

MoE proposes review of TET exams

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: The Ministry of Education (MoE) has proposed to undertake comprehensive measures pertaining to the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET). MoE in an office memorandum said that the review is related to TET and proposed legislative review in view of emerging issues concerning teachers and teacher eligibility "The Ministry of Education, Government of India, has taken note of various representations and issues being raised by teachers, teacher associations, educational institutions and other stakeholders regarding the implementation of the TET requirement," it reads.

The Ministry further said that it has also taken note of the directions and observations of the Supreme Court concerning the requirement of TET for teachers covered under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009.

"In view of the representations received from various stakeholders and with a view to ensuring a transparent, fair and workable framework for

teacher eligibility, the Government proposes to undertake a comprehensive review of the existing arrangements relating to TET," MoE said.

The Ministry said that the measures proposed for consideration of TET includes examination of the existing TET eligibility and qualification framework as well as examination of issues relating to teachers who are already in service and are required to acquire TET qualification;

MoE also said that the consideration of measures shall ensure that TET examinations are conducted periodically and at reasonable intervals. The Ministry has further proposed to review the examination of the practical difficulties faced by serving teachers in obtaining TET qualification. MoE said that there must be a consultation of State Governments, Union Territory Administrations, NCTE, educational experts and other stakeholders. It also said that the government will review whether appropriate amendments to the relevant statutory provisions are necessary in the larger public interest.

Dr. Ashfaq Ahmad Kailam assumes Charge as Director AHD Kashmir



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SRINAGAR: Dr. Ashfaq Ahmad Kailam today officially assumed charge as the

Director of Animal Husbandry Department (AHD), Kashmir, at the departmental headquarters GawKadal, Srinagar.

Upon his arrival at the Directorate, Dr.Kailam was warmly received by the senior officers, technical experts, and administrative staff from across the division. The officers extended their congratulations and expressed full cooperation in driving the department's developmental goals forward.

Immediately after taking over the operational responsibilities, the incoming Director chaired an introductory meeting with key departmental heads. During the interaction, Dr.Kailam outlined his core priorities including strengthening healthcare infrastructure, administrative efficiency, besides farmer welfare and livestock productivity. Dr. Kailam emphasized team collaboration, urging all staff members to work with dedication, transparency, and accountability to strengthen the rural economy dependent on animal

Chadoora sees simultaneous work on main bridge, footbridge

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

BUDGAM: Work on the main bridge and the newly taken-up footbridge in Chadoora over Nallah Doodhganga is progressing simultaneously, with Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Chadoora directing the concerned Roads and Buildings (R&B) Department and executing agency to expedite the pace of work and ensure minimum inconvenience to the general public. The SDM conducted an on-site inspection of both projects. He was accompanied by the Executive Engineer (ExEn), R&B Department, and the concerned Junior Engineer (JE).

The inspection comes after the main bridge was completely closed for public movement to facilitate its dismantling and reconstruction. The bridge had remained closed to vehicular traffic for nearly 10 months following the development of cracks, while pedestrian movement continued until the dismantling process began.

With the main bridge now inaccessible and construction work also underway on the footbridge, residents are facing difficulties in crossing the river and moving between the two sides of the area.

Taking note of the situation, the SDM directed the R&B Department to put in place an interim ramp/temporary diversion to facilitate pedestrian movement until the footbridge is completed.

Speaking to the media during the inspection, the SDM said the works had been taken up on the directions of the administration and that the footbridge was an immediate requirement considering the difficulties being faced by the public.<"The temporary ramp is being constructed to provide relief to people during the intervening period," he said, directing the concerned department to ensure that the arrangement is completed at the earliest. The temporary arrangement is being taken up on priority, with the SDM stating that the ramp is expected to be completed by Friday and

provide immediate relief to the people.

The SDM further directed the concerned agency to expedite the construction of the footbridge and set mid-November as the target for its completion. The footbridge is being treated as an immediate requirement to restore dedicated pedestrian connectivity between the two sides.

"The footbridge is an immediate requirement considering the difficulties being faced by the public. We have set mid-November as the target for its completion," the SDM said. Meanwhile, work on the main bridge is also underway following the commencement of the dismantling process. The SDM directed the executing agency to maintain the pace of work and adhere to the stipulated timeline for its reconstruction. The ongoing works are particularly significant for pedestrians, including school-going children, elderly persons, women and other residents who need to cross the river for their daily activities.

DC Budgam stresses speedy, quality execution of developmental projects in Chadoora

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

BUDGAM: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan, today conducted an extensive tour of Chadoora and reviewed various ongoing and proposed development projects.

Among other projects, the Deputy Commissioner inspected New Bus Stand, New Bus stand shopping complex, main bridge, new footbridge and planned Revenue Complex having SDM Office and Tehsil Office.

During inspection of New Bus Stand, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed the facilities available for the public. He also inspected the New Bus Stand Shopping Complex and reviewed the progress of the ongoing work.

During tour, the Deputy Commissioner also visited the Main Bridge and reviewed the repair works being carried out



there. He also inspected the new footbridge and took stock of its progress. He directed the concerned departments to ensure timely completion and proper quality of works.

The Deputy Commissioner also inspected the site of the new planned Revenue Complex, which will house the SDM Office and Tehsil Office. He directed the concerned officers to take necessary steps for early execution of the project.

The Deputy Commissioner also took serious note of illegal mining in Nallah Doodhganga and directed the District Mineral Officer to intensify monitoring and take strict action against violations. During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner interacted with local people and delegations and heard their issues and demands. He assured that genuine issues would be examined for necessary redressal.

He directed all concerned officers to closely monitor the works and ensure their timely completion.

The Deputy Commissioner was accompanied by SDM Chadoora, Joint Director Planning Budgam, Tehsil, Executive Engineer R&B Division Chadoora, Executive Engineer Irrigation, ARTO Budgam, Executive Officer MC Chadoora and other concerned officers.

Cluster University Srinagar, Rapture Biotech join hands to strengthen skill development

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: Cluster University of Srinagar signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Rapture Biotech to strengthen industry-academia linkages across biotechnology and allied life sciences.

The agreement will create pathways for student skill development, research, training and career advancement. Both institutions will align academic learning with current industry requirements. The initiative supports employability, innovation and applied research within the region.

The MoU was signed on 14 September 2026 at Cluster University of Srinagar. Registrar Prof (Dr) Wilayat Hussain Rizvi in presence of Vice Chancellor, Prof Mohammed Mobin, signed for the university and Ambika Slathia, Di-



rector of Rapture Biotech, signed for the company. Controller Examinations, Prof Khurshid Ahmad Mir and PS to Vice Chancellor, Dr. Ubaid Sidique, besides Senior representatives from both organisations witnessed the signing ceremony.

The agreement covers biotechnology, botany, chemistry, biochemistry, microbi-

ology, geography, geology, pharmaceutical chemistry and zoology. It also includes other life-science disciplines. Activities will include student and faculty exchanges, joint academic initiatives and hands-on laboratory training.

Project and dissertation support will be extended to undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral students. Intern-

ships, workshops and technical skill exchange will be delivered through structured programmes. Placement support, startup incubation and mentorship will be offered to aspiring student entrepreneurs.

The partners will collaborate on research publications and share intellectual property from joint work.

Cluster University Srinagar signs MoU with NIELIT for NSQF-aligned skill programmes



■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 18: Cluster University of Srinagar (CUS) signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology (NIELIT) J&K for National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF)-aligned skill development for a period of three years.

The MoU will strengthen digital skilling, employability and emerging technology readiness among learners.

The collaboration will use the NIELIT Digital University Platform for technology-enabled education. It will support online, blended and other mutually agreed learning modes.<"The MoU was signed on 15 September 2026 at Cluster University of Srinagar. Registrar Prof (Dr) Wilayat Hussain Rizvi, in presence of the Vice Chancellor Prof Mohammed Mobin, signed for the university and Ashaq Hussain Dar, Director NIELIT, signed for the Institute. Controller Examinations, Prof Khurshid Ahmad Mir and PS to Vice Chancellor Dr. Ubaid Sidique, besides Senior representatives from both organisations witnessed the signing ceremony. The partnership will facilitate courses in Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, Cyber Security and Cloud Computing. Other areas include Internet of

Things, Blockchain, AR and VR, semiconductor technologies and digital governance. The collaboration also covers electronics, information technology and other emerging technology domains. Students, faculty, staff, professionals and eligible learners may benefit from these programmes. Credit transfer and academic integration will follow applicable institutional and regulatory norms. The NIELIT platform provides learning management, digital content and virtual laboratory facilities. It also supports artificial intelligence enabled learning, learner analytics and online assessments. The partners will jointly develop course content, assignments and laboratory manuals. They will also facilitate faculty development, internships, project work, research and industry engagement. Workshops, seminars, webinars, bootcamps and hackathons will be organised under the partnership. The MoU further provides for training of trainers and institutional coordinators. It includes capacity building for administrators supporting platform based academic programmes. NIELIT will support course delivery, assessments, certification and learner progress reporting. The Cluster University will identify learners, facilitate enrolment and obtain necessary academic approvals.

Cold storage bookings fill up across Kashmir ahead of peak apple season

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: Cold storage capacity across Kashmir has been almost entirely booked months before the apple season is set to peak, with growers who failed to reserve space in advance now struggling to find storage for their produce.

The rush follows last season's experience, when growers who stored their crop instead of selling during the peak arrival period secured significantly better prices amid weak market conditions.

Cold storage operators said a major portion of their capacity was reserved several months ago, shortly after last season's stored produce was cleared, while the

remaining space has also been largely booked in recent weeks. Most units are expected to begin receiving fresh produce from next week.

Growers said the early booking of storage space has become a necessity rather than a choice for many farmers. "We have seen what happened last year. During the peak season, rates were under pressure, while prices improved later. This year, growers have therefore booked storage space much earlier. Those who have not made arrangements in advance are now struggling to get space," a grower said.

Another grower said last year's market was unfavourable when a large quantity of apples arrived to-

gether due to highway disruption. "Those who had the option of keeping their produce in cold storage waited for better market conditions and were able to sell at comparatively better prices later," he said.

Cold storage unit holders said bookings began several months ago, with growers reserving space soon after last season's stored produce was cleared.

"Most of our capacity was booked months in advance. The response has been much stronger this year because growers who stored their apples last season received relatively good returns. The remaining capacity has also been booked now," a cold storage operator said.

Another unit holder said

most facilities are making preparations to receive the crop from next week.

"Several units are scheduled to start receiving produce from next week. Since capacity is limited, growers cannot wait until the last moment to make bookings. The demand this year is significantly higher than what we witnessed earlier," he said.

Growers said cold storage has increasingly emerged as an important option for managing market risk, particularly when arrivals are concentrated within a short period.

"Cold storage gives growers some flexibility. Instead of selling the entire crop immediately when arrivals are high and rates are weak, they can store part of the produce

and wait for the market to improve. But this option is useful only when storage is booked in advance," another grower said.

The growers, however, maintained that cold storage alone cannot resolve all the challenges confronting the horticulture sector and called for better market management, transportation facilities and timely market information to help them make informed decisions. With the new apple season approaching its peak, the early exhaustion of cold storage bookings has also highlighted the growing dependence of growers on controlled storage facilities to protect themselves against sharp fluctuations in market prices.

The visit provided an opportunity to assess the implementation of rural development initiatives in the challenging border and hilly terrain of Machil valley and to identify areas requiring focused intervention.

He also interacted with local residents in villages close to the Line of Control (LoC) and listened to their concerns and developmental needs.

During the visit, emphasis was laid on timely completion, quality execution and effective monitoring of works, particularly in view of the approaching winter.

Additional Secretary appreciated the innovative approach adopted for the implementation of VB-GRAM G at Malik Bela, the last village close to the Line of Control (LoC). He also inspected the geotagged PMAY-G houses and interacted with the beneficiaries.

The Additional Secretary further inspected the playground at Machil, constructed under MGNREGA, and reviewed the ongoing flood-protection crate works aimed at safeguarding the area from flood-related damage.

Earlier, on reaching Machil, the Additional Secretary chaired a meeting of officers and field functionaries of the Machil Block to review block wise progress on various ongoing development works, payments made to labourers and other progress indicators under VBGRAM G, PMAY-G and district Capex.

The Additional Secretary was accompanied by ACD Kupwara, Abdul Rashid, BDO Machil, Mohammad Rafiq Poswal, and other officers.

SKUAST-K holds 73rd BoM Meeting

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-K) held its 73rd Meeting of the Board of Management (BoM) at the VC Secretariat, SKUAST-K, with Vice-Chancellor Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai chairing the meeting.

The meeting was attended by Prof. B.N. Tripathi, Vice-Chancellor, SKUAST-Jammu; Dr. Rajbir Singh, Deputy Director General, Agricultural Extension, ICAR; Dr. Cherukamulli Srinivasa Rao, Director, ICAR-IARI; representatives from Director General, Codes; Special Secretary, Agriculture Production; Special Secretary, Planning and Monitoring; Director Extension, SKUAST-K; Dean, Faculty of Forestry; officers of the university; and a progressive farmer, among others.

During the meeting, Vice-Chancellor Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai presented the University's progress report, outlining institutional developments and the roadmap for its next phase of transformation.

In his address, Prof. Ganai said SKUAST-K has achieved the goal set in 2022 of moving from 'Local to National' and is now repositioning its goalpost from 'National to Global'. He said the next phase of transformation would focus on six key pillars: student diversity, faculty diversity, curriculum transformation, research and innovation, world-class infrastructure, and financial sustainability.

Outlining the University's 2030 roadmap, he identified targets including raising international student enrolment to 5 percent and the share of students from other States and Union Territories to 35 percent. He also set targets of expanding the University's

intellectual property rights (IPR) portfolio to over 250, taking its H-index to 250-plus, and attracting more than 50 faculty members from outside the Union Territory, including Professors of Practice and Adjunct Faculty, to strengthen faculty diversity.

Among the major decisions, the Board approved the establishment of the Centre for Faculty Training and Pedagogy Research (CFTPR) under the Centre for Quality Education, along with the Centre for Quality Plant Material Discipline and Certification (CQPMDC).

As part of academic restructuring, the Board approved the renaming of several divisions. The Division of Floriculture and Landscaping was renamed the Division of Floriculture, Ornamental Breeding and Landscaping Innovation. The Division of Fruit Sciences was renamed the Division of Fruit Breeding, Technology and Inno-

vation, while the Division of Vegetable Sciences was renamed the Division of Vegetable Breeding, Technology and Innovation.

On the recommendations of the Selection Committee, the Board approved the appointment of Deans and Directors in various academic and administrative positions, including Education, Research, Planning and Monitoring, Students Welfare, Faculty of Agriculture, Horticulture, Veterinary Sciences and Fisheries.

The Board also approved direct appointments of Associate Professors and Professors across 14 departments, along with Career Advancement Scheme (CAS) promotions of Associate Professors and Professors in 31 disciplines.

The Board also approved select recommendations of the Academic Council and considered matters related to statutory amendments.