking Sheermal is very much alive. Local bakeries, popularly known as Kander Wan, have been working tirelessly to prepare for the festive rush. Around 30-40 bakers in the area are engaged in producing this brownish, sesame-coated bread, continuing a legacy that has been passed down through generations.



Javid Ahmad Sofi, a veteran baker, said that although the market response has been relatively dull this year so far, they are hopeful that demand will increase in the final days leading up to Eid. "Every year, we witness a surge in sales just before Eid. While things are slow at the moment, we are expecting a good turnout in the coming days," Sofi said. He added that Sheermal was once considered a luxury item, consumed only by affluent families. However, over time, it has become a common feature at almost every household's festive spread, reflecting changing socio-economic conditions in the region. Another baker, Mohamad Shaban, said that Rajpora's Sheermal enjoys a reputation

that extends far beyond Kashmir. "People living outside the Valley, and even abroad, place advance orders. Many visitors take it along as gifts for their friends and relatives," he said, attributing this popularity to the consistent quality maintained by local bakers. Sameer Ahmad, a baker who mostly deals with online delivery of this delicious Sheermal, said he is receiving a good number of orders online, which he sends outside the valley and even abroad. He, however, said that the sales on the ground haven't been as they used to be on festive occasions. The bakers expressed hope that the pace will pick up on Eid. Many other traders admit that overall sales have been lower this

season compared to previous years—possibly due to economic challenges and reduced spending—they believe Eid will revive the market.

Traditionally, hundreds of customers from different districts visit Rajpora during the festive period, and each baker sells large quantities of Sheermal, making it a key source of livelihood. Customers, too, remain loyal to the Rajpora speciality. Muzamil Ahmad, a resident of Anantnag, said his family has followed a long-standing tradition of purchasing Sheermal from Rajpora. "The taste here is unmatched. We always buy in bulk and distribute it among relatives during Eid," he said.

Apart from Eid, Sheermal holds cultural importance in various ceremonies such as weddings, engagements, and other religious events. It is prepared in two main varieties—sweet and salty—each paired with different traditional drinks, adding to its versatility and appeal. For the people of Kashmir, Sheermal is not merely a food item but a symbol of heritage, celebration, and togetherness. Even in the face of slow business, the unwavering hope of Rajpora's bakers reflects the enduring spirit of this cherished tradition.

Director SKIMS commissions advanced diagnostic facilities to strengthen precision healthcare

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: In a significant step towards strengthening advanced diagnostics and clinical care, the Director Sher-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) and EOSG, Prof. Mohammad Ashraf Ganie, today commissioned a series of high-end medical equipment and advanced diagnostic facilities at the institute.

The newly introduced facilities are aimed at enhancing precision diagnostics, improving clinical decision-making, and enabling clinicians to provide timely and optimal treatment to patients. "Among the key initiatives is the installation of high-resolution ultrasound (USG) machines in individual wards, which will provide doorstep diagnostic services for admitted patients. The facility will allow clinicians to conduct bedside evaluations and make faster clinical assessments, thereby improving patient management and treatment outcomes," said an official. "In another major advancement, the Department of

Pathology at SKIMS has operationalized an advanced Immunohistochemistry (IHC) panel comprising 174 markers, significantly strengthening the institute's cancer diagnostics and precision pathology services. The facility will enable more accurate tumour classification and support personalized treatment strategies for cancer patients," the official added.

"Further augmenting diagnostic capabilities, state-of-the-art machine (Automated Mycobacterial Detection) have also been installed in the Department of Microbiology to facilitate rapid and precise identification of infectious diseases and antimicrobial resistance patterns, thereby improving infection diagnosis and patient care," he said. After commissioning of these advanced facilities, Director SKIMS Professor Dr M. Ashraf Ganie said, "This reflects continued commitment of SKIMS to upgrade healthcare infrastructure and delivering cutting-edge medical services to patients across Jammu & Kashmir and neighbouring regions."