

Ashok Koul & Arvind Gupta energise BJP Cadre, push for stronger booth network

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JAMMU: Reaffirming its commitment to strengthening the party organisation at the grassroots level, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Jammu West unit organised a significant organisational meeting with Booth Presidents and their teams, focusing on enhancing booth-level coordination, public connect, and future organisational strategies. The meeting was held under the guidance and esteemed presence of BJP General Secretary (Organisation) Ashok Koul, MLA Jammu West Arvind Gupta, District President Rajesh Gupta, Sangathan Mantri Inderjeet, Mandal President Anil Angral, and Shakti Kendra Pramukh (Ex-Councillor Ward No. 31) S. Sucha Singh DC. The gathering witnessed detailed deliberations on strengthening the party's booth machinery, improving communication with citizens, expanding outreach activities, and ensuring that the benefits of government welfare schemes reach every section of society effectively.



Addressing the dedicated cadre, Sh. Ashok Koul Ji highlighted the pivotal role of booth-level workers in shaping the organisational strength of the BJP. He said that the booth is the foundation of the party's structure and the first point of connection between the organisation and the people. He called upon Booth Presidents and workers to remain continuously engaged with citizens, listen to their concerns, and work with dedication, discipline, and a spirit of service. He emphasised that a strong booth network is the

key to a stronger organisation and effective public outreach. Speaking on the occasion, MLA Jammu West Sh. Arvind Gupta Ji lauded the commitment and hard work of BJP workers, stating that the party's biggest strength lies in its dedicated cadre working tirelessly at the grassroots level. He said that BJP workers have always stood with the people and will continue to work with the same commitment towards resolving public issues, accelerating development, and strengthening the bond between the organisation and citizens of Jammu

West. Highlighting the importance of unity and teamwork, MLA Arvind Gupta said that collective efforts, effective coordination, and regular interaction with the public are essential for achieving organisational objectives and taking the vision of development forward. The meeting concluded with party workers taking a renewed pledge to further strengthen the booth network, increase public engagement, and continue their dedicated efforts towards nation-building and public welfare.

Balwant Thakur's 'AAG' mesmerises large gathering at Rani Park

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JAMMU: Natrang Sunday presented Balwant Thakur's Hindi play 'AAG' under its weekly theatre series 'Sunday Theatre' at Rani Park, Jammu. Directed by Neeraj Kant, the powerful production highlighted the devastating impact of drug abuse on society and underscored the urgent need to protect the younger generation from the growing menace of addiction. The play aligns with the ongoing 100-day Anti-Drug Campaign initiated by the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir. Responding to the Lieutenant Governor's appeal, Natrang has voluntarily staged more than 20 performances to spread awareness through the powerful medium of theatre, adding a meaningful cultural dimension to the campaign. Speaking on the occasion, eminent theatre personality and playwright Balwant Thakur said that theatre remains one of the most effective mediums for engaging people and inspiring social



change. He noted that AAG has been specially written to address the alarming rise in drug addiction and is intended to carry this crucial message into every home across Jammu & Kashmir. He expressed confidence that every viewer of the play would leave inspired to become an ambassador for the cause by creating awareness and sensitizing others against drug abuse. Rather than following a single storyline, AAG presents a series of interconnected episodes that collectively portray the rapid spread of drug addiction like a raging fire, consuming one of the country's most valuable assets—its youth. Through multiple narratives, the play vividly

illustrates how addiction destroys individuals, families and communities. One episode depicts a young student entering college after completing school. Feeling isolated because he refuses to consume intoxicants, he is mocked by his peers and treated as immature. Frustrated and eager to prove his adulthood, he ultimately succumbs to peer pressure and begins experimenting with drugs and other intoxicants. Another sequence portrays a rural village where widespread alcoholism among men has become the root cause of poverty, domestic violence and deteriorating health. The play also follows the daily routine of a labour-

er who spends his entire day's earnings on alcohol. Intoxicated, he loses his way home and, after being escorted back by a villager, brutally assaults his wife and children for not welcoming him. When the neighbour intervenes to protect the family, he is falsely accused of having ill intentions. In his drunken rage, the man further destroys his own household, symbolizing how addiction devastates both families and society. Through these compelling episodes, AAG exposes the tragic consequences of drug abuse, alcoholism and other forms of addiction, demonstrating how countless lives are being consumed by this social evil. The play concludes with a powerful appeal for collective action to save humanity from the destructive grip of the drug menace. The production featured impactful performances by Neeraj Kant, Mahikshit Singh, Aadesh Dhar, Vishal Sharma, Akash Wadhwan, Aryan Sharma, Kushal Bhat and Kananpreet Kour.

Schools must prioritise students' emotional wellbeing alongside academics: Experts

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NEW DELHI: Examination stress, excessive screen time, social media pressures, bullying and loneliness are emerging as major challenges for schoolchildren, prompting educationists and mental health experts to call for emotional wellbeing to be integrated into the education system rather than being treated as an occasional awareness exercise. Experts say schools must move beyond measuring success solely through academic performance and instead create environments where students feel safe, supported and emotionally resilient. According to the World Health Organisation, one in seven adolescents aged 10-19 years lives with a mental disorder, with depression, anxiety and behavioural disorders. The UNICEF (United Na-

tions International Children's Emergency Fund) and NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) have highlighted rising stress among children and the need for stronger counselling support and mental health awareness in schools. "Schools today are witnessing children struggling with increased anxiety, perfectionism, fear of failure and emotional exhaustion at much younger ages than we saw a decade ago," said Dr Nand Kumar, professor in the Department of Psychiatry at AIIMS, Delhi. Academic achievement cannot come at the cost of poor mental health, he said. Dr Kumar emphasised that every school should have systems for early enhancing of resilience in children, along with early identification of emotional distress, access to trained counsellors and teach-

ers equipped to recognise behavioural changes before they escalate into serious psychiatric conditions. Mental health experts noted that while awareness around emotional well-being has improved in recent years, stigma continues to prevent many students from seeking timely help. Dr Kumar stated that instead of treating counselling as an intervention only during crises, schools should normalise conversations around emotions, resilience, stress management and healthy relationships as part of everyday learning. Educationists believe schools have an equally important role in shaping emotionally healthy environments through institutional policies, teachers' training and parental engagement. "Education today must prepare children not only to excel in examinations but also to nav-

igate setbacks, uncertainty and interpersonal relationships. Schools need to integrate social-emotional learning, mindfulness, peer-support initiatives and regular interaction with counsellors into the school ecosystem. A child's emotional wellbeing is as important as academic success, and both must progress together," said educationist Shishir Jaipuria, chairman of Seth Anandram Jaipuria Group of Educational Institutions. Several schools have begun introducing wellness periods, dedicated counselling cells, peer mentoring programmes and workshops on cyber safety, emotional regulation and responsible digital behaviour, he said. Jaipuria pointed out that each teacher has to adopt the role of a counsellor to address the challenge of fewer trained counsellors.

Sadhotra expresses grief over Pir Panjal rain havoc, calls for stronger disaster preparedness

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JAMMU: National Conference Additional General Secretary and former minister Ajay Kumar Sadhotra on Sunday expressed profound grief over the loss of lives and widespread devastation caused by cloudbursts, flash floods and landslides in Rajouri, Surankote and other parts of the Pir Panjal region, while calling for comprehensive rehabilitation of affected families and stronger disaster preparedness measures. In a statement, Sadhotra conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the families who lost their loved ones in the natural calamity, describing the tragedy as one that had left several fami-

lies shattered and many others displaced. "My heart goes out to every family that has lost a loved one in this devastating natural calamity. I share their grief and pray that they are blessed with courage and strength to bear this irreparable loss," he said. He also prayed for eternal peace to the departed souls and wished a speedy recovery to those injured, expressing hope that normalcy would be restored in the affected areas at the earliest. Sadhotra appreciated Chief Minister Omar Abdullah for closely monitoring the situation and ensuring prompt rescue, relief and rehabilitation measures in the affected

areas. He said the swift response of the government, district administration, police, SDRF, NDRF, Army and other rescue agencies had helped save lives and provide timely assistance to people affected by the disaster. He lauded the rescue personnel for working under adverse weather conditions and difficult terrain to evacuate stranded residents, provide medical aid and restore essential services. Calling for collective efforts to assist the affected population, Sadhotra urged voluntary organisations, social groups and well-wishers to supplement the government's relief operations by extending support to families in distress. He stressed the need for

adequate compensation and comprehensive rehabilitation for those affected, while calling for the restoration of damaged roads, drinking water supply, electricity and communication infrastructure on a priority basis. Highlighting the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, the National Conference leader said climate-related disasters were becoming more common and underscored the need to strengthen disaster preparedness and mitigation mechanisms in vulnerable regions. He called for improved early warning systems, more resilient infrastructure and greater community awareness to minimise future loss of life and property.

SC grants bail to Kashmiri youth jailed for over 9 yrs

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JAMMU: The Supreme Court of India has granted bail to a man who remained incarcerated for over nine years as an undertrial in a murder case. Expressing shock over the prolonged delay in the judicial proceedings, the apex court invoked its powers under Article 32 of the Constitution of India to order his release. The division bench comprising Justice MM Sundresh and Justice Prasanna B Varale observed that the trial was moving at a snail's pace, which shocked their judicial conscience. The order was passed on July 16, 2026 during the hearing of a criminal writ petition filed by the petitioner, Liakat Ali, against the State of Jammu and Kashmir. The petitioner was represented in the apex court by a legal team including advocates Ranjeet Kumar, Simanta Kumar, TR Naval, and

Sushma Kumari, along with advocate on record Dr Pratap Singh Nerwal. The respondent state was represented by advocate Parth Awasthi and advocate on record Pashupathi Nath Razdan. The background of the case dates back to an occurrence where the petitioner, then a teenager, was accused of offences punishable under Sections 302, 382, and 201 read with Section 34 of the Ranbir Penal Code, 1989. The prosecution case against the petitioner rested entirely on circumstantial evidence. Following his arrest, the petitioner remained in jail for nine years and two months, during which his initial bail application attained finality in the year 2024. Despite this, the trial failed to make substantial progress, with the Trial Court examining only 12 out of the 30 listed prosecution witnesses. The counsel for the petitioner argued

that the trial was delayed for no fault of the accused. The defence stressed that the court must consider the core principles governing the presumption of innocence, reiterating that bail is the rule and jail is the exception. Opposing the plea, the counsel for the state argued that the nature of the offences was severe and nothing prevented the petitioner from approaching the lower court with a fresh bail application, meaning no apex court interference was required. The bench rejected the state's contention, noting the extraordinary delay in the conclusion of the trial. The judges observed that in the normal course, they would not have entertained the petition, but the specific circumstances demanded intervention. The apex court noted that at the current pace, the trial was likely to take significant time, which placed a distinct duty on the state and the judiciary to act swiftly.

DC Khan monitors situation amid adverse weather advisory

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RAMBAN: Deputy Commissioner Ramban Mohammad Alyas Khan Sunday personally monitored the situation across the district following the adverse weather advisory and intermittent rainfall. He inspected National Highway-44 at the Nashri landslide site and other vulnerable locations to assess the impact of the inclement weather and review restoration measures undertaken by the departments concerned. Meanwhile, the DC directed all Sub Divisional Magistrates and Tehsildars to remain stationed in their respective jurisdictions, maintain close coordination with line departments, monitor the situation round the clock and ensure a prompt response to any emergency.



He instructed field officers to remain in constant touch with the District Administration and immediately report any incident requiring urgent intervention. The Deputy Commissioner directed officers of NHAI, BRO/BECON, the Public Works Department (PWD) and PMGSY to deploy adequate manpower and machinery for immediate restoration of all affected roads

and to ensure that road connectivity is restored at the earliest. He stressed that all roads, particularly the National Highway and other major routes, should be kept traffic-worthy to facilitate the safe movement of commuters and emergency services. Reviewing the status of essential services, the DC took stock of water supply, power supply, healthcare fa-

cilities, availability of essential commodities and other public utilities. He directed officers concerned to ensure uninterrupted delivery of these services and to remain fully prepared to address any disruptions on priority. The DC said the District Administration has activated all essential services and restoration agencies to deal with any eventuality arising.

J&K High Court refuses to quash Srinagar SIM swap fraud case FIR

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SRINAGAR: The High Court of Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh has dismissed a petition seeking to quash a First Information Report (FIR) against an accused involved in a high-tech SIM card swapping and bank fraud case. Justice Sanjay Dhar ruled that the court cannot hold a mini-trial to determine the veracity of allegations at this stage. The court observed that the allegations clearly disclose the commission of cognizable offences, and the investigating agency has a statutory duty to undertake a full investigation. The order was pronounced on July 13, 2026 at the Srinagar wing of the High Court in a criminal petition filed

by the petitioner, Yavnika alias Anshu. The petitioner was represented by advocate Hazim Qureshi. No counsel appeared on behalf of the respondents, which included the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and others. The background of the case stems from a communication received from the Cyber Crime Police Station in Siliguri, West Bengal. A zero FIR was initially registered there based on a complaint filed by the father of the victim, Ritwik Gupta. The case was later transferred to the Nishat Police Station in Srinagar, leading to the registration of FIR No.1/2025 for offences under sections 318(4), 319(2), and 61(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). According to the complaint,

the victim was travelling in Jammu and Kashmir from 24 August 2024 to 2 September 2024. The complainant named 12 individuals, including the petitioner, accusing them of forming an association to swap the victim's SIM card and fraudulently siphon off Rs 8,73,661.50 from his bank accounts. The fraud allegedly took place at a hostel named "WHOSTELS" located in Upper Brein, Nishat, Srinagar. The victim had checked into a dormitory on 24 August 2024. Two days later, on 26 August 2024, the victim left his mobile phone on charge in his room while he went to the washroom. Upon returning, he found the petitioner and another accused, Rohit Kumar,

handling his mobile phone. The duo claimed they were merely trying to fix the phone as it was not charging properly. The accused subsequently learned that the victim was leaving for a week-long trekking trip in the Pir Panjal range. Due to the lack of network coverage during the trek, the victim remained unaware of his mobile phone status. When he returned to the hostel on 2 September 2024, he discovered multiple fraudulent transactions executed via net banking, debit cards, and credit cards across HDFC Bank, State Bank of India, and ICICI Bank. The accused had also allegedly used his identity to apply for loans and multiple new credit cards from Axis Bank.

SMS doctors find new tool to detect health risks in premature Newborns

JAIPUR: A study by doctors at Sawai Man Singh (SMS) Medical College has found that a simple scoring system can help quickly identify serious health risks in premature and low-weight newborns and improve their chances of survival. The study, conducted on 181 premature babies at JK Lone Hospital in Jaipur, has highlighted the usefulness of the CRIB-II (Clinical Risk Index for Babies-II) score to assess the condition of newborns soon after admission. The findings have been published in the International Journal of Paediatric Research. Dr Yogesh Yadav, a paediatric specialist and one of the researchers, said early assessment using this score can guide treatment decisions. "If we calculate the CRIB-II score at the time of admission, we can understand the seriousness of the baby's

condition. This helps doctors decide the right treatment direction early and increases the chances of saving the baby," he said. The study found that babies with higher CRIB-II scores had a higher risk of death. The average gestational age of babies in the study was about 28.88 weeks, and the average birth weight was 1.01 kg, much lower than normal. Explaining the scoring system, Dr Yadav said, "A score of 0-5 means low risk, 6-10 means moderate risk, 11-15 means high risk, and above 15 means very high risk. The higher the score, the greater the risk of serious illness and death." He said the CRIB-II score is based on five factors: birth weight, gestational age, body temperature at admission, blood acid levels and baby's gender. Highlighting its importance, Dr Yadav said, "CRIB-II is not just a score to pre-

dict death risk, but an important scientific tool for decision-making in the NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit). In the first few hours, we can identify which newborn is at high risk." He added that the system is especially useful when medical resources are limited. "When beds, ventilators or trained staff are limited, babies with higher scores can be given priority in the NICU. It also helps in deciding which newborns need to be referred immediately to higher centres," Dr Yadav said. He said the score also helps doctors communicate better with families. "Through CRIB-II, we can give parents a clearer and more accurate understanding of the baby's condition, possible outcomes and treatment needs," he said. He stressed that the tool can play a key role in India.