

Rana launches Rs 57.98 cr development projects in remote, border villages of Medhar

POONCH, MAY 17: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, today laid the foundation for a series of major development projects worth ₹57.98 crore in Mendhar, aimed at strengthening the drinking water supply, irrigation infrastructure and rural connectivity across several remote and border villages.

The projects included 20 Water Supply Schemes under the UT CAPEX programme with a cumulative cost of ₹51.84 crore. These schemes are designed to provide Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) to uncovered and underserved villages of Sub-Division Mendhar ensuring access to safe and potable drinking water for thousands of residents.

In addition, irrigation and flood control works worth ₹3.62 crore were launched to modernise and strengthen the water management infrastructure in the area. Foundation for construction of motorable bridge over Chattral Nallah at an estimated cost of ₹2.52 crore was also laid which will improve the road connectivity and facilitate easier access to healthcare, education and other essential services.

Addressing a large gathering of local residents, public representatives and senior officers, Rana reaffirmed Omar Abdullah led government's commitment to equitable and inclusive development, particularly in remote and border areas that have long remained underserved. He emphasised that access to safe



drinking water, efficient irrigation and better connectivity are essential for improving the quality of life and ensuring sustainable socio-economic development in far-flung areas.

"These projects are not merely infrastructure works but they reflect the resolve of the administration to ensure that development reaches every household, every field and every corner, no matter how remote," the Minister said.

Highlighting the importance of responsible water management, Rana said that creation of infrastructure must go hand in hand with conservation and efficient use of water resources.

"Providing water is only half the task; managing and conserving it is equally important. Water saved is water earned and every community must treat this infrastructure as a shared public asset," he added.

The Minister directed the executing agencies to ensure timely completion of all the projects while

strictly maintaining the quality standards. He stressed the need for continuous monitoring and accountability so that the benefits of these schemes reach the people without unnecessary delay.

Speaking about the irrigation component, Rana noted that the modernisation of canals and khuls would help the farmers enhance their agricultural productivity, minimise water losses and improve irrigation efficiency. He added that flood protection measures would also safeguard the agricultural land and residential areas during heavy rains and flash floods.

As part of the connectivity initiative, the Minister laid the foundation stone for the construction of a 60-metre (2x30 metre span) single-lane plate girder motorable bridge over Chattral Nallah on the SK Road.

The bridge, being constructed under the Bridge Sector Permanent Restoration 2025-26 programme

by the Public Works (R&B) Department, is expected to significantly improve accessibility in the area.

Underlining the significance of the bridge project, Rana said that residents of Chattral had faced hardships due to the absence of a proper motorable crossing. "This bridge will not only ease daily travel for residents but will also open new avenues for economic activity, ensure timely access to healthcare and education and strengthen the connectivity of this remote region with the rest of Mendhar," he said.

Among the major projects launched the Minister also laid the foundation stone for construction of the PHE Division Mendhar office complex including Irrigation Sub-Division Mendhar.

Senior officers from the Jal Shakti Department, Irrigation and Flood Control Department, district administration, local representatives and the local residents attended the programme.

BOPEE conducts Common Entrance Test for GNM/ANM Courses 2026

SRINAGAR, MAY 17: The Jammu and Kashmir Board of Professional Entrance Examinations (J&K BOPEE) today conducted the Common Entrance Test (CET) for GNM/ANM Courses-2026 for the academic session 2026-27 at the designated Centres within the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

In Kashmir division, the test was conducted at Amar Singh College, KGP

Gogjibagh and S. P. College, M.A. Road and Government College of Education, M.A. Road, Centres. In Jammu division, it was conducted at the Government SPMR Commerce College and Government MAM College Centres. A total of 2548 candidates appeared in the examination out of 2995 applicants.

To ensure smooth conduct of the Entrance Test, adequate arrangements

were made in collaboration with the respective institution/college administration and law enforcement agencies, under the guidance of Professor Minu Mahajan, Chairperson, J&K BOPEE. The examination was conducted smoothly under the supervision of staff from the respective institutions and colleges, with no reports of any untoward or unfair incidents.

The Chairperson, along

with the members, the Secretary, the Controller of Examinations and officials of the J&K BOPEE, actively monitored the entrance test in Srinagar and Jammu. They thanked the staff of the respective institutions and colleges, as well as those deployed under the supervision of Deputy Commissioners at the district headquarters, for ensuring the smooth conduct of the test.

JKPCC Working President leads Sangathan Srijan Abhiyan in Gadigarh



HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, MAY 17

The Jammu & Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee intensified its grassroots outreach today with a Sangathan Srijan Abhiyan at Gadigarh in R.S. Pura South constituency, convened by Amrit Bali, JKPCC Incharge for the area. The event brought together senior party leaders and a large gathering of workers to deliberate on pressing issues affecting Jammu & Kashmir and the country, and to chalk out a plan for strengthening the party's organisational structure at the booth level.

Addressing the gathering, JKPCC Working Presi-

dent Raman Bhalla delivered the keynote address spread across four key themes. First, he flagged the continued demand for restoration of full statehood to J&K, arguing that elected governance and fiscal autonomy are essential to address local aspirations and deliver accountability on development and jobs. Second, he highlighted growing unemployment and agrarian distress in the Jammu region, citing concerns over youth migration, delays in recruitment, and impact on farmers and small traders due to rising input costs. Third, Bhalla linked national-level issues to J&K's context, pointing to debates around social welfare, price rise, and democratic space, and urged

workers to take the Congress's alternative narrative to every household. Fourth, he outlined the objectives of the Sangathan Srijan Abhiyan—revitalising block and booth committees, inducting youth and women, and ensuring the party is visible on local problems ranging from water, electricity, and roads to healthcare and education.

Former Minister Mulla Ram focused his remarks on the challenges faced by Scheduled Castes, backward classes, and rural labour in Jammu's border and kandi areas. He stressed the need for timely implementation of welfare schemes, better access to education and skill training, and stronger rep-

resentation of marginalised communities within the party structure.

Former Minister Yogesh Sawhney spoke on urban and semi-urban concerns in Greater Jammu, including traffic, housing, and youth engagement. He called for a proactive Congress presence on civic issues and greater use of digital platforms to connect with first-time voters ahead of upcoming electoral contests.

Former Minister Abdul Majeed Wani addressed the impact of national economic policies on J&K's trade, tourism, and horticulture sectors. He urged the party to raise issues of market access, cold storage, and price stability for apple and other fruit growers, while also stressing communal harmony and inclusive politics as Congress's core strength in the UT.

Amrit Bali, Incharge Jammu R.S. Pura South and organiser of the programme, said the Sangathan Srijan Abhiyan aims to rebuild the party from the grassroots by listening to workers and the public. He thanked the leadership for their guidance and pledged to expand the outreach in every panchayat and ward of the constituency.

ASTRO ZINDAGI

(Weekly Horoscope May 18-24, 2026)

ARIES : This week, emotional healing takes center stage in your love life. If you are single, Venus suggests that you may feel a need to reflect on past relationships, gaining clarity on what you truly seek in a partner. For couples, this is a time for emotional honesty and addressing unresolved issues with care. Financially, caution is needed due to complex energy of South Node. Impulse buys or unnecessary upgrades may tempt you, driven by external pressures or internal impatience. Take a step back and reflect on what's motivating these urges. You may also uncover hidden financial resources, like an unused benefit or old account, offering you a chance to get organized. This is a week for building strong foundations, especially in systems and structures. Saturn suggests that consistency will be key to long-term success.

TAURUS : This week, Venus enhances your connection-building abilities, whether you are in a relationship or single. If you're in a partnership, focus on nurturing the bond you already have. Small gestures of love and understanding will deepen your connection. In finances, Saturn urges you to be careful and thoughtful about any new investments or money-making opportunities. Research thoroughly before making any decisions. Small, steady steps will help you build wealth safely, rather than taking big risks. At work, Mars sparks motivation, but it's important to stay aligned with your long-term career goals. If work has felt stagnant, consider making small adjustments to bring more meaning and satisfaction.

GEMINI : This week, your love life invites you to slow down and reflect on your emotions. With Venus influencing your relationships, deeper conversations in your partnership will provide clarity about future plans. Emotions may intensify midweek, but staying calm and listening attentively will help resolve any tension. Trust your instincts and approach love with honesty and peace, avoid playing games or sending mixed signals. Financially, Saturn's steady influence helps you stay grounded. Focus on organizing your finances and creating a solid savings plan. You may receive valuable financial advice or discover ways to earn extra income.

CANCER : This week offers a gentle wave of healing energy, especially in matters of the heart, as Venus aligns harmoniously. If you are in a relationship, a moment of genuine tenderness can soften past tensions. If single, you are likely to attract someone emotionally grounded and sincere. With the influence of the Jupiter, your emotional awareness is heightened, helping you connect with those who truly resonate. Financially, Saturn's influence promotes reflection and responsibility. It's a good time to reorganize your finances. Advice from someone experienced may prove helpful, but your instincts should guide your final decisions. Career-wise, Mercury and Mars support thoughtful planning and intuitive decision-making.

LEO : At the start of the week, the emotional atmosphere lightens, bringing peace and harmony to your love life. If you are in a relationship, focus on quiet moments and shared routines rather than drama. Singles may attract someone sincere and emotionally grounded as your genuine presence shines brightest now. Midweek, Mercury advises staying calm through any unexpected financial hiccups like delayed payments. Avoid impulsive spending and revisit your long-term money goals. Teamwork might bring financial opportunities, but balance openness with caution. Toward the latter half of the week, the Sun boosts your professional focus. It's a great time for negotiations, presentations, or interviews.

VIRGO : This week, Venus encourages harmony in your relationships, emphasizing shared goals and future planning. Singles might be drawn to those who share their long-term values, building a solid foundation for meaningful connections. On the financial front, Saturn's practical influence urges careful reflection on spending. Tracking daily expenses reveals where you can save without sacrificing comfort. Midweek, opportunities for extra income may arise through freelance work or side projects, evaluate them cautiously. At work, Mercury sharpens your focus on reviewing contracts and operational de-

tails. Methodical organization and streamlining processes improve efficiency and performance.

LIBRA : The beginning is emotionally rich and supportive, guided by the calming influence of the Moon. Couples may experience renewed intimacy by addressing past issues or simply creating space to reconnect. The energy between you and your partner feels peaceful and affectionate. Singles will feel hopeful and open, drawn to sincerity and emotional safety. Mercury encourages practical financial steps this week. Discipline helps you review debts, adjust savings, and seek expert advice. Avoid quick fixes and invest in long-term value. Patience pays off as your steady efforts build solid financial foundations.

SCORPIO : The week opens with a reflective, introspective vibe as the Moon gently connects and inviting you to align your emotional world with your deeper needs. In relationships, heartfelt conversations about the future may arise, fostering greater depth and understanding. Singles benefit from reconnecting with their inner emotional foundation, this quiet clarity builds lasting self-trust and prepares you for meaningful connections ahead. Financially, cautious Saturn influences your money sector, urging prudence as unexpected expenses may arise. New contracts or projects might cross your path, but a careful review is essential before committing. Avoid impulsive purchases or risky investments. Your career gains focus under the influence of pragmatic Saturn and transformative Pluto.

SAGITTARIUS : The week begins under Venus's influence, making love more intentional and clear. If you are in a relationship, this is a time to recommit by strengthening your bond or honestly assessing its direction. Emotional clarity brings strength, while singles attract emotionally available partners thanks to their own inner clarity. Conversations turn serious but remain practical, fostering trust and respect. Financially, Jupiter encourages momentum from unexpected opportunities—whether through casual talks, referrals, or revisiting old ideas. Your ongoing projects or savings may start showing results. Reinvest cautiously, ensuring essentials are secure first, and consider supporting causes aligned with your values. Midweek, Mars tests your resilience with challenges like deadlines or leadership friction. Staying calm and solving problems boosts your reputation and opens doors to surprise opportunities.

CAPRICORN : The week begins under the gentle influence of Venus, inviting you to deepen emotional honesty in love. If committed, open conversations about needs and hopes build trust and intimacy. Singles might feel a quiet, grounding connection with someone unexpectedly familiar—softening control invites love to flow naturally. Financially, Mercury encourages renewed focus and smart choices. It's a good time to renegotiate contracts or cut unnecessary expenses. Educational investments may arise but avoid overcommitting. Stay calm during financial discussions at work or home—clarity and patience win.

AQUARIUS : At the start of the week, Venus grounds your relationships, bringing practical but emotionally important conversations about shared responsibilities, finances, or living arrangements. Couples build long-term harmony through steady connection, while singles seek partners who offer emotional maturity and calmness over excitement. Mars helps you appreciate the beauty in quiet, reliable love. Midweek, Mercury energizes your financial planning with a fresh vision for freedom and peace of mind. Unexpected income or refunds may arrive—use them wisely to support future goals.

PISCES : This week brings clarity in love as Venus and Jupiter guide your heart. It marks a turning point. If you have felt uncertain about a relationship, signs early on will help you decide. Couples can rekindle passion through mutual effort, while singles may feel drawn to someone unexpected. Some connections may fade, offering emotional freedom—not failure. Be honest with your feelings. Emotional honesty is rewarded now. Financially, Saturn supports long-term planning. Organizing your budget or researching investments now will pay off. Steer clear of risky shortcuts. Professional growth is favored—focus on quality, restructure tasks, or embrace new responsibilities.

Principal Census Officer (Urban) briefs Media on launch of Self-Enumeration for Census 2027

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, MAY 17

Principal Census Officer (Urban)/Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Faz Lul Haseeb, today briefed the media regarding the commencement of the Self-Enumeration phase of Census 2027, which begins today and will continue until May 31, 2026.

While addressing the media, He said that the Self-Enumeration initiative enables citizens to voluntarily submit their household and demographic details through a simple and convenient digital platform. He emphasized that



the initiative is aimed at facilitating greater public participation and ensuring accuracy in the Census process.

He further highlighted that Self-Enumeration is a significant citizen-centric initiative introduced for the

first time in the history of the Indian Census, allowing residents to provide their information from the comfort of their homes. The initiative has been designed to promote ease, transparency, and efficiency in the Census exer-

cise while strengthening public outreach and supporting welfare-oriented planning.

Appealing to the general public, Haseeb urged all residents to actively participate in the Self-Enumeration process within the stipulated time frame and extend full cooperation to the administration for the successful conduct of Census 2027.

He also called upon citizens to ensure that accurate and complete information is provided so that the Census exercise reflects a true and reliable demographic profile, which will contribute to effective planning and development.