

Hakeem Yaseen calls for action on reservation policy, jobs, and tourism

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SRINAGAR: President of the People's Democratic Front (PDF) and former Cabinet Minister Hakeem Mohammad Yaseen on Thursday said that key public issues in Jammu and Kashmir continue to remain unaddressed, alleging that attention is being diverted from pressing concerns. Addressing a convention at Khanshab in Budgam, Yaseen stressed that clarity on the reservation policy is urgently needed, as uncertainty is creating difficulties for youth applying for jobs and pursuing education. He said the government must bring out a transparent framework to address growing concerns among aspirants. Highlighting the plight of daily wagers, Yaseen said people were expecting a resolution during the current budget,



but the issue remains unresolved on the ground. He termed it a "burning issue," noting that successive governments had formed committees in the past, but no concrete results have been achieved so far. The PDF president also raised concerns

over rising unemployment, stating that while promises have been made, there has been little practical progress to generate employment opportunities for the youth.

On tourism, Yaseen called for reopening of several closed destinations, particularly Tosamaidan, stating that it should be made accessible to the public and tourists at the earliest. He, however, expressed gratitude to Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha for steps taken towards reopening Doodhpathri. Yaseen further alleged that incidents of harassment of tourists at Doodhpathri are a matter of concern, claiming that some elements are threatening visitors and acting as commission agents. He urged the police and district administration to take strict action against such elements to ensure safety and promote tourism in the region.

Dr. Farooq calls on GoI to join global efforts to end West Asia Conflict

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SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference President Dr. Farooq Abdullah Thursday urged the GoI to take an active role in rallying the international community to halt the ongoing conflict in West Asia, warning that inaction could push the world closer to an economic abyss. Speaking to the media, Dr. Farooq said, "If the current conflict is left unattended, its ripple effects will not just be felt in West Asia, but across the globe. The poorest of the poor will bear the heaviest burden, and we risk tipping the



world into a deep chasm of economic instability." He emphasized that conflicts in today's interconnected world cannot be treated as distant crises. "We live in an era where one region's turmoil quickly becomes everyone's challenge. It is high

time that diplomatic channels are used proactively, and the world comes together to prevent further escalation," he remarked. Dr. Farooq also said the urgency of global collaboration, blending political insight with a subtle caution. "Peace is not just a moral imperative, it is an economic necessity. Ignoring conflicts halfway across the world is like ignoring smoke while sitting next to a fire." He urged the union govt to adopt a balanced and pragmatic approach that safeguards global stability while protecting the most vulnerable populations back home.

Over 14.4 lakh priority ration cards enrolled, new food grain scheme launched: J&K Govt

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SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government on said a total of 14,40,473 Priority Household (PHH) ration card holders are covered across the Union Territory. Replying to a starred question in the Legislative Assembly, the said all eligible beneficiaries have been enrolled in the ration card database, while updation and deletion of cards is a continuous process based on verification and eligibility norms. It said that identification of beneficiaries is carried out as per Census 2011 data and targets assigned by the Government of India, adding that newly identified eligible families are included as and when revised targets are communicated. Regarding LPG support,

the government said it has announced three free LPG cylinders per year for AAY ration card holders to support economically vulnerable sections. Efforts are being made to enhance this support in future, subject to availability of resources, it added. The government further informed that a new scheme providing an additional 10 kilograms of free food grains per month to AAY households has been launched from April 2025 in Jammu division, aimed at households with four or more members. Providing details, it said the scheme is currently operational across all districts of Jammu division, covering 37,412 AAY beneficiaries, with district-wise distribution including Jammu, Rajouri, Poonch, Doda and others. On Fair Price Shops (FPS), the government said that

94 FPS are currently operational in Rajouri constituency. "The opening of new FPS in Jammu and Kashmir will be considered after full stabilisation of the Smart Public Distribution System (Smart PDS)," it said. "The proposals for new FPS will be formulated in line with S.O. 41 of 2023, taking into account population norms, geographical factors and existing coverage." The key systems like ration card management, supply chain management and e-KYC integration are operational, while further improvements, including grievance redressal and PoS device upgrades, are underway, the government said, adding that elected representatives will be consulted before taking any final decision on expansion of FPS network across Jammu and Kashmir.

ACB charge-sheets 5 SMC officials, beneficiary in Rajbagh Illegal construction case

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SRINAGAR: The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Thursday said they have filed a charge-sheet against five officials of the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) and a private beneficiary for allegedly facilitating illegal construction of a commercial complex in Rajbagh by misusing official permissions. In a statement, a spokesperson said the Jammu and Kashmir Anti-Corruption Bureau produced Charge sheet in case FIR No. 11/2020 for the commission of offences U/S 5(1)(d) r/w5(2) of J&K Prevention of Corruption Act, Svt. 2006, 120-B RPC at Police Station ACB Srinagar Kashmir before the Court of Additional Special Judge Anti-Corruption Srinagar against 05 accused persons of the Srinagar Municipal Committee (SMC) Namely 1. Choudary Mehraj-Din Bhuja S/O Ghulam Qadir R/O Maharaj Bazar A/P Bemina the then Ward Officer.



2. Showkat Hussain Hamdani S/O Gh Nabi Hamdani R/O Khankai Mohalla Srinagar then Ward officer 3. Nisar Ahmad Rah S/O Ghulam Mohammad R/O Jamalata A/P Shah Mohallah Nawab Bazar, the then Building Inspector. 4. Gulzar Ahmad Bhat S/O Ali Mohd Bhat R/O Chekpath Dooru Anantnag, Tehsil Dooru Anantnag the then Building Inspector 5. Mudasir Hussain Bandy S/O Gh Mohd R/O Nowsheera Srinagar then CEO SMC, and one beneficiary namely Mo-

hammad Abdullah Dar S/O Abdul Qadir Dar R/O Rajbagh Srinagar, in connection with abuse of official position, criminal conspiracy and conferring undue benefit to private individual. He said, the instant case was registered for illegal construction of 04 storey Commercial Shopping Complex "namely Abdullah Shopping Plaza" at Kursoo Rajbagh Srinagar raised by one Mohammad Abdullah Dar S/O Abdul Qadir Dar R/O Rajbagh Srinagar in connivance

with the officers/ officials of SMC Srinagar under the garb of building permission issued by the SMC Srinagar for construction of the residential house. The spokesperson said, the investigation conducted by Police Station ACB Srinagar, on the basis of oral and documentary evidence, has fully substantiated the charges levelled against the accused officers/officials and private beneficiary. The conspiracy between the accused government functionaries and the beneficiary was proved beyond doubt. "After obtaining the requisite sanction for prosecution of public servants from the Govt. the charge sheet against 05 accused public servants one 01 private beneficiary was produced before the of Hon'ble Court of Additional Special Judge Anti-Corruption Srinagar for Judicial determination. The next date of hearing has been fixed on 11-05-2026," said the spokesperson.

Director Agriculture Kashmir reviews IFMS implementation

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SRINAGAR: Director Agriculture Kashmir, Sartaj Ahmad Shah, today conducted a review of the Integrated Fertilizer Management System (IFMS) and inspected the functioning of Point of Sale (POS)-enabled retail outlets in Budgam and Srinagar districts. The Director visited multiple sale points and retail outlets to personally assess the performance of POS machines, real-time stock updation, and overall inventory management. He laid special emphasis on maintaining transparency in sales, ensuring accurate digital recording of transactions, and strict adherence



to the digital monitoring mechanisms for efficient and farmer-friendly service delivery. While reviewing the district-wise progress of IFMS implementation, Sartaj Ahmad Shah directed officers to ensure seamless integra-

tion of field-level operations with the digital platform. He stressed the importance of robust inventory management, accurate financial tracking, and greater accountability through the system. Chief Agriculture Officer

Budgam, Mohd Iqbal Khan, and Chief Agriculture Officer Srinagar, Ajaz Hussain Dar, along with Deputy Director Law Enforcement Kashmir, Mujtaba Yahya, Technical Officer, and other senior officers and field functionaries accompanied the Director during the visit. The district officers briefed the Director about the current status of the POS network, stock availability, and challenges being faced. The Director appreciated the efforts of the district teams and instructed them to further strengthen the monitoring mechanism to ensure timely and transparent availability of quality agricultural inputs to the farming community.

DC Athar visits industrial estate Rangreth

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SRINAGAR: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Athar Amir Khan, today visited the Industrial Estate (I/E) Rangreth and chaired a comprehensive review meeting regarding the development, functioning, and regulation of the estate. The DC was accompanied by General Manager DIC Budgam, Superintending Engineer R&B, Assistant Commissioner Revenue (ACR), Chief Planning Officer (CPO) Budgam, Managing Director SICOP, District Officer Pollution Control Board (PCB) Budgam, Tehsildar concerned, Lead District Manager (LDM), Executive Engineer KPD-

CL, and other concerned officers. During the visit, the DC conducted on-spot inspections of various industrial units and assessed their operational status, infrastructure facilities, power supply, environmental compliance, and employment generation. He also interacted with unit holders and stakeholders to understand their concerns and challenges. While chairing the meeting, the DC stressed strict adherence to government norms and directed the concerned departments to initiate immediate de-registration of all units operating illegally or in violation of prescribed guidelines, emphasizing that no compromise will be

made on regulatory compliance. He further directed the PCB to ensure that all units operate only after obtaining necessary environmental clearances and strictly follow pollution control norms. The DC reiterated that the district administration is committed to creating a conducive ecosystem for legitimate businesses and assured that genuine grievances of unit holders, particularly those related to incentives and subsidies, will be taken up with higher authorities for prompt redressal. During the meeting, the functioning of the Common Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP) was discussed in detail, and the DC direct-

ed that a joint committee comprising SIDCO, JKPCC, and representatives of the Industrial Association be constituted to assess the quantity and nature of wastewater generated by units, including JKLI as well as rainwater inflow, so that a workable and sustainable solution for the CETP can be devised. The issue of water supply was also deliberated upon, wherein unit holders highlighted the poor quality of potable water being supplied to the estate. The DC directed SIDCO to explore the feasibility of establishing potable water connectivity through PHE to ensure access to safe drinking water within the estate.

PDJ Kupwara sentences man to 5-year jail in POCSO case

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KUPWARA: A court in North Kashmir's Kupwara district has sentenced a man to five years rigorous imprisonment for sexually assaulting a minor. The verdict was delivered by the Principal District and Sessions Judge, Kupwara, in a case registered at Vilgam police station in 2020. The accused, identified as Jameel Ahmad Mughal, of Nawbugh Champora in Vilgam, was convicted under Section 8 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

The court also imposed a fine of Rs 20,000 on the convict. In case of non-payment, he will have to undergo an additional three months of simple imprisonment.

According to the prosecution, the offence involved a child aged around three years. The court, while pronouncing the sentence, took note of the gravity of the crime and observed that the accused had violated a position of trust as he was working at the victim's residence at the time. Rejecting the plea for leniency, the court held that factors such as the accused's custody since April 2020, lack of prior criminal record, and socio-economic background did not dilute the seriousness of the offence. The court granted the benefit of set-off under Section 428 of the Code of Criminal Procedure for the period already spent in custody. It also directed that the fine amount be paid to the victim as compensation under Section 357 CrPC, with provision for further relief under the Victim Compensation Scheme, officials said.

Govt reviewing pending salaries of COVID-19 contract staff

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SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government said the issue of pending salaries of disengaged paramedical and allied staff engaged during the COVID-19 pandemic is currently under active consideration of the government. Responding to a question raised by MLA Nairinder Singh Raina in

the Legislative Assembly, Health and Medical Education Minister Sakeena Itoo referred to a recent Supreme Court ruling wherein directions were issued to release salaries of disengaged DRDO employees. The judgment, she said, has prompted examination of similar cases, including those of contractual healthcare workers engaged during the pandemic.

Scores of youth join YNC's Srinagar unit; Imran calls for grassroots level dedication to strengthen party's base

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SRINAGAR: In a significant boost to the youth wing of the party, Provincial President of Youth National Conference (YNC) Kashmir, Mir Mushtaq Ahmad, today welcomed a dynamic group of educated youth into the party fold at an event held at the party headquarters, Nawa-e-Subha. The event was organized by YNC District President Srinagar, Irshad Ahmad Anchari, and witnessed active participation from

party workers and youth activists. Party's State Spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar attended the programme as the chief guest. Party's Addl Spokesperson Abrar Hamid, Joint secretary YNC Bilal Ganaie, Province member Iqbal Nabi were also present on the occasion. Addressing the gathering, Imran urged the new entrants to remain committed to the party's ideology and work collectively for the betterment of society. "The youth are the backbone of our movement. Your energy, ideas, and commit-



ment are essential in shaping a progressive and inclusive future. I urge all of you to work with unity

and dedication to strengthen the party at the grassroots level," he said.

GMC Handwara relocation on cards as flood-prone site declared unsafe

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SRINAGAR: The long-awaited Government Medical College (GMC) Handwara project is set for relocation after the originally identified construction site at Maidan Chogal/Chogal was found unsuitable due to recurring flood threats, the Health and Medical Education Department informed the Assembly. Replying to a question raised by MLA Khursheed Ahmad Sheikh, the Minister for Health and Medical Education said that the initial site earmarked for the college campus and hostels was submerged during floods, raising serious concerns over its viability for a major infrastructure project. "Given the vulnerability of the site to flooding, the government has initiated the process for relocation

of GMC Handwara. A proposal in this regard is being taken up with the General Administration Department to seek in-principle approval from the Council of Ministers," the Minister stated. A high-level committee constituted by the General Administration Department under Government Order No. 2090-JK(GAD) of 2024, and headed by the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, carried out a detailed inspection of the original and alternative sites. The committee assessed multiple locations, including: Chogal Maidan: Approximately 183 kanals and 17 marlas under the Horticulture Department, currently housing a high-density orchard and related assets, Kulangam: Spread over 208 kanals and 14 marlas, partly transferred to Kri-

shi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) for a Walnut Research Centre, with a portion under District Police Lines Handwara and Maidan Chogal (linear patch): Over 100 kanals of kahcharai land. After evaluating parameters such as flood vulnerability, land stability, accessibility, and compliance with National Medical Commission (NMC) norms, the committee unanimously concluded that the existing site at Chogal Maidan is "not feasible" for establishing a prestigious institution like a medical college. "The relocation of GMC Handwara, as per NMC norms, is the only plausible option," the committee recommended. Among the alternatives, the committee identified Kulangam as the most suitable site, citing its compliance with NMC requirements, better connectivity to highways,

and relative safety from natural hazards such as floods and landslides. "The Kulangam site is not susceptible to the vagaries of climate and offers advantages in terms of security and accessibility," the report noted. Following this, the Health and Medical Education Department approached the Agriculture Production and Farmers Welfare Department for a No Objection Certificate (NOC) to facilitate land transfer. However, the proposal did not materialize due to unresolved issues. Meanwhile, an alternate site at Nutrusa village has also been proposed, based on deliberations held during a meeting chaired by the Minister on March 19, 2025, with MLAs from Kupwara district. "The feasibility of the Nutrusa site is currently being analyzed

to determine its suitability and structural stability for the project," the Minister informed. The matter has now been placed before the Council of Ministers for in-principle approval to relocate the project. The Minister further revealed that most prerequisite clearances from key departments—including Roads & Buildings (R&B), Public Health Engineering (PHE), Irrigation & Flood Control, Forest, Pollution Control Board, and Soil Conservation—have already been obtained. The Deputy Commissioner Kupwara has also been tasked with ensuring the availability of encumbrance-free land. However, the Geology and Mining Department has flagged critical concerns, recommending a comprehensive geo-technical investigation by a competent institution

before any construction and a site-specific seismic hazard assessment, given the region's classification under Seismic Zone-V (high vulnerability). Acting on these recommendations, the Chief Engineer, R&B North Kashmir, has been requested to undertake the necessary geo-technical studies through an accredited agency. With the fate of GMC Handwara now tied to technical feasibility and administrative approvals, the government has emphasized that no construction will proceed without rigorous scientific validation of the selected site. The relocation, once finalized, is expected to pave the way for establishing a robust medical education and healthcare institution in north Kashmir, addressing long-standing demands of the region.