

"Get a good idea and stay with it. Dog it, and work at it until it's done right."

—Walt Disney

Inking the Truth

J&K at critical juncture; massive drive required against drugs: LG

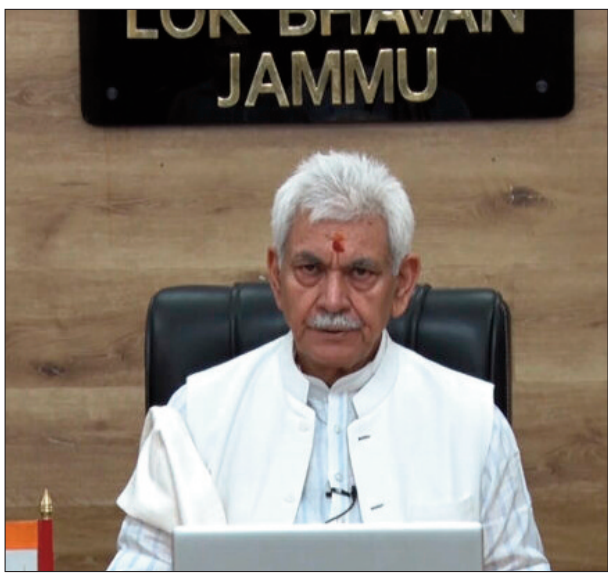
■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: The Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday said that Jammu and Kashmir stands at a "very critical juncture" and called for a united mass movement to combat the growing menace of drug abuse among the youth.

Jammu and Kashmir will launch a massive assault on the drug addiction ecosystem and is all set to roll out a 100-day intensive campaign under 'Nasha Mukta Jammu Kashmir Abhiyaan' from April 11, with Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha reviewing its preparedness on Thursday.

The campaign will start from the Panchayat level to the Union Territory level, with the LG himself leading it. It will not only involve all sections of society but also target the issue on legal, criminal and rehabilitation fronts.

"Friends, Jammu and Kashmir today stands at a very critical juncture. Under a certain conspiracy, there is an on-



going attempt to push our youth into drug addiction and destroy an entire generation," Sinha said while addressing people of the union territory through a video message.

Referring to efforts taken so far, the Lieutenant Governor said that the 'Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan' launched in

2020 under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has led to significant anti-drug initiatives in the Union Territory.

"Since then, significant efforts have been made in Jammu and Kashmir to combat drug abuse. Last year, in 2025, a major anti-drug cam-

paign was carried out. The actions of the police and security forces have also been effective," he said.

However, Sinha emphasised the need for a broader societal response, stating that a comprehensive plan, including a 100-day programme, has been prepared to intensify the fight against drugs.

Announcing the launch of the campaign, Sinha said that a large gathering has been planned at M A Stadium in Jammu on April 11, where civil society members, political leaders, academicians and sports persons will participate. "On that day, we will take a pledge against drug abuse and also undertake a padayatra. This march will continue across the entire Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

Calling for public participation, the Lieutenant Governor said the campaign is not limited to any individual but concerns the future of the youth.

"This campaign does not belong to any one ► P11

2,700 Sikh pilgrims leave for Pakistan

AMRITSAR: A 'jatha' (procession) of nearly 2,700 Sikh pilgrims crossed over to Pakistan from the Attari border here on Friday to participate in a religious congregation to be organised on the occasion of Khalsa Sajna Diwas (Baisakhi) at Gurdwara Panja Sahib in the Punjab province of the neighbouring country.

The journey of the 2,700 pilgrims was facilitated by three Sikh bodies -- Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) Amritsar, Haryana Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (HGPC) and Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Board (DSGMB) -- with SGPC Amritsar sponsoring around 1695 pilgrims.

The jatha crossed over to Pakistan through the Joint Check Post at the Attari border.

An SGPC official said the jatha has departed to participate in the main congregation of ► P11

NEP 2020: Vision on Paper, Uncertainty on Ground India's biggest educational reform now needs disciplined execution framework

INKING THE TRUTH



Shivang Satya Gupta
Editor-in-Chief

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was introduced as a transformative blueprint to reshape country's education system for the 21st century. It promised a decisive shift from routine learning to conceptual understanding, from rigid academic streams to multidisciplinary education, and from linguistic barriers to a more inclusive and multilingual framework.

On paper, it stands as one of the most ambitious education reforms in India. Yet, five years into its roll-out, a critical question emerges: Is India witnessing transformation, or confusion?

At its core, NEP 2020 addresses long-standing structural weaknesses in country's education system. These include poor foundational literacy and skill, overloaded curricula with limited conceptual clarity, rigid subject boundaries, lack of skill-based learning, and a persistent disconnect between education and employability.

There is no doubt in saying that the policy rightly emphasises early childhood care, multilingual education, flexibility in subject choices, and stronger teacher training systems. It also seeks to

align education with national development goals while preparing students for global competitiveness.

However, beyond structural reform, NEP also carries an implicit national vision that education must act as a unifying force. In a diverse country like India, where linguistic and regional identities are strong, the education system must rise above regionalism and reinforce a sense of shared national identity.

In this context, promoting Hindi as a link language—without undermining regional languages—can play a critical role. Incentivising the learning of Hindi across states can help bridge communication gaps and foster greater national cohesion. A balanced multilingual approach, where students are rooted in their mother tongue, proficient in Hindi, and globally connected through English, can strengthen both identity and opportunity.

So, the success of NEP depends heavily on colleges and universities transitioning from routine-based instruction to conceptual and experiential learning. Instead of promoting post-graduations and research, the overall focus has been shifted towards excelling in competitive examinations which ultimately undermining the role of institutions of higher education across India.

Moreover, this is motivating the morale of private coaching players to attract the students towards their own self-satisfying goals. This is the root cause that the enrolment has been declines in colleges and universities across countries which have their consequences as the concept of research based learning would be defeated.

The push for mother

tongue-based education in early years is pedagogically sound, but its implementation has created confusion. Parents, particularly in urban and aspirational rural segments, continue to prioritise English due to its perceived link with economic mobility.

Schools, meanwhile, are caught between policy directives and societal expectations. The lack of a clear roadmap on language transition—from foundational education to higher studies and competitive exams—has resulted in inconsistent practices across states.

This is where the role of Hindi as a unifying language becomes important. Rather than allowing language to become a divisive factor, policy must encourage a structured multilingual model. Incentivising Hindi learning—through curriculum support, teacher availability, and career advantages—can help create a common linguistic bridge, while still respecting India's linguistic diversity.

At present, NEP implementation relies heavily on circulars, guidelines and decentralised execution.

What is missing is a robust national monitoring system that can assess: learning outcomes; teacher preparedness; institutional compliance; and regional disparities.

If these structural gaps remain unaddressed, NEP 2020 could lead to unintended consequences.

There is already a visible risk of widening inequality between private and government schools, with the former adapting faster to reforms due to better resources. Educational standards may become fragmented across states, weakening national coherence. ► P11

Illegal construction goes unabated over Govt land near Chenab bridges

Admin's 'delay tactics' fail to stop shops erection in Ambarana

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: The illegal construction on government land located between two bridges over the Chenab river in Akhnoor tehsil of Jammu district has raised serious concerns over the role of the local administration and enforcement agencies, which have failed to check such illegal activities at a sensitive location.

As per reports, the illegal construction of two shops on the land in Ambarana village has blocked the pathway belonging to the Rural Development Department (RDD) and Public



Works Department (PWD) road, causing inconvenience to commuters and raising safety concerns.

Interestingly, the piece of the Government land is located between the Old Steel Bridge and a new bridge currently under construction over Chenab river in Akhnoor. The shops are reportedly being constructed along the pathways meant for public use.

Pertinently, the land in question is recorded as Government property, with a retaining wall earlier constructed by the department concerned marking its boundary. Moreover, ► P11

JD Vance heads to Pak for peace talks

ISLAMABAD: US Vice President JD Vance on Friday left for Pakistan to participate in peace talks with Iran to end their war, even as there was no official word about the arrival of the Iranian delegation in Islamabad, which has been placed under high security.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, while announcing a two-week ceasefire on Wednesday, had said that the US and Iran would hold talks in Islamabad on April 10. He had tagged the presidents of the US and Iran in his statement on X.

Before he departed for Pakistan, Vice President Vance said he was looking forward to the negotiations with Iran and that he expected the Islamabad talks to be "positive."

He also said President Donald Trump gave him "some pretty clear guidelines" on negotiations. ► P11

Box fitted with two grenades recovered



■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Security forces on Friday recovered a suspected IED-type box containing two grenades in Rajouri district, prompting authorities to cordon off the area, officials said.

Locals spotted suspicious material in the Thandipani area of the Sunderbani belt, following which security personnel rushed to the spot and secured the area, they said.

The suspected explosive material, containing two grenades sealed inside a box, was found lying near a water body, officials added.

A bomb disposal squad has been called in to safely destroy the material, they said. Further details are awaited. ► P11

Census 2027 a digital mission to power 'Viksit Bharat': CS Dulloo

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo on Friday said the Census 2027 will be a "national digital transformation mission" that will lay the foundation for a 'Viksit Bharat' and enable evidence-based policy planning, asserting that India is at a crucial "data inflection point".

Addressing the Census 2027 Summit at Abhinav Theatre here, Dulloo said the exercise will go beyond routine enumeration to become a cornerstone for data-driven governance.

The summit was attended by senior administrators, development partners and policy experts



who deliberated on the roadmap, preparedness and significance of Census 2027, the country's first fully digital and paperless census exercise, an official spokesman

said. Delivering the keynote address, the chief secretary said India is entering a new era of governance driven by technology and ► P11

CAG: Over 10% drop in Dal Lake's open water

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has flagged significant spatio-temporal changes in land use and water cover of the iconic Dal lake, pointing to a shrinkage of the water body from 15.40 square kilometres in 2007 to 12.91 square kilometres in 2020, registering a decline of 10.15 per cent in 13 years.

The CAG recommended a robust lake management policy to ensure effective functioning and upgrade of sewage treatment plants (STPs) to ensure proper

treatment of sewage and solid waste entering the lake.

"It may be seen from data that during 2007-2020, there was a decrease from 15.40 to 12.91 square kilometres (10.15 per cent) in the water body with (respect to) submerged vegetation and open water of the lake, while there was increase in other land uses such as floating vegetation from 5.262 to 6.796 square kilometres (6.23 per cent), crop land and plantation from 2.29 to 2.85 square kilometres (2.27 per cent), and built-up from 0.743 to 1.025 square kilometres (1.15 per cent)," the report said. ► P11

CDS calls for integrated, tech-driven armed forces

BENGALURU: Chief of Defence Staff, General Anil Chauhan, on Friday underscored the urgent need for India's armed forces to evolve into an integrated, agile and technologically driven warfighting instrument capable of operating seamlessly across multiple domains.

He also said that modern warfare is rapidly transcending traditional boundaries and timelines.

Delivering the closing address at the 'Ran Samvad' seminar, he highlighted that Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) are no longer a conceptual buzzword but an emerging operational reality, driven by advances in data an-



alytics, artificial intelligence and the changing character of conflict.

"MDOs were chosen for this year's theme not because it's a buzzword, but I think it's a kind of new reality," the CDS said.

General Chauhan noted that the seminar, conceptualised to place serving officers at the centre of strategic discourse, had enabled mid-level and junior officers to articulate perspectives on future warfare.

"Normally, it's veterans or think tanks who would express their views. So I reversed that particular trend," he said.

He added that those actively engaged in ► P11

ISI backed spying module unearthed

NEW DELHI: An espionage network with direct links to Pakistan has been unearthed, revealing how handlers across the border were remotely monitoring real-time movement of Indian Army personnel through a covert grid of solar-powered CCTV cameras installed at strategically sensitive locations across northern India, an official said on Friday.

The surveillance network spanned key cities including Kapurthala, Jalandhar, Pathankot, Patiala and Moga in Punjab, Ambala in Haryana, Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir, and Bikaner and Alwar in Rajasthan -- all of which are

crucial due to the presence of Army cantonments, proximity to the international border and their role as major troop movement and logistics corridors.

According to police, the cameras were deliberately positioned to capture activities near military installations, highways used for troop mobilisation and border-linked infrastructure.

What makes the operation particularly alarming is that these devices were transmitting live footage directly to Pakistan-based handlers, allowing them to "sit across the border and watch Indian Army movements unfold in ► P11

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