

CS reviews implementation of VVP-II for holistic development of border villages

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: As part of the nationwide initiative to realise the vision of Viksit Bharat, Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo on Sunday chaired a high-level meeting to assess the progress and implementation of the Vibrant Villages Programme - Phase II (VVP-II) across Jammu & Kashmir.

The meeting, attended by the ACS Planning, ACS APD; Secretary Tribal Affairs; concerned DCs and other senior officers of concerned departments, focused on accelerating development interventions in strategically located border villages.

The Chief Secretary underscored the urgent need to complete comprehensive surveys to identify gaps in core components such as road connectivity, telecom services, television access and electricity supply in the identified villages.

He directed the departments to undertake detailed theme-wise gap analysis and expedite the formulation of individual Village Action Plans aimed at saturating these areas with essential infrastructure and services. He further called for the designation of dedicated nodal officers for each component to ensure focused monitoring and timely execution.

Emphasising a whole-of-government approach, the Chief Secretary urged departments of IT, Health and Education to proactively identify deficiencies



Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo chairing a high-level meeting on Sunday.

within their respective domains and initiate corrective interventions. He also stressed close coordination with BSNL and Prasar Bharati to strengthen telecom and television connectivity, while directing the concerned departments to prepare structured roadmaps for coverage of all thematic areas under their Village Action Plans.

ACS Planning, Ashish Chander Verna, informed the meeting that VVP-II is a centrally funded initiative with a national outlay of ₹6,839 crore for the period 2024-25 to 2028-29. The programme aims to transform strategically important border villages into prosperous, sustainable and secure communities.

He highlighted that the scheme operates on a three-pronged strategy of saturating existing central and UT schemes, strengthening basic infrastructure and building enabling capacities for sustainable livelihood generation, thereby integrating border populations with the national

mainstream.

The Secretary, Tribal Affairs Department, apprised the meeting that a comprehensive roadmap has been prepared for J&K under which 124 strategic villages across 43 border blocks in 8 districts have been selected for focused development. He added that a robust institutional framework has been established with the designation of nodal departments and officers at the UT and district levels, along with the constitution of screening committees through the General Administration Department (GAD).

It was further informed that the programme covers the border districts of Baramulla, Bandipora, Kupwara, Jammu, Samba, Kathua, Rajouri and Poonch. A comprehensive gap analysis has been conducted across 1,421 border villages to achieve saturation in four critical areas constituting all-weather road connectivity under PMGSY-IV, telecom connectivity under Digital Bharat Nidhi, on-grid electrification through RDSS, and television connectivity under the BIND scheme.

While 1,378 villages have already been connected with road infrastructure, 30 strategic villages have been proposed for connectivity under PMGSY-IV. Surveys for 169 habitations have also been completed for seeking norm relaxations to facilitate connectivity in difficult terrains.

With respect to telecom connectivity it was revealed that the BSNL has expedited 4G saturation surveys, with 98 of the selected vibrant villages currently covered and plans underway to extend services to remaining shadow areas, particularly in Kupwara and Bandipora districts.

Regarding electrification, districts of Jammu, Samba and Kathua have achieved 100 per cent coverage. The Power Development Department has been directed to prioritise pending works in Tulail Valley and Kupwara

to ensure grid connectivity for the remaining 1,402 households in Kupwara and 2,574 households in Bandipora.

To bridge the information and communication gap, focused efforts are being made to provide DTH facilities to households with television sets, especially in border blocks of Baramulla and Kupwara.

For ensuring transparency and real-time monitoring, the Digital VVP Portal has been operationalised. District Nodal Officers have completed verification of Local Government Directory (LGD) codes and are in the process of finalising Village Action Plans, which utilise geo-tagging technology to align development works with village-specific needs identified during the gap analysis.

Beyond physical infrastructure, VVP-II also prioritises financial inclusion, tourism promotion and preservation of cultural heritage. The roadmap includes organisation of medical camps, awareness campaigns and tourism initiatives aimed at boosting the local economy and strengthening national integration.

It was reiterated that the Vibrant Villages Programme is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme focused on the holistic development of villages along the northern borders by improving socio-economic conditions and ensuring a better quality of life for residents of identified border areas.



Cold Weather Challenges Cardiovascular Health: Dr Sushil



HoD Ccardiology GMCH Jammu Dr Sushil Sharma with team examining patients.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: In view of recent climate change and upcoming winter season Head Department of cardiology GMCH Jammu Dr Sushil Sharma held a cardiac awareness cum health checkup camp at Vishwakarma Temple Mishriwala, Jammu with main focus to reduce the impact of winter season on cardiac ailments and decrease the morbidity and mortality. Interacting with the people Dr Sushil stated that Cold weather exerts a significant influence on cardiovascular health by triggering a physiological response in which blood vessels constrict, leading to increased blood pressure and forcing the heart to work harder than usual, thereby placing additional strain on the cardiovascular system. When temperatures drop, this vasoconstriction reduces blood flow to the skin to conserve heat, but in doing so, it increases the workload on the heart and raises the risk of adverse events, especially in individuals with pre-existing heart disease. Alongside this natural response, lifestyle changes during winter such as decreased physical activity, weight gain due to heavier food intake, and increased indoor time further contribute to worsening heart health. He elaborated that the combination of narrowed arteries, elevated blood pressure, and reduced cardiovascular resilience can heighten the likelihood of angina, arrhythmias, heart attacks, and strokes. Moreover, cold weather can cause the body to release more stress hormones like adrenaline, which further elevates the heart rate and blood pressure, compounding the strain. Even sudden exposure to cold, such as stepping out into chilly air or engaging in strenuous activity, can precipitate acute cardiac events by rapidly increasing oxygen demand in the heart. Thus, understanding this interplay between cold temperatures and cardiovascular physiology is crucial for adopting protective strategies during winter months. These include wearing adequate warm clothing, avoiding sudden heavy exertion, maintaining regular exercise indoors, adhering to heart-healthy diets, monitoring blood pressure, staying hydrated, managing stress, and ensuring timely intake of prescribed medications. Recognizing symptoms such as chest discomfort, breathlessness, palpitations becomes even more important in cold seasons. He added that in addition to the direct physical effects of cold on the

cardiovascular system, winter also influences heart health through behavioral and environmental shifts that often go unnoticed. Shorter daylight hours can disrupt circadian rhythms, leading to increased fatigue, mood changes, and decreased motivation for exercise all of which indirectly weaken cardiovascular resilience. Many individuals also consume more salty, sugary, and high-fat comfort foods during colder months, which can cause fluid retention, weight gain, and elevated cholesterol levels, further straining the heart. Even indoor heating systems can contribute by causing dehydration, which thickens the blood slightly and makes circulation more demanding for the heart. Infections trigger systemic inflammation, elevate metabolic demands, and can destabilize plaque in coronary arteries, increasing the risk of acute events like myocardial infarction. Fever, dehydration, and reduced appetite during illness also worsen heart strain. This makes timely vaccination, early treatment of infections, adequate hydration, and careful monitoring of symptoms essential during cold weather. By recognizing these interconnected winter-related triggers, individuals and clinicians can better anticipate risks and adopt protective measures that safeguard heart health throughout the season, He said. Dr Sushil Sharma in his concluding remarks told that cold weather silently challenges the cardiovascular system by increasing blood pressure, raising heart workload, and amplifying the effects of existing risk factors, making winters a vulnerable period for heart patients. Awareness, preventive habits, and early symptom recognition are powerful tools in reducing winter-related cardiac events. By staying warm, remaining active, eating wisely, and following medical advice closely, individuals can significantly protect their heart health throughout the colder months. Management Committee of the Vishwakarma Temple Raman Chaloetra, Rashpal Verma, Mangal Dass, Balvant Kataria, Joginder Angotra and Om Prakash Kataria appreciated the efforts of Dr Sushil for conducted camp. Others present were Dr Bhola Kumar and Dr Aditya Sharma. Paramedics and Volunteers includes Kamal Sharma, Ranjeet Singh, Rajinder Singh , Vikas Kumar, Manoj Sharma, Rahul Vaid, Maninder Singh, Shubham, Mukesh, Abhishek, Sanjay Singh and Nirvair Singh Bali.

In age of artificial intelligence, teachers have bigger roles to play for boosting our young minds: Dr Darakhshan

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
SRINAGAR: Chairperson of Jammu & Kashmir Waqf Board Dr Syed Darakhshan Andrabi participated as the Chief Guest in the Annual Function of the Spring Buds School Ompora Budgam on Sunday and encouraged the young achievers and performers in different academic pursuits and other extracurricular activities.

Waqf Chairperson was accorded a warm welcome by the Chairman of the School Mohammad Shafi Qureshi, Principal Shah Nawaz Qurehi and the staff and parents on her arrival amid grand cultural performance.

Dr Darakhshan Andrabi witnessed the Cultural Show presented by the talented boys and girls of the school & also visited the Science & Knowledge Exhibits created by the students of the institute.



Spring Buds School management presenting memento to Chief Guest, Dr Syed Darakhshan Andrabi, Chairperson JKWB.

Addressing the gathering of students, teachers, parents, civil society representatives and the galaxy of administrators of different government departments, Dr Darakhshan said that this is the age of knowledge and human development and we all have to provide the conducive teaching

learning atmosphere in our educational institutes where we are able to prepare our young minds to fit in the new world of Knowledge and science.

"In the age of artificial intelligence, teachers have bigger roles to play in boosting our young minds. We have to broaden the thinking horizon of our

kids so that they are ready to be global citizens in the arena of knowledge and technological development. The future belongs to Science & Technology; and we have to prepare our new generation to be the technological leaders ", said Dr Darakhshan Andrabi.

She said that inclusivity is the driver of the new age and we cannot afford to fall behind. She emphasized on the need of training our youth to be ambassadors of peace and knowledge to make them relevant to the modern world.

"Our young kids are our guarantee to lead our future to a developed nation in every sphere of life. Our country is growing at a bigger pace now and taking the lead seats at all important initiatives of the new world and we have to make our young minds the contributors and beneficiaries of these changes at national and global levels", said Andrabi.

3-day CBP on "Resilient and Responsible Urbanisation in Hill Towns" begins



Comm Secy H&UDD, Mandeep Kaur chairing a Capacity Building Programme.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: The 3-Day Capacity Building Programme (CBP) on Resilient and Responsible Urbanisation in Hill Towns began here on Sunday at Vikas Bhawan, Jammu.

The programme is being organised by the Housing and Urban Development Department (H&UDD) and the Jammu Development Authority in association with the Union Ministry for Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) and the Centre of Excellence for Urban Planning and Design, School of Planning and Architecture (SPA), New Delhi. The event was inaugurated by Mandeep Kaur, Commissioner Secretary, Housing and Urban Development Department.

Others present were Professor Virendra K. Paul, Director, School of Planning

and Architecture, Delhi; Dr. Devansh Yadav, Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC); Dr. Rupesh Kumar, Vice Chairman, Jammu Development Authority and Faz Lul Haseeb, Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) besides other senior officials and stakeholders from government institutions.

The first day of the programme included a series of technical sessions led by experts from SPA New Delhi, focusing on the evolution of hill settlements, their unique physiography and the vulnerabilities emerging from rapid urban growth. Discussions covered carrying capacity challenges, tourism-driven pressures, climate-linked risks and sustainability concerns, while emphasising the need for evidence-based planning and regulatory

frameworks tailored to hill environments. The speakers also highlighted the approaches such as green growth, contextualised development strategies and resilience planning for Himalayan towns. Mandeep Kaur emphasised the importance of this capacity-building initiative for Jammu & Kashmir, particularly in the context of Union Territory's growing urban centres located in hill geographies. She underscored the need for responsible planning strategies that balance development with ecological sensitivity, especially as climate-related vulnerabilities continue to intensify in mountain regions. The 3-day programme, scheduled from 23rd to 25th November 2025, aims to equip the urban practitioners with knowledge and tools to promote sustainable, resilient, and context-specific urban growth in hill towns.

Bhalla criticises power hike, seeks immediate roll back

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: JKPC Working President Raman Bhalla on Sunday launched a fierce attack on the government, accusing it of "glaring failures" and "administrative neglect" that has left the people of Jammu & Kashmir struggling even after one year of the elected government taking charge.

Addressing an impressive programme at Rohi Morh today, Bhalla said the government's inaction has deepened the problems of the common people, who continue to suffer due to misgovern-



JKPC Working President Raman Bhalla interacting with people.

nance, irregular power supply, shortage of clean drinking water and lack of basic civic facilities.

Bhalla demanded immediate measures to resolve the persistent power crisis, augmentation of drinking water supply, and significant investment in infrastructure and road connectivity.

He also urged the government to address pending issues of daily wagers, casual labourers, migrant workers, and ensure steps for the addressing the genuine issues of Kashmiri migrants & their children & for their safe and dignified return of Kashmiri Pandits.

Expressing serious concern over the proposed 20% power tariff hike, Bhalla said the decision has sparked widespread resentment among citizens. He appealed to the government to roll back the hike, provide compensation to flood-affected families, and extend support to business units suffering from natural disasters.

Bhalla further sought strict measures to curb drug abuse, establishment of rehabilitation centres, revival of the industrial sector, creation of employment opportunities for youth, improvement in healthcare and education infrastructure, and promotion of tourism.

He expressed grave concern over rising crime in Jammu and sought immediate strong measures to check it and instill. Sense of security amongst common man.

He stressed the need for transparency, accountability and strong anti-corruption mechanisms to restore people's faith in governance.

Prominent leaders present on the occasion included Anrit Bali (PC General Secretary), Rajinder Singh, Gurmeet Singh (Block President), Madam Santosh Sharma, Manohar Lal Bittu, Babu Ram Bakshi, Rajesh Sharma Babby, Raje Kumar Sharma, Ramesh Chander, Kewal Sharma, Darshan Happy, Neter Sharma, along with several other senior party workers.

Saurabh Bhagat reviews Legal Metrology labs, calls for modernisation

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: Commissioner Secretary, Food Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA), Saurabh Bhagat, on Sunday conducted a comprehensive inspection of the Legal Metrology Department's laboratories and infrastructure at Transport Nagar, Narwal, Jammu.

He reviewed functioning of the laboratories and assessed ongoing reforms aimed at strengthening consumer protection mechanisms in the Union Territory.

During the inspection, the Commissioner Secretary stressed timely achievement of departmental targets and called for strong measures to enhance ease of doing business for the trading community. He emphasized continuous technological upgradation of laboratories to ensure precision, accuracy and transparency in verification of weights and measures.

He informed that the government has approved deployment of 20 mobile laboratories equipped with advanced testing instruments, which will significantly improve the field mobility and provide doorstep verification services to the traders.

This initiative is expected to enhance consumer confidence and strengthen adherence to legal metrology standards.

The Commissioner Secretary also reviewed progress on strengthening karat measurement facilities, ensuring accurate and reliable gold purity testing services for citizens.

He directed the district officers to ensure proper upkeep and maintenance of departmental buildings and promptly report any infrastructure requirements to higher authorities. He added that the availability of land in remaining districts is being assessed and the



Controller Legal Metrology, J&K, Rajinder Singh Tara interacting with Comm Secy FCS&CA, Saurabh Bhagat.

modern laboratories will soon be established across the Union Territory to enhance accessibility and better serve the public.

Controller Legal Metrology, J&K, Rajinder Singh Tara, Joint Controller Jammu, Manoj Prabhakar, and other officers of the department accompanied the Commissioner Secretary during the inspection.

Appreciating the efforts of the department, the Commissioner Secretary asked the officers to continue with a proactive, service-oriented approach to uphold consumer rights and ensure fair trade practices across Jammu & Kashmir.

Property of Drug Peddler attached

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
BUDGAM: Police in Budgam have attached property worth around Rs 35 lakhs, including a double-storey house in Mazhama, Magam, and a Maruti A-Star (JK05B-4705), belonging to notorious drug peddler Hilal Ahmad Mir alias Hilal Galwan.

Mir, involved in FIR No. 29/2020 under

Sections 8/22 and 29 of the NDPS Act, was found to have acquired the property through proceeds of narcotics trafficking.

After completing all legal formalities and verifying evidence, police seized the assets under Section 68-F of the NDPS Act. Authorities reiterated their zero-tolerance policy toward drugs and urged the public to report any drug-related activities.