

DAILY Asian EXPRESS

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Last nine years saw decisive policies, political stability: Amit Shah

New Delhi, Sep 29: The last nine years have witnessed decisive policies, political stability, democracy and teamwork in the federal structure that led the country out of the "policy paralysis" from 2004 to 2014, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Friday. Addressing the 118th Annual Session of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, he said the period of 2004 to 2014 "shook the country", which was also the "last period" of political instability. The last nine years have seen the result of performance. The country's economy has also got a new direction under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Shah said. "The last nine years have been that of political stability and decisive policy-making... our GDP has grown from USD 2.03 trillion to USD 3.75 trillion during the period, which is almost double. Per capita income has grown from Rs 68,000 in 2013-14... to Rs 1.80 lakh," he said. Shah said PM Modi has tried to change India in every field in the last nine years and has also been

see Shah on pg 02...

Thousands converge at Hazratbal shrine to catch glimpse of Holy Relic on Eid-e-Meelad (saw) Eve

Srinagar: Thousands of people Friday gathered at the Kashmir's revered shrine of Hazratbal to have the glimpse of holy relic of Prophet Muhammad (saw) on the occasion of Eid-e-Meelad-un-Nabi (saw) amid moist eyes. Eid-e-Meelad un Nabi (saw) marks the birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad (saw). Early in the morning, people from far off places started gathering at the holy shrine. The atmosphere was charged with reverence as pilgrims from diverse backgrounds converged at the shrine, reaffirming the spirit of religious harmony. Men, women, along with children, raised their hands in the air and sought forgiveness from Almighty Allah, filling the air with hope and faith. Srinagar's Hazratbal shrine witnessed a massive gathering from all walks of life. People came from far districts of Jammu and Kashmir, with some of them even carrying lunch boxes with them. The gathering at Hazratbal Shrine became a symbol of faith and unity



in the region, as people from different faiths came together to witness the sacred relic. "Devotees, many of whom had travelled long distances, and mostly many of them were from Banihal, Doda, Kishtwar and other parts of Jammu shared their experiences of spirituality and togetherness, with tears in their eyes, and emotions running very high. "After seeing the holy relic, we fell contented. We feel satisfied and are sure that Allah will answer our all prayers," said Ali Muhammad, resident of Banihal

while talking to news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO). In the sacred moments when devotees gathered to witness the holy relic of Prophet Muhammad (saw) on this auspicious occasion of Eid-e-Meelad-un-Nabi (saw), emotions soared to unparalleled heights. "It was as if the very air around us became infused with the collective heartbeat of faith. Tears flowed freely, not as a sign of weakness, but as a testament to the overwhelming love and veneration we hold for the Prophet. In those tears, we found solace, unity, and a connection to something greater than ourselves. The sight of the relic was a profound reminder of the enduring legacy of the Prophet, and it touched our souls in a way that words can scarcely capture," said Mushtaq Ahmed, a resident of Budgam. A woman devotee, Raja Begum had come all the way from northern district of Kupwara, said: "it was as though centuries melted away

see Catch on pg 02...

IAF to buy 156 more 'Prachand' Light Combat Choppers

New Delhi, Sep 29: In what could be termed as one of the biggest pushes for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Make in India' in the defence sector, the Indian Air Force is going to place orders for 156 more Prachand Light Combat Helicopters, with HAL, which would be deployed at both the China and Pakistan front by the IAF and the Indian Army. The two services have already inducted 15 of these choppers in their fleet in the last 15 months after holding trials in the most extreme weather conditions and terrain in the world. "The Indian Air Force as the lead service has moved a proposal to the government for buying 156 more Prachand choppers as a joint acquisition case which is likely to get approved soon," senior defence officials said. Recently, Indian Air Force chief Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari had announced from foreign soil about the force's intent to buy around 100 more Light Combat Aircraft Mark 1A to push indigenisation. The combined total of the two projects in terms of worth is over Rs 1.5 lakh crore. Of the 156 choppers, 66 would be inducted by the Indian Air Force while the rest 90 would be acquired by the Indian Army. Meeting the Indian Air Force requirement of being a completely Indian Designed, developed and manufactured weapon system, the Prachand has been extensively test-flown by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL). The attack helicopter has been built as per the requirements

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World Heart Day: Heart attacks double in last 5 years in J&K



Doctors attribute rising heart attacks, strokes to pollution, sedentary lifestyle, fast food consumption

Srinagar: Heart attacks and strokes in Jammu & Kashmir have been rising, much like the rest of the world, and experts have identified pollution, insufficient exercise, and excessive consumption of fast foods

as the primary factors contributing to this trend. Cardiologists at several tertiary healthcare facilities in the Union Territory, who spoke with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), revealed that the number of heart attacks in Jammu & Kashmir has nearly doubled over the past five years. They said the hospitals here have witnessed an almost twofold increase in the number of stent procedures performed in the last two years alone. Dr A G Ahanger, a renowned Cardiologist, informed KNO that heart disease is responsible for approximately 27-31% of all deaths worldwide. However, about 85% of these deaths can be preventable if treated promptly, he said. The doctor emphasised that any symptoms associated with heart disease should not be disregarded, and a proper investigation should be done to diagnose and treat the condition and save lives.

see Heart on pg 02...

MHA allows foreign tourists to stay overnight in Ladakh's Hanle village

Leh, Sep 29: The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has now allowed foreign tourists to stay overnight in Hanle, a remote high-altitude village in Ladakh's Changthang plateau, an official said on Friday. Hanle, known for India's first dark sky reserve, offers excellent stargazing conditions due to its secluded location, high altitude and minimal light pollution. "The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India has granted permission for the night stays of foreign tourists in Hanle. This decision will rejuvenate the tourism sector in the Changthang region and broaden the scope of tourist destinations in the union territory," Commissioner-Secretary of Tourism Ladakh, Kacho Mehboob said. Until September 15, Hanle was off-limits to foreign tourists.

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Fissures within J&K BJP unit; notice served to 8 leaders over anti-party activities

Have given time to leaders to tender apology: Chairman Disciplinary Committee



Srinagar: Fissures appear within the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as the party's disciplinary committee on Friday served notice to eight Kashmir-based leaders over alleged anti-party activities, asking them to tender apology. Sources privy to the development told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said

while confirming the issuing of notice to the party leaders, said that it has come to the fore that the leaders are involved in anti-party activities. "We have given time to the leaders to tender an apology," he said, adding that in case the leaders fail to come up with the apology, then next procedure will be started in this regard against the leaders," he said. "Nothing can be stated further in this regard, the disciplinary committee is waiting for the response of the leaders," Sethi added. Party's General Secretary (Organization), Ashok Koul also said

see Notice on pg 02...

4 notorious drug smugglers booked under PIT NDPS Act in Baramulla: Police



Srinagar: Acting tough against drug peddlers and to eradicate the menace of drugs from the society, Jammu & Kashmir Police on Friday said to have booked four most wanted and notorious drug smugglers under PIT NDPS Act in Baramulla and lodged them in Central Jail Kot-balwal Jammu.

The four most wanted and notorious drug smugglers namely Muzamil Majeed Bhat @ Hashim resident of Mohalla Mir Sahib Old Town, Showkat Ahmad Sheikh resident of Umerabad Srinagar, Hayat Ahmad Bhat resident of Kawoosa Budgam & Bashir Ahmad Sheikh resident of Palpora Pattan have been booked under PIT-NDPS Act after obtaining formal detention orders from the competent Authority. The booked drug smugglers have been detained and subsequently

see Police on pg 02...

Dr Jitendra Launches Artificial Intelligence Driven Grievance Monitoring System

NEW DELHI: Dr Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology, MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, today launched Artificial Intelligence (AI) driven Grievance Monitoring System, IGMS 2.0 Public Grievance portal and Automated Analysis in TREE Dashboard portal of the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG). The Intelligent Grievance Monitoring System (IGMS) 2.0 Dashboard has been implemented by IIT Kanpur following an MoU with DARPG on December 14,



2021 for upgrading DARPG Information Systems (CPGRAMS) with Artificial Intelligence capabilities. The Dashboard provides instant tabular analysis of Grievances Filed & Disposed, State-wise & District-wise Grievances Filed & Ministry-wise data. Besides, the Dashboard will also help the officials identify the root cause of the grievance.

With a ballooning caseload of problems being raised by the common man and their trust in the timebound redressal of their grievances, close to 20 lakh grievances are received annually on the CPGRAMS portal. In view of the large number of grievances, the classification and monitoring of grievances cannot be done

see System on pg 02...

SMC Mayor Mattu, other delegations call on LG

Srinagar: Junaid Azim Mattu, Mayor, Srinagar Municipal Corporation called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha at Raj Bhawan on Friday. Mattu discussed various developmental issues, promotion of sports and welfare of the people, especially the members of marginalised communities in Srinagar. Dr. Beena Budki, President Hindi Kashmiri Sangam also called on the Lt Governor and apprised about the activities of the organisation including promotion of culture and literature. She also presented her book 'Kokh ki Peeda' and Urdu translation of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore Ji's 'Geetanjali'. A Delegation of Joint Committee of



Women and Child Development, Uttar Pradesh led by its Chairperson Neelima Katiyar called on Lieutenant Governor at Raj Bhawan. The members of the Joint Committee apprised the Lt Governor about the visits and activities of the panel during their study tour. They shared their views on the ongoing development scenario and the improved Socio-economic conditions in Jammu Kashmir.

see Mattu on pg 02...

Message of peace by Prophet Mohammed (SAW) shows us the way forward for harmony": Dr Andrabi

Chairperson of Jammu & Kashmir Waqf Board & Minister of State J&K Dr Darakhshan Andrabi today offered prayers at Hazratbal shrine in Srinagar on the occasion of Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi amid a record participation of the devotees. Waqf Board had put in all requisite arrangements for the festivity and the facilities to cater huge congregations here and on other prominent shrines. Amid great reverence, people took a glimpse of the pious relic of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) at the shrine. Earlier Dr Andrabi lead cleanliness drive with a huge public participation at the shrine where lakhs of devotees

see Peace on pg 02...

Chief Secretary reviews developmental scenario of Samba

Samba: Chief Secretary, Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta, conducted a comprehensive review of ongoing developmental projects and flagship initiatives spanning various sectors in district Samba on Friday. The primary focus of the meeting was to assess the progress of various schemes and development projects currently underway in the district. The meeting was attended by Divisional Commissioner Jammu Ramesh Kumar, SSP Samba Benam Tosh, along with the heads of various divisions and departments operating within the district. During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner Samba Abhishek Sharma



presented a detailed sector-wise overview of the ongoing projects and flagship schemes being managed by various departments in the district. Notable projects, including the construction of the Bus Stand under JMRDA at Vijaypur, the Degree College at Purmandal, and the Nari Niketan building

in Samba, were highlighted. Updates on the upgradation of the existing Municipal complex, the construction of a multifunctional complex at Samba bus stand, the construction of Uttarbehni bridge over Dewar, several road projects, and the construction of the OPD block of District Hospital

Samba, were also provided. Chief Secretary also reviewed the status of ongoing projects, programs, flagship schemes, and financial progress for the fiscal years 2022-23 and 2023-24. A wide array of departments including Horticulture,

see CS on pg 02...

Law Commission Working On Formula So That 2029 Onwards LS, Assembly Polls Can Be Held Together

New Delhi: The Law Commission is working on a formula to synchronise all assembly polls by extending or reducing the tenure so that all state elections can be held along with the Lok Sabha polls 2029 onwards, sources said on Friday. As the government has already set up a high-level panel to explore simultaneous polls for Lok Sabha, state assemblies and local bodies, the Law Commission may also be asked to include the third tier of elections along with its current mandate for national and state-level polls.



The sources also said the law panel is devising a mechanism to ensure a common electoral roll for Lok Sabha, assemblies and local bodies to reduce cost and use of manpower for undertaking an almost identical exercise which is carried out now

see Law on pg 02...

Secretary Sports Council tours tribal areas in South Kashmir

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 29: While continuing with its concerted efforts of reaching out to the far-flung and tribal areas of the union territory, the Secretary Sports Council Nuzhat Gull toured tribal areas of Dongawari, Manzmo, Gulab-Bagh, Hilar-Shahbaad, Ujru, Wangud, and Khaterchek areas in South Kashmir today.

The visit came as a follow-up to an invitation extended by the tribal delegation from the Gulab-Bagh area located at some distance from Dooru near the old tunnel in Anantnag.

Motivated to curb the drug menace with the means of sports that the area has been battling for a long, the visiting delegation had requested for the continuous engagement of youth under

the ambit of My Youth My Pride upon which the Secretary Sports Council had responded in affirmative.

Reaching early in the morning today, the Secretary, Sports Council Nuzhat Gull interacted with several local civil society groups from these areas who equivocally pitched the demand for sports infrastructure under the PMDP which was received well by the visiting officer.

While speaking on the occasion, Nuzhat Gull said that sportspersons from the tribal areas have a deep connection with nature as they grow up in challenging environments, which hone their skills and make them resilient. Nuzhat Gull mentioned that she has closely watched a few players from the



tribal areas and they bring a unique passion and energy to their game, making them stand out from others. Nuzhat Gull said their dedication

and discipline are commendable though they lack proper training facilities and resources. Despite all these challenges, they put in their full effort and push their limits to achieve success. The Secretary Sports Council also emphasized that tribal sportspersons possess a natural talent and instinct for their sport, which sets them apart from others. Furthermore, tribal sportspersons are not affected by extreme weather conditions. Whether it is playing under scorching heat or cold, they remain undeterred and give their best performance and it is this unwavering spirit that reflects their love for the sports and their commitment to excel, Nuzhat Gull added.

While concluding, Nuzhat Gull said

that tribal sportspersons are exceptional individuals who deserve recognition for their amazing talent, dedication, high endurance, and ability to perform under any circumstances.

The Secretary Sports Council also ensured that sports programs under different verticals will be organized in these areas especially under the flagship program of My Youth My Pride to extend the reach of the sports to far-flung areas besides keeping a check on the growing menace of drug addiction among the youth of these areas.

The Secretary Sports Council also distributed Cricket kits and Cricket mat on the spot and assured more assistance to the sports persons in future as well.

ADDC Ganderbal flags-off Shanti Yatra from BHSS



GANDERBAL, SEPTEMBER 29: The Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Ganderbal, Mushtaq Ahmad Simnani today flagged-off the Shanti Yatra-2023 from Government Boys Higher Secondary School (BHSS) Ganderbal which culminated at Girls High School Pandach.

Scores of students from government and private schools, and staff of different departments participated enthusiastically as the Yatra made its way through the district.

The Yatra is an initiative that seeks to foster a spirit of harmony and understanding among the youth and, aims to propagate Mahatma Gandhi's message, particularly emphasizing his philosophy of truth and non-violence.

Chief Education Officer Ganderbal, MA Kohli and officials from various educational institutions, and large number of students were also present on the occasion.

In a symbolic gesture, the Shanti torch (Mashal) was received yesterday morning from Chief Education Officer Bandipora at BHSS Safapora and after passing through various Government and private schools the same was kept for night in BHSS Ganderbal. The Shanti Mashal will be halted for tonight at GHS Pandach and tomorrow will be handed over to the Chief Education Officer Srinagar at BHS Umerhair Buchpora.

Baramulla adds another feather to its Cap: Young Cricket Talents triumph in Under-17 Provincial Cricket Championship

BARAMULLA, SEPTEMBER 29: Baramulla's budding cricket stars have once again demonstrated their prowess on the cricket field, securing the under-17 Provincial Cricket Championship title with an exhilarating victory over Kulgam.

The thrilling match, held at Anantnag, concluded with Baramulla winning by 5 wickets. In a standout performance, Faizan Ibrahim from Baramulla



earned the prestigious titles of "Man of the Series" and "Man of the Match" for his exceptional contributions to the team's success. Jatinder Singh DYSSO Baramulla extended his hearty congratulations to the entire Baramulla team for their



outstanding win and remarkable achievements on the cricket field. This victory not only adds another accolade to Baramulla's rich sports history but also underscores the immense talent and dedication of our young cricket stars, he added.

'Swachta hi Seva' & 'Meri Maati Mera Desh': Event held at Agriculture Directorate Lalmandi

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 29: Under the aegis of "Swachta hi Seva" and "Meri Maati Mera Desh", an event was held at the Agriculture Complex Lalmandi Srinagar.

The cleanliness campaign was launched by Director Agriculture Kashmir, Chowdhury Mohammad Iqbal in which all the officers and officials participated and cleaned their premises and adjacent areas with commitment and devotion.

Under the slogan of "Swachata hi Seva" the Director Agriculture Kashmir addressed the participants and highlighted the importance of collective responsibility towards maintaining a clean environment. He said the main objective of cleanliness and sanitation



among the officers/ officials of the department is to ensure a hygienic environment around for their overall Director Agriculture actively took part in the cleanliness drive together with other participants carrying brooms to exemplify their commitment to cleanliness with an objective to disseminate message regarding the event.

Executive Engineer PMGSY Bandipora accorded warm send-off

BANDIPORA, SEPTEMBER 29: A grand farewell function was organised to accord warm send-off to Executive Engineer PMGSY, Er Bilal Ahmad at Manasbal. Superintending Engineer PMGSY, BSE PWD, JD Planning Imtiyaz Ahmad attended the function besides officials of PMGSY Department.

Speakers highlighted the contributions of Er Bilal in challenging areas of Bandipora district. It was given out that the 80 kms of PMGSY roads got black topped and around 150 kms metaled due to untiring efforts of Er Bilal Ahmad.

It was further stated that despite different challenges Kaloosa Gurdal, Bagtore Iz marg, Kaspot Khilsay and other hilly roads have been completed by the officer and his team. AEE PMGSY Bandipora and Sumbal highlighted the working attitude of the officer and termed .

Swachhta Hi Seva: Series of activities being held at Shopian

SHOPIAN, SEPTEMBER 29: Under the ongoing Swachhta Hi Seva campaign, Department of Rural Development is celebrating the ODF plus model camps in all the blocks of district Shopian along with engaging people taking the solemn resolve to sustain the mission.

The camps were mainly held at Block headquarters of Chitragam, Zainapora, Shopian, Kanjiullar, Ramnagri, Kaprin, Keller, Imamsahab and Hermain.

The camps were attended by a large number of public and were chaired by BDOs of the concerned blocks. Members of different strata of society were made aware about



the achievements under SBMG-II. It was informed that the District has already achieved ODF plus model status under which all

information about the uses of SWM sheds, Liquid Waste Management Units, Plastic Waste Management Sheds, Soakage pits, Compost pits and door to door collection and segregation of the waste.

It was impressed upon in the camps that most important thing of SBM Plus is its sustainability. Different ways to sustain this model were discussed and the public took a resolve to act on these measures to make their areas clean and sanitized.

People in these camps expressed their satisfaction over the steps taken by the Department of Rural Development for making the District SBM plus under SBMG II.

...Swachhta Hi Seva: Cleanliness drives held across Aanganwadi Centres at Bandipora

BANDIPORA, SEPTEMBER 29: To promote sense of hygiene, cleanliness drives were Friday held in and around all 806 Aanganwadi Centres of district Bandipora under the banner of Swachhta Hi Seva (Swachhta Pakhwada).

District Nodal Officer Coordination Bandipora, Mohommad Ashraf Hakak, who is also District Programme Officer (DPO) Bandipora, informed that in continuation to ongoing Swachhta Hi Seva campaign, cleanliness drives were held in all the 806 Aanganwadi Centres (AWCs) of district Bandipora.

He said that the aim of cleanliness



drives is to impart sense of hygiene among the people which strengthens the central concept of ongoing Swachhta Hi Seva campaign. The DPO further said that in connection with ongoing Poshan Maah programme and Swachhta Pakhwada, the officials ICDS in Bandipora visited the slum area to create awareness regarding hygiene and nutrition related issues.

Chief Secretary takes stock of preparations for finale of AZAM

Instructs to target uploading of 80000 events under 'Swachhta hi Sewa' Mission

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 29: Chief Secretary, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta today took stock of the preparations made for the grand celebrations to be held at the culmination of year long celebrations under Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav here in the UT and the contingent to be sent to New Delhi to participate in the grand finale.

The meeting besides the Administrative Secretaries was attended by Divisional Commissioner Kashmir/Jammu, Deputy Commissioners, several HoDs from RDD, H&UD and Culture Departments.

During this meeting, Dr Mehta also reviews preparedness for Gandhi Jayanti, Swachhta hi Sewa and Sankalpa Saptah campaigns.

On the occasion the Chief Secretary impressed upon both the Housing & Urban Development and Rural Development Departments to make all efforts in view of the programs to be organized in all the villages

and Municipal wards for collection of Mitti (soil) for their respective Amrit Kalashes.

He also advised them to look into the possibility for construction of our Amrit Vatikas out of this collected soil from all over J&K. The Mitti from all villages shall be sent to New Delhi for the Amrit Watika at Delhi. He stated that these would signify our collective conscience and rich culture and heritage of the UT.

The Chief Secretary called for collecting the soil for Amrit Kalashes with traditional fervour as envisaged under the guidelines by the Ministry of Culture. He told them to celebrate all the Panchayat/Block/District level events in a befitting manner. He asked them to make best arrangements for receiving the respective Amrit Kalashes from Blocks and Districts.

Dr Mehta also stressed on providing best of the facilities to the block level youth volunteers going to take their



Amrit Kalashes to New Delhi. He asked for giving them warm sendoff from their villages as they are the representatives of these villages at UT and National level. He asked for adopting a uniform attire for all these youth from J&K representing our traditions and culture so that this group of around 400 people is identified collectively as the one from J&K.

Regarding the Swachhta hi Sewa campaign, the Chief Secretary urged

each of the Administrative Secretary to hold the maximum possible events in their Departments. He observed that the UT has nearly 18500 educational institutions, 28000 Aanganwadi centres, 20000 individual government offices, 3000 health care institutions, 4000 sports stadiums besides thousands of other government organizations including courts, police stations, Industrial estates and other public infrastructure. He maintained that even if each of them organises

2 events each the number would jump to 80000 easily.

He urged all of them to record these events and upload good quality photos and videos on the given web portal. He added that J&K has always been among the top with the joint efforts of all the officers and officials of the UT. He directed for establishment of District level control rooms in collaboration with IT Department for seeking assistance and advice for swift uploading of the feedback on the national portal.

As far as the celebrations of Gandhi Jayanti are concerned the CS urged for cleanliness of all the areas ahead of October 2nd. He impressed upon the officers to take measures for sprucing up all the towns by giving facelift to all of these areas. He asked for taking low-cost measures like painting of walls and other public buildings, cleaning of water bodies and restoration of all the water

Last 9 yrs saw decisive policies, political stability, economy got new direction, claims Amit Shah

NEW DELHI: The last nine years have witnessed decisive policies, political stability, democracy and teamwork in the federal structure that led the country out of the "policy paralysis" from 2004 to 2014, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Friday.

Addressing the 118th Annual Session of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, he said the period of 2004 to 2014 "shook the country", which was also the "last period" of political instability.

The last nine years have seen the result of performance. The country's economy has also got a new direction under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Shah said.

"The last nine years have been that of political stability and decisive policy-making...our GDP has grown from USD 2.03 trillion to USD 3.75 trillion during the period, which is almost double. Per capita income has grown from Rs 68,000 in 2013-14... to Rs 1.80 lakh," he said.

Shah said PM Modi has tried to change India in every field in the last nine years and has also been successful.

After successfully organising the G20 Summit, a new energy has been infused not only in trade and industries but also in every sector of the country and all people are experiencing a new momentum, the Union home minister said.

He said trade and industries are



the centre of the country's economy, from where it gets energy.

"Due to the changes brought about by policies, today 'India's Moment'

is talked about everywhere and India is known as a vibrant spot all over the world," he said.

Shah said whenever a company

wants to shift base around the world, India emerges as the bright spot to relocate.

"Our country is the youngest and we also have the largest number of engineers, doctors and technocrats. There is democracy here, there is teamwork and the policy formulation is also clear under the leadership of Modi ji. Therefore, now no one can stop India from establishing itself at the first place in every field in the Amrit Kaal," he said.

The Union home minister said the Production Linked Incentive Scheme has fulfilled the dream of Make in India in 14 sectors within the country.

"This is the right time. The next

25 years are extremely important for India's trade and industries. Indian industries will have to move towards changing both their size and scale," he said.

Shah said the need of the hour is that Indian companies become multi-national.

"The network of small industries along with big industries will have to be strengthened and PHDCCI will have to come forward strongly to provide guidance and infrastructure in this," he said.

Shah said that because of the new education policy brought by the Modi government, India is going to become the best destination in the world for students in the next 10 years.

Punjab farmers stir: Train movement hit; protesters block Chandigarh-Ambala national highway

CHANDIGARH/HOSHIARPUR: Farmers in large numbers squatted on rail tracks in parts of Punjab on Friday, while another group of cultivators blocked the Chandigarh-Ambala national highway as part of their stir to demand a financial package for losses incurred in floods, a legal guarantee to MSP and a sweeping debt waiver.

As part of the three-day 'rail roko' protest, farmers squatted on the Amritsar-Delhi railway track in Devidas Pura, while in Hoshiarpur, members of the Azad Kisan Committee, Doaba, sat on dharna at the local railway station.

According to railway officials, while some trains were cancelled, routes of several trains have been diverted. Some trains are being short-terminated in view of the agitation. The stir is underway at 17 places in Punjab, including in Moga, Hoshiarpur, Gurdaspur, Jalandhar, Tarn Taran, Sangrur, Patiala, Ferozepur, Bathinda, and Amritsar. A group of farmers owing allegiance to BKU (Sidhupur) also



squatted on the Chandigarh-Ambala national highway near Lohru in Punjab. Farmers have also parked their tractors alongside the highway.

A Punjab Police official said both sides of the highway have been blocked and traffic has been diverted through alternate routes.

State President of the Azad Kisan Committee, Doaba, Harpal Singh Sangha, said their agitation will continue till September 30. If the demands are not met by that time, the next course of action will be decided, he said.

The stir has left many rail passengers stranded in Punjab

and Haryana.

"The matter is between the Centre and the farmers. Why should passengers face harassment. Since yesterday, we have been waiting at the railway station, but there is no surety when our train will come," said an elderly passenger at the Ludhiana railway station who was travelling to Patna.

On Thursday night, hundreds of railway passengers travelling to various destinations, including Delhi, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, were stranded at the Ambala Cantonment Railway Station in Haryana as rail movement was hit in neighbouring Punjab due

to the protest.

Several farmer groups, including the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee, Bharti Kisan Union (Krantikari), BKU (Ekta Azaad), Azaad Kisan Committee Doaba, BKU (Behramke), BKU (Shaheed Bhagat Singh), and BKU (Chottu Ram), are participating in the protest.

Their demands include a financial package for the flood-affected people in north India, a legal guarantee for minimum support price on all crops, and a debt waiver for farmers.

Farmers want a Rs 50,000-crore flood relief package for north Indian states and MSP as per the recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission report, farmer leader Gurbachan Singh had said in Amritsar on Thursday. He demanded waiver of the entire debt of farmers and labourers, and Rs 10 lakh and a government job in compensation to the kin of each farmer who died during the agitation against the now-repealed three farm laws.

School teacher from Uttar Pradesh arrested for getting student slapped by classmates

LUCKNOW: While the dust over the Muzaffarnagar primary school slapping case is yet to be settled, another school teacher in Sambhal district in western Uttar Pradesh was arrested for allegedly getting a class 5 student slapped by classmates on failing to answer her question.

The school teacher, named Shaista, was arrested for "spreading communal hatred". The incident took place at a private school in Dugawar village under Asmoli police station limits on September 26 and an FIR was registered by the boy's father on Thursday. The arrest came hours after the registration of the case.

The father of the student claimed in his police complaint that his son, in class 5, was unable to answer the teacher's question and she asked his classmate to slap him in front of the whole class. His son felt humiliated and was upset when he reached home.

According to the Sambhal Additional SP Shrish Chandra, the father lodged a complaint that his son's teacher had asked a student belonging to a minority community to slap him. "We registered an FIR under sections 153 (promoting



enmity between two groups on grounds of religion, race, etc) and 323 (voluntarily causing hurt) of IPC. We arrested teacher Shaista and are questioning her," said the officer.

In the earlier incident at Khubbapur village in Muzaffarnagar last month, school teacher Tripta Tyagi had asked a child of the majority community to slap his classmate belonging to a minority community for not doing homework. A case was registered against her under IPC sections 323 (voluntarily causing hurt) and 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace). However, Tyagi has not been arrested.

Indian scientists discover active submarine volcano in Andaman sea

BENGALURU: Two Indian scientists from the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), and their team have discovered an active submarine volcano (Crater Seamount) in the Andaman Sea, which has been at the epicentre of the seismic zone since it was first observed in 2007.

Crater Seamount has the potential to erupt at any time leading to earthquakes and even tsunamis in the Java-Sumatra region. The timing of the eruption however cannot be ascertained.

In 2018, Senior Scientist Sriram Gullapalli and Senior Principal Scientist Pawan Dewangan, both from the NIO, initially substantiated the existence of telltale signs of active gas venting above the shallow submarine volcano, which is located at 500m water depth in the Andaman-Nicobar Volcanic arc. They revisited their findings in 2021 and confirmed the submarine volcano in the Andaman-Nicobar Arc. Their findings were sent for peer review and the paper was published in the prestigious 'Geo-Marine Letters' - an international peer-reviewed journal in marine geology, geophysics, and geochemistry - in July this year.

Speaking exclusively to TNIE, Sriram said that for a long time, "Ocean scientists have been curious about the Nicobar underwater volcano area in the Andaman Sea. Our interest grew after the Tsunami-causing earthquake in 2004 and thereafter the increase in the number of earthquake swarms over the past two decades. In November 2007, some of us from the CSIR-NIO conducted a groundbreaking high-resolution multi-beam echo-sounding (MBES) survey over the earthquake swarm region, unveiling the presence of well-developed twin submarine volcanoes.

Subsequently, in 2014, we carried out an Ocean Bottom Seismometer (OBS) survey spanning four months, aimed at monitoring the volcanic arc. During this period, we detected earthquake swarms characterized by low-frequency and distinct hydro-acoustic phases, indicating the presence of sub-surface tectonic and magmatic influences that were associated with a shallow magma chamber," said Sriram.

Building upon this research, Sriram and Dewangan along with some other scientists,

CM Kejriwal announces winter action plan, says pollution levels declined in Delhi due to govt steps

NEW DELHI: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said pollution levels declined in the national capital due to government initiatives as he announced the winter action plan to curb pollution.

The number of days witnessing severe pollution levels declined in the last eight years due to several initiatives of the government, such as the introduction of electric buses and the EV Policy, among others, he said at a press conference.

Announcing the winter action plan, Kejriwal said the Pusa bio-

decomposer that prevents stubble burning will be sprayed on 5,000 hectares of farmland this year against 4,400 hectares last year.

The Pusa bio-decomposer, developed by the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) here, is a microbial solution that can turn paddy straw into manure in 15-20 days.

The government will deploy 530 water sprinklers to prevent dust pollution and 385 teams will check vehicles' pollution certificates and prevent the plying of overage cars.



In 2018, the Supreme Court banned diesel and petrol vehicles

older than 10 and 15 years, respectively, in Delhi. It had added that the vehicles plying in violation of the order would be impounded. A 2014 order from the National Green Tribunal bars vehicles older than 15 years to be parked in public places.

Kejriwal said burning garbage in the open is banned in Delhi and 611 teams will monitor its implementation. He also urged people to download the Green Delhi mobile application and report any pollution-causing activity to the government.

India slams rich nations' climate inaction; calls for focus on pre-2020 gaps, equity in Global Stocktake

NEW DELHI: India has said that the first-ever Global Stocktake outcome should prioritise addressing pre-2020 gaps, capture equity as an overarching concern and acknowledge the serious lack of ambition among developed nations in combating climate change.

Global Stocktake is a two-year UN review to evaluate collective global progress towards achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement.

This process will conclude at the end of COP28 in Dubai.

In a submission to the UNFCCC outlining its expectations from the Global Stocktake, India emphasised that the outcome should encourage developed nations to reduce their emissions in alignment with their historical responsibilities and provide support to developing countries in terms of finance, technology development and transfer, and capacity building.

The Global Stocktake outcome must promote global climate action within the context of poverty eradication, sustainable development, economic



diversification efforts, and closing gaps in social and economic development between developed and developing countries, India emphasised.

It stressed that the First Global Stocktake outcome should not exclusively focus on future mitigation while disregarding "historical responsibility and pre-2020 emissions."

"Pre-2020 is the foundation upon which climate action must be built, and as such, pre-2020 gaps should be addressed as a matter of priority with a view to advancing long-term climate action and protecting the integrity of the Paris Agreement.

"It is an iterative process. There is a need to reaffirm the objectives,

principles, and provisions of the Convention, in particular the principles of equity and CBDR-RC, keeping in view the process of enhanced action in the Pre-2020 period," it said.

The principle of equity ensures that countries' efforts to combat climate change are viewed in light of their contributions to greenhouse gas emissions, both historically and currently, as well as the likely future emissions they will generate.

The CBDR-RC principle recognises that each country bears responsibility for addressing climate change, but developed countries should shoulder primary responsibilities, given their significant historical and current greenhouse gas emissions.

India also made it clear that it does not support any other classification of developing countries, such as "major emitters", "G20 partners", and "other developing and emerging economies", as these classifications overlook national circumstances and replace considerations of "equity and CBDR-RC" in terms of climate actions.

Afghan Embassy in Delhi closes down

NEW DELHI: The Afghan Embassy in Delhi has closed down, due to lack of finances, infighting amongst diplomats with some seeking asylum in other countries.

"Indian government is aware of the developments and have received a note verbal on the same - which they are said to be examining. The authenticity of the communication and its contents are being examined. This is in the context of the Ambassador being out of India for past many months, steady departure of diplomats to third countries reportedly after receiving asylum as well as reports of infighting amongst Embassy personnel," according to a source.

The Afghans are also sore with India for not issuing visas for their students (nearly 2500) who wanted to continue their studies in India.

"We had written to the Indian government many times to enable Afghan students to continue their education in India, all in vain," said Onib Dadgar, who represents the student body of Afghans. Meanwhile, though the Indian government hasn't officially recognised the Taliban-led government in Afghanistan the embassy in Kabul is functional - which is referred to as a technical establishment which with the help of locals distributes humanitarian aid.

More than 70% of Nagorno-Karabakh's population flees as separatist government says it will dissolve

YEREVAN: More than 70% of Nagorno-Karabakh's original population has fled to Armenia as the region's separatist government said it will dissolve itself and the unrecognized republic inside Azerbaijan will cease to exist by year's end after a three-decade bid for independence.

By Friday morning 84,770 people had left Nagorno-Karabakh, according to Armenian officials, continuing a mass exodus from the region of ethnic Armenians that began Sunday. The region's population was around 120,000 before the exodus began.

The moves came after Azerbaijan carried out a lightning offensive last week to reclaim full control over the breakaway region and demanded that Armenian troops in Nagorno-Karabakh disarm and the separatist government disband.

A decree signed by the region's separatist President Samvel

Shakhramanyan cited a Sept. 20 agreement to end the fighting under which Azerbaijan will allow the "free, voluntary and unhindered movement" of Nagorno-Karabakh residents to Armenia.

Some of those who fled the regional capital of Stepanakert said they had no hope for the future.

"I left Stepanakert having a slight hope that maybe something will change and I will come back soon, and these hopes are ruined after reading about the dissolution of our government," 21-year-old student Ani Abaghyan told The Associated Press on Thursday.

During the three decades of conflict in the region, Azerbaijan and separatists inside Nagorno-Karabakh, alongside allies in Armenia, have accused the other of targeted attacks, massacres and other atrocities, leaving people on both sides deeply suspicious and fearful.



While Azerbaijan has pledged to respect the rights of ethnic Armenians in the region, most are now fleeing as they do not believe the Azerbaijani authorities will treat them fairly and humanely or guarantee them their language, religion and culture.

After six years of separatist fighting ended in 1994 following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Nagorno-Karabakh came under the control of ethnic Armenian forces, backed by Armenia. Then, during a six-week war in 2020, Azerbaijan took back parts of the region in the south Caucasus Mountains along with surrounding territory that Armenian forces had claimed earlier.

Nagorno-Karabakh was internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan's sovereign territory. In December, Azerbaijan blockaded

the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia, alleging the Armenian government was using it for illicit weapons shipments to the region's separatist forces.

Armenia alleged the closure denied basic food and fuel supplies to Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan rejected the accusation, arguing that the region could receive supplies through the Azerbaijani city of Aghdam — a solution long resisted by Nagorno-Karabakh authorities, who called it a strategy for Azerbaijan to gain control of the region.

On Monday night, a fuel reservoir exploded at a gas station where people lined up for gas to fill their cars to flee to Armenia. At least 68 people were killed and nearly 300 injured, with over 100 others still considered missing after the blast, which exacerbated fuel shortages that were already dire after the blockade.

On Thursday, Azerbaijani

authorities charged Ruben Vardanyan, the former head of Nagorno-Karabakh's separatist government, with financing terrorism, creating illegal armed formations and illegally crossing a state border.

A day earlier, he was detained by Azerbaijani border guards as he was trying to leave Nagorno-Karabakh for Armenia along with tens of thousands of others.

Vardanyan, a billionaire who made his fortune in Russia, was placed in pretrial detention for at least four months and faces up to 14 years in prison. His arrest appeared to indicate Azerbaijan's intent to quickly enforce its grip on the region.

Another top separatist figure, Nagorno-Karabakh's former foreign minister and now presidential adviser David Babayan, said Thursday he will surrender to Azerbaijani authorities who ordered him to face a probe in Baku.

Afghanistan embassy in New Delhi to shut down its operations

NEW DELHI: The Afghan Embassy in Delhi has closed down, due to a lack of finances, and fighting amongst diplomats with some seeking asylum in other countries.

"The presence of the Afghan Diplomatic Mission in India cannot function normally without the help of the Indian government. After a careful consideration and assessment of the current situation, disappointingly the Embassy finds itself in a position where this support is not forthcoming. Given these circumstances, the Embassy has concluded that it is in our mission and its staff's best interest to bring it to a close by the end of September 2023.

The Embassy requests the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)," according to a note verbal issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Afghanistan).

While the Ambassador, Farid Mamundzay, has been in London for several months, many other diplomats have received asylum in several countries including the US, Canada and Australia.

Trouble had been brewing for many months after the power struggle between



Ambassador Mamundzay and Taliban-appointed Ambassador Qadir Shah became public a few months back.

Ambassador Mamundzay was appointed by the previous Ashraf Ghani government and has been operating as the envoy even after the Taliban took over in 2021.

However, in April Qadir Shah claimed to be appointed by the Taliban as head of India's mission. Shah has been working as a trade councillor since 2020 in Delhi.

After taking power the Taliban sent Ambassadors to four countries — Russia, Pakistan, China and Turkmenistan.

"Indian government is aware of the developments and have received a note verbal on the same — which they are said to be examining. The authenticity of the communication and its contents are being examined.

As China censors homegrown feminism, a feminist scholar from Japan is on its bestseller lists

HONG KONG: In the last few years, China's government has promoted increasingly conservative social values, encouraging women to focus on raising children. It has cracked down on civil society movements and made laws to drive out foreign influence.

So a 75-year-old Japanese feminist scholar who's not married and does not have children is an unlikely celebrity on the country's tightly censored internet.

But Chizuko Ueno, a professor emerita at the University of Tokyo, is a phenomenon. She leapt to fame in China in 2019 with a speech that criticized social expectations for women to act cute and the pressure they face to hide their success.

Ueno's popularity reflects a surge in interest in women's rights, said Leta Hong Fincher, a research associate at the Weatherhead East Asian Institute who has written about gender discrimination and



feminism in China.

About a decade ago, China had a rampant feminist movement that staged protests like occupying a men's restroom to demand more toilets for women, or marching in wedding dresses spattered with fake blood to draw attention to domestic violence. But that movement has been silenced as President Xi Jinping's administration has tightened controls on civil society and promoted conservative family values in a bid to boost childbirths.

Ueno declined multiple requests to be interviewed for this story.

In mainland China, Ueno's books sold more than half a million copies in the first half of 2023, according to sales tracker Beijing OpenBook, and 26 were available in Chinese bookstores as of September. They cover topics ranging from "misogyny" in Japanese society to feminist approaches to elder care issues in an ageing society.

"Starting From the Limit," a collection of letters between Ueno and Suzumi Suzuki, a writer who

used to act in Japanese porn, topped the 2022 Books of the Year list on the popular Chinese review platform Douban.

Fans said Ueno's openness about choosing not to marry or have children makes her a role model.

Edith Cao, a writer who spoke on the condition of being identified by her English nickname due to fear of government retaliation, said seeing an East Asian woman succeed without a family helped her decide not to marry. Yang Xiao, a graduate student, said Ueno's example helped assuage her anxieties about being single and inspired her to start booking holidays alone to build confidence.

Relationships are a divisive issue even among Ueno's Chinese fans. Earlier this year, fans attacked a Chinese video blogger who asked Ueno if she hadn't married because "she'd been hurt by men," saying the blogger had reinforced traditional assumptions.

The fall of an enclave in Azerbaijan stuns the Armenian diaspora, extinguishing a dream

BEIRUT: The swift fall of the Armenian-majority enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijani troops and exodus of much of its population has stunned the large Armenian diaspora around the world. Traumatized by genocide a century ago, they now fear the erasure of what they consider a central and beloved part of their historic homeland.

These separatist ethnic Armenian government in Nagorno-Karabakh on Thursday announced that it was dissolving and that the unrecognized republic will cease to exist by year's end — a seeming death knell for its 30-year defacto independence.

Azerbaijan, which routed the region's Armenian forces in a lightning offensive last week, has

pledged to respect the rights of the territory's Armenian community. But by Thursday morning, 74,400 people — over 60% of Nagorno-Karabakh's population — had fled to Armenia, and the influx continues, according to Armenian officials.

Many in Armenia and the diaspora fear a centuries-long community in the territory they call Artsakh will disappear in what they call a new wave of ethnic cleansing. They accuse European countries, Russia and the United States — and the government of Armenia itself — of failing to protect ethnic Armenians during months of blockade of the territory by Azerbaijan's military and in the lightning blitz earlier this month that defeated



separatist forces.

Armenians say the loss is a historic blow. Outside the modern country of Armenia itself, the mountainous land was one of the only surviving parts of a heartland that centuries ago stretched across what is now eastern Turkey, into the Caucasus

region and western Iran.

Many in the diaspora had pinned dreams on it gaining independence or being joined to Armenia.

Nagorno-Karabakh was "a page of hope in Armenian history," Narod Seroujjan, a Lebanese-Armenian university instructor in Beirut, said Thursday.

"It showed us that there is hope to gain back a land that is rightfully ours... For the diaspora, Nagorno-Karabakh was already part of Armenia."

Hundreds of Lebanese Armenians on Thursday protested outside the Azerbaijani Embassy in Beirut. They waved flags of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh and burned pictures of the Azerbaijani and Turkish presidents. Riot police lobbed tear gas when they threw firecrackers at the embassy. Ethnic Armenians have communities around Europe and the Middle East and in the United States. Lebanon is home to one of the largest, with an estimated 120,000 of Armenian origin, 4% of the population.

Teen in court after schoolgirl becomes latest UK knife victim



LONDON: A teenager will appear in a London court on Friday charged with the murder of a 15-year-old schoolgirl in a case that has once again shone the spotlight on UK knife crime.

Elianne Andam was stabbed to death in Croydon, south London, as she went to school.

A 17-year-old boy, who cannot be named for legal reasons, was arrested shortly afterwards.

He is due to appear at youth court, sitting at Croydon Magistrates' Court, later Friday charged with murder and possession of a knife, police said in a statement.

Emergency services including an air ambulance were called to the scene at around 8:30 am (0730 GMT) following reports of a stabbing.

Paramedics battled to save the girl but she was pronounced dead at the scene 50 minutes later.

London mayor Sadiq Khan said he was "heartbroken" by the fatal incident and pledged to "continue working day and night to end the scourge of knife crime in our city".

According to official figures, 99 people under the age of 25 were killed in England and Wales with a knife or sharp object in the year to March 2023. Of those 13 were under the age of 16.

The deaths were among 50,000 stabbing incidents in the year to March 2023, a five percent increase on the previous year and a 75 percent increase on a decade ago, the figures from the Office for National Statistics showed.

Andam was a pupil at Old Palace of John Whitgift School, a private girls' school in Croydon.

"We are deeply shocked by the senseless and tragic death of our much-loved and valued friend and pupil," the school said in a statement.

Karabakh fuel depot blast toll jumps to 170: Officials

YEREVAN: The toll from an explosion at a fuel depot in Nagorno-Karabakh that was thronged with Armenians fleeing an Azerbaijani military offensive has jumped to 170 people, authorities in the region announced Friday.

The blast occurred days after the breakaway region's separatist fighters announced they would disarm and integrate with Azerbaijan, spurring an exodus of thousands of ethnic Armenians.

"To date, a total of 170 remains... have been found in the same area and handed over to the forensic medical examination bureau," separatist authorities said in a statement on social media.

Authorities had earlier said the blast claimed the lives of 68 people and wounded another 200. They said Monday that the remains would be transferred to Armenia for identification.

Russia says 11 Ukrainian drones destroyed overnight

MOSCOW: Russia claimed on Friday that it had destroyed 11 Ukrainian drones overnight, though one UAV dropped explosives on a substation, cutting the local power supply, a regional governor said.

"Eleven Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicles were destroyed by air defence systems on duty, one of them over the territory of Kaluga region and 10 over Kursk region," Russia's defence ministry said on the messaging platform Telegram.

Kursk governor Roman Starovoyt said that the region bordering eastern Ukraine was "massively attacked" by Ukrainian UAVs.

In Belaya village, less than 25 kilometres (16 miles) from the border, "a Ukrainian drone dropped two explosive devices on a substation,"



he said on Telegram.

"One of the transformers caught fire.

Five settlements and a hospital were cut off from power supply. Fire crews rushed to the scene," he added.

"Power will be restored as soon as it is safe to do so."

The governor warned citizens that "due to the danger of self-destruction

of downed UAVs, it is forbidden to touch their debris, approach them or take photographs".

Russia earlier said it had destroyed two Ukrainian drones on Thursday evening over the neighbouring Belgorod region.

The defence ministry said the first drone was "thwarted" at about 5:00pm (1400 GMT), while a second was brought down around four hours later.

The Belgorod and Kursk regions, south of Moscow, border eastern Ukraine. Kaluga region is closer to the Russian capital.

Since Ukraine launched its counter-offensive in early June, Russia has weathered waves of drone attacks that have sporadically damaged buildings, including in Moscow.

Editorial

Mental Health Matters

In a world that often prioritizes physical health, it's time to shine a brighter spotlight on mental health. The importance of mental health awareness cannot be overstated, as it impacts every aspect of our lives. Mental health is not a niche concern; it's a universal issue. According to the World Health Organization, one in four people will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives. These disorders know no boundaries; they affect people of all ages, backgrounds, and walks of life. Yet, stigma and misconceptions about mental health persist, preventing countless individuals from seeking help. By raising awareness, we can challenge these stigmas and create a more compassionate society where people feel safe discussing their mental health. Mental health awareness is not just about acknowledging problems; it's also about promoting well-being. It's about teaching individuals the skills to manage stress, build resilience, and maintain good mental health. When people have the tools to take care of their minds, they can lead more fulfilling lives. Furthermore, mental health awareness has broader societal benefits. It reduces the economic burden of untreated mental illness, enhances workplace productivity, and strengthens communities. Mental health awareness is not a luxury; it's a necessity. By fostering understanding, empathy, and support, we can create a world where mental health is valued, protected, and prioritized. Let's start the conversation and make mental health a global priority.

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Ending Opioid Addiction and Deaths through Creative Strategies

Phil Pasquini

Citing horrific statistics that "An estimated 221 Americans die every day (80,564 in the past 12 months) from an opioid overdose, and an estimated 5.6 million experience an opioid use disorder, affecting individuals, families, and communities across the nation," the Foundation for Opioid Response Efforts (FORE), a national grant making organization, held a press conference during National Recovery Month titled "New Initiatives to Fight the Opioid and Overdose Crisis Facing Amer-

ica's Youth." that grants have focused on access and evidence-based treatment for those most at risk by death from overdose. Most important in awarding funding is "the removal of barriers by linking people with care." Last year FORE began funding 11 family and community-based prevention programs, its largest to date. This new series of grants will focus on children, youth and family including those presently impacted by drug abuse to "change the trajectory of the next generation."

Jeanette Betancourt, EdD, Senior Vice President for U.S. Social Impact at Sesame Workshop, the nonprofit organization

Dwayne Dean, a 27-year substance abuser now entering his 10th year of sobriety, reflected on how the subject of drugs and addiction when he was younger were not an approachable subject with his mother who did not answer his questions. He soon realized that "every child is going to learn in spite" of answers not being forthcoming. Respective to opioid addiction he went on to say that "Our children are begging for bread and they have no one to break it for them. They have questions, we have to help them to understand, cause they are gonna learn even if it's not from us. We need to guide, direct and feed them." We must "Have those hard conversations now with our youth because they are curious and they



ica's Youth."

FORE is a privately funded national grant making organization that was founded in 2018 to fund specific projects by U.S. nonprofit tax-exempt organizations, universities, state and local governments along with Native American tribal governments. Their grant funding seeks to engage grantees in discovering "creative strategies with and in testing new approaches while enhancing proven ways to prevent and reduce opioid use and overdoses."

Since its inception they have focused on four specific areas: professional education, payer and provider strategies, policy initiatives and public awareness. FORE funds grants focused on prevention through "innovative solutions and how policymakers, health care providers, parents, caregivers, educators, the court system, all involved in the future of our children, can work together to improve adult-child relationships and family resilience." As reported here earlier, America's youth are most affected by the crisis of opioid overdose which is the leading cause of death for those between the ages of 18-45 years of age.

In discussing the ongoing opioid use and overdose crisis, a panel of experts along with two former opioid abusers emphasized education for younger children, youth and families as key to preventing another generation becoming victims.

Dr. Andrea Barthwell, MD, DFASAM, Chair of FORE's Board of Directors, in her opening comments pointed out that "the market of substances of misuse is subject to demand, is extremely nimble and increasingly poisonous and deadly. A balanced national strategy requires that we explore, implement and integrate innovative solutions" in the prevention and intervention of and treatment for those who are substance abusers.

She continued by announcing two new recent grants: one for Sesame Street Workshop the iconic children's TV program (\$840,000) and a second grant (\$500,000) to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) "our nation's children's doctors." The Sesame Street grant would develop programming that introduces the subject of drug abuse and addiction to educate younger audiences.

The AAP grant according to FORE's website would be used to "Create and disseminate educational tools that enhance the capacity of clinicians to prevent, identify, and treat substance use among adolescents and young adults." These two new grants bring FORE's total portfolio of its awards in its five years of existence to 100 for a total of \$39 million.

President of FORE, Dr. Karen A. Scott, MD, MPH, related

behind Sesame Street described the mission as to "grow all children in making them smarter, stronger and kinder." In achieving those goals, they utilize "the power of media and research and the power of education and the power of childhood development to really empower the next generation."

Behind this approach is their philosophy of "The Circle of care... That every adult is a key influencer in young children's development." This for children who live in households where their main caregiver is affected by a substance abuse disorder and who have many questions about their circumstances which they may be unable to express, along with not receiving the required nurturing they need in their development which can be especially impactful.

Sesame Street recognizes that "in order to counteract the effects we must begin in early childhood." In attempting to have a positive influence they have created a special Muppet in utilizing its power to influence young minds and behavior. "Kari" as she is named deals with her mother's struggle with substance abuse. Kari's story begins when she enters foster care paralleling that of many children's experiences in similar circumstances.

Their biggest discovery in research of young children in substance abuse households was "...that they (children) also felt guilty that they were causing their parents' addiction, as young as three, feeling that it was something they did or that they didn't behave" causing the parental addiction. Through their use of Kari she related, they are "creating a sense of hope, a sense of awareness and making a difference holistically."

While most of the discussion centered on academic research, psychological and medical interventions and the social stigma of substance abuse and its effects, former substance abusers, Lucy Battles and Dwayne Dean, presented their personal struggles with addiction emphasizing the importance of early childhood education.

Battles, in her 12th year of opioid abuse recovery, related as a teenage she abused alcohol and while in college after a dental procedure became addicted to Percocet using it daily for four years. Her addiction eventually turned to homelessness and she resorted to criminal activity until pressured into a treatment program through the courts. She noted that children whose parents have substance abuse problems have an increased chance of doing the same. The "Opioid crisis does not discriminate and affects all communities." She now works with others and commented that Sesame Street has done an incredible service to children and families around the substance abuse issue.



Jeanette Betancourt, EdD, Senior Vice President for U.S. Social Impact at Sesame Workshop, the nonprofit organization behind Sesame Street described the mission as to "grow all children in making them smarter, stronger and kinder." In achieving those goals, they utilize "the power of media and research and the power of education and the power of childhood development to really empower the next generation."



want to know why. We have to change the narrative we have to talk about it (drugs)."

Sesame Street Workshop he related allows for people to discuss these subjects by raising them in their programming which in turn makes it easier for parents to have these conversations with their children. As the now proud father of a two-year-old daughter, he felt confident in having those conversations the program raises in establishing a brighter and drug free future for his child. (CC)



CREATINE
supplement may help
relieve some long
Covid symptoms



Creatine supplements are popular among fitness enthusiasts. It's no wonder, with research showing it may help improve strength and power, and support recovery between workouts.

Given its many benefits, a team of researchers recently decided to investigate whether it could help people with long Covid. They specifically wanted to know whether creatine could help combat fatigue, which is one of the most common and debilitating long Covid symptoms.

The researchers from Serbia conducted a randomised controlled trial involving 12 people who'd had a recent long Covid diagnosis. This is the best study design to work out whether or not a treatment is effective.

Participants were randomly assigned to either receive a daily creatine supplement or a placebo (in this case inulin a type of fibre). The treatment and placebo were an identical white powder that was mixed into water. This ensured neither the participants nor the researchers knew who'd received the creatine supplement until the trial was complete. The trial lasted over six months, ensuring the creatine had enough time to have an effect.

The researchers measured several outcomes including how fatigued participants reported feeling and whether other long Covid symptoms (such as loss of smell) improved. The researchers also tracked how long participants could walk without feeling exhausted (an objective measure of fatigue), as well as levels of

creatine in both muscle and brain tissues. This last outcome is important as it shows the supplement has made a measurable difference in the body and shows participants adhered to the treatment.

Between 90-95% of participants took the supplement as directed for the duration of the study. Only one patient on creatine reported experiencing mild nausea.

After six months, the creatine group was shown to have higher concentrations of creatine in their muscles and brain tissue compared with the placebo group. But when the researchers looked at fatigue levels both objective and self-reported they found there was no difference between the placebo group and the creatine group.

However, the researchers did find that creatine may have some benefit when it comes to other long Covid symptoms (including loss of smell and taste, breathing difficulties, lung pain, body aches, headaches and trouble concentrating).

While all participants reported improvements in their long Covid symptoms by the end of the study, these improvements were greater in the creatine group. But it's worth noting that it's difficult to judge how severe these symptoms were to begin with or how great the improvements were as no information was provided on the scale the researchers used.

These results suggest that creatine appears to have had a positive effect on some self-reported long Covid symptoms. But creatine did not appear to have any effect on physical fatigue, which was a key focus of the trial.

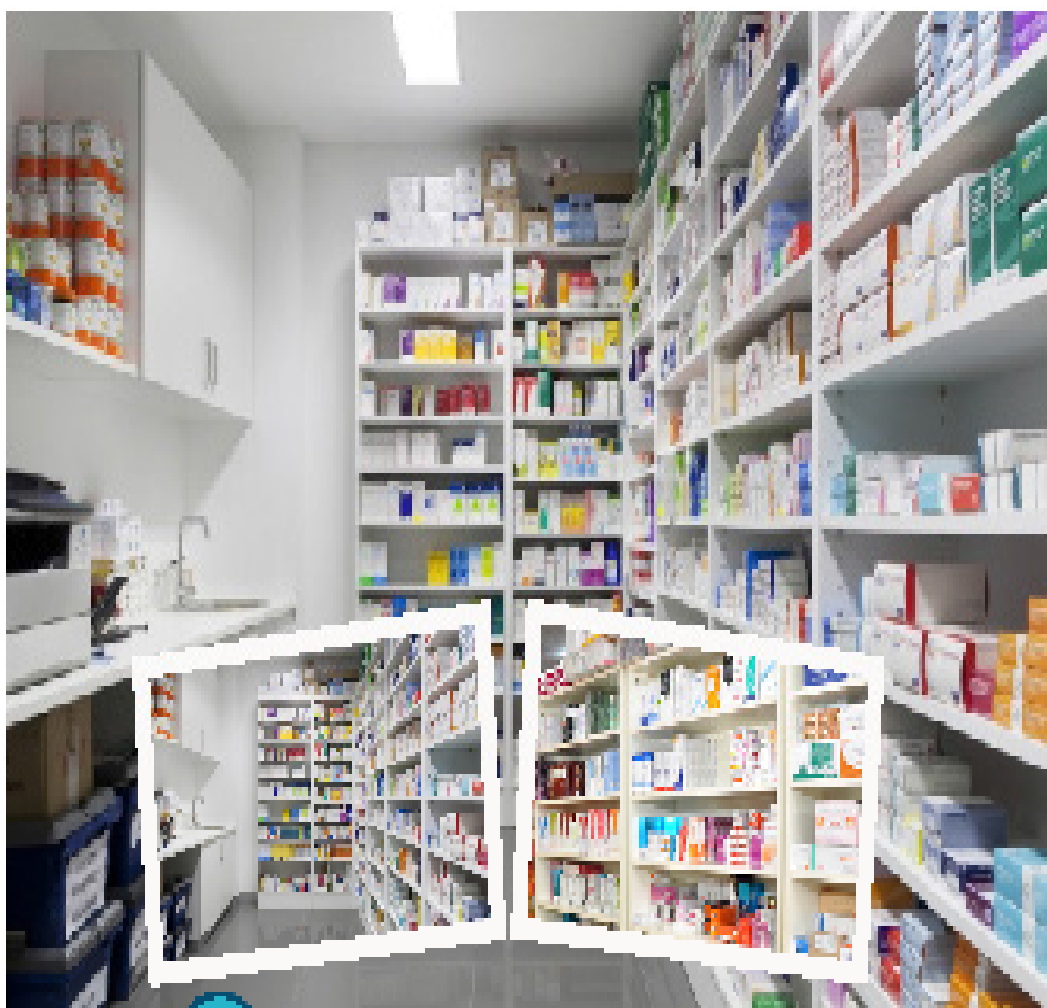
The researchers suggest several potential mechanisms by which creatine could be causing these effects. One possible mechanism could be that it aids in adenosine triphosphate recycling in the brain and muscles. This molecule is important for energy production and release, and so creatine may make energy more available within these tissues.

Another potential mechanism could be that creatine changes nerve regulation by protecting the nerve cells and reducing nerve cell death, which might help brain symptoms. Creatine is also anti-inflammatory and has antioxidant effects, which may help prevent tissue damage thereby preserving the function of the brain and muscle cells.

Need for research
This is the first study examining the use of creatine to treat symptoms of long Covid. The results are encouraging, and suggest it may be worth further exploration. But this is by no means enough evidence to warrant recommending this supplement to anyone who has long Covid.

Given the study used only a very few people, this means there's still a lot we don't know for certain when it comes to using creatine for long Covid symptoms including whether sex differences affect a person's response to the supplement, if creatine works equally well in people of all ages and what effect a person's diet and exercise habits may have on how they respond to creatine.

The researchers suggest several potential mechanisms by which creatine could be causing these effects. One possible mechanism could be that it aids in adenosine triphosphate recycling in the brain and muscles. This molecule is important for energy production and release, and so creatine may make energy more available within these tissues.



**Rafiq
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