

LG addresses Interfaith Dialogue For Harmony Organised by Save Youth Save Future Foundation

SRINAGAR, JULY 19: The Lieutenant Governor, Shri Manoj Sinha today addressed Interfaith Dialogue for Harmony in Baramulla, organised by the Save Youth Save Future Foundation. He commended the Save Youth Save Future Foundation for their contribution to the drug-free Jammu Kashmir campaign. He said the young volunteers worked selflessly and took on a great responsibility for a better future for UT.

“Through this campaign we have strengthened trust within our families and institutions, reinforced youth’s confidence in their future, and sent a message across the country that when a society rises up on its own, it can overcome biggest challenges,” the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor also highlighted that this land of Jammu Kashmir embodies harmony and brotherhood.

“For generations, people of different faiths received respect and experienced spiritual peace. It is the lasting legacy of the saints, Sufis, and Rishis who spent centuries teaching our people the power of love, compassion, and unity. Lal Ded’s teachings didn’t belong to one religion. Her Vakh spoke directly to the human heart. She never judged people by their faith. Instead, Lal Ded focused on bringing different ways of worship together. Similarly, Sheikh-ul-Alam showed us that true devotion isn’t about conflict or division. It is found in compassion and in serving every single human being.



The flourishing risshi-sufi tradition in Kashmir does not proclaim the superiority of one faith. Its message is that all religions and beliefs draw their strength from the same existence, and I believe this teaching is our shared heritage. This heritage does not belong only to Hindus, only to Muslims, only to Sikhs, Buddhists, or Christians. It is the legacy of every citizen born on this sacred land, and protecting this heritage is our moral and spiritual duty. We must safeguard this harmony in the same way we protect our families,” the Lieutenant Governor said.

He also stated that social and religious harmony is the cornerstone on which a strong society, a strong Jammu Kashmir, and a developed India can be built.

“When the people move in peaceful coexistence then the energy of society becomes the greatest force for development. That is why I strongly believe that harmony is both a moral necessity for the people and the foundation of economic prosperity and it also a guarantee of a brighter fu-

ture for coming generations.

We must strengthen the spirit of equal respect for all religions so that every citizen can progress with equal opportunities. We must reinforce mutual goodwill so that poverty is eliminated from every home. We must unite to promote fraternity so that we can uproot challenges like drug addiction.

From the soil of Baramulla today a message should go out that if there is any land in the world that can teach the world that different communities, sects, and faiths can live together in peace, joy, and trust, it is India,” the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor also called upon youth to believe in themselves.

“Believe in your ability. Believe that you can build a future far brighter than the past you inherited. For a long time, this land suffered from the scourge of drugs and terrorism, and that impacted the consciousness, dreams, and futures of the youth.

Today I say with full conviction that that era has now ended. Now the youth

of Jammu Kashmir have taken the reins of their future into their own hands, and this Union Territory is moving toward a new era of education, entrepreneurship, innovation, spiritual awareness, and national unity. Let us together build a Jammu Kashmir that is stronger, more prosperous, peaceful, and progressive,” the Lieutenant Governor said. During his visit, the Lieutenant Governor also met various public delegations. He assured appropriate action on the issues projected by them.

Major General Manoj Joshi, GoC, Dagger Division; Shri Brij Mohan Sharma, Principal Secretary, Culture Department; Dr. Vinod Kumar, DIG North Kashmir Range; Shri Syeed Fakhruddin Hamid, Deputy Commissioner, Baramulla; Shri Gurinderpal Singh, SSP Baramulla; Shri Wajahat Farooq Bhat, Chairman, Save Youth Save Future Foundation; members of the Foundation; senior officials, civil society members, prominent citizens, people from different walks of life and youth in large number were present.

Himachal on high alert as MeT issues red warning for heavy rainfall

SHIMLA, JULY 19: All departments are on high alert in Himachal following a red alert warning issued by the Shimla Meteorological office predicting very heavy to extremely heavy rains at isolated places in four to five districts for Monday and Tuesday.

The MeT office on Sunday issued a red warning for Chamba, Kangra, Mandi and Sirmaur districts for Monday (July 20) and Chamba, Kangra, Kullu, Mandi and Sirmaur districts for Tuesday (July 21).

Flash floods triggered by rains blocked the Sangla-Chitkul road near the ITBP camp at Mastarang in the Rakhchham area of Kinnaur district on Saturday evening, causing extensive damage and soil erosion along the ravine. No loss of life has been reported so far, officials said.

Light to heavy rains lashed parts of the state, and Dharamshala received 82.2 mm of rain since Saturday evening, followed by Kangra 57.9 mm, Paonta



Sahib 33 mm, Palampur 27.1 mm, Bhattiyat 22.2 mm and Jot 20 mm.

Very heavy rains imply rainfall between 115.6 and 204.5 mm, while extremely heavy rains indicate rainfall over 204.5 mm in a day.

A red alert was sounded in July and August 2023, when heavy monsoon rains caused massive destruction in the state and left more than 550 people dead.

Chief Secretary Kamlesh Kumar Pant has directed all deputy commissioners

(DCs) to activate district emergency operation centres on a 24x7 basis, identify vulnerable locations prone to landslides, flash floods and cloudbursts and take preventive measures.

The DCs have been instructed to keep Quick Response Teams (QRTs), SDRF, NDRF, Home Guards, fire services, police and ambulances in complete readiness.

Contingency plans and resource inventories are

being reviewed ensuring availability of food, drinking water, medicines and essential commodities.

The general public has been asked to avoid unnecessary travel, stay away from rivers, streams, nallahs and landslide-prone slopes, not attempt crossing overflowing bridges or flooded roads, follow official advisories and contact the state emergency helpline 1070 or district emergency helpline 1077 in case of any emergency.

Dhami halts tree felling for Rishikesh-Bhanyawala 4-lane project in Uttarakhand

DEHRADUN, JUL 19: Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Saturday announced a halt to the proposed felling of around 3,000 trees for the Rishikesh-Bhanyawala four-lane project, saying the exercise would remain suspended until a consensus was reached among all stakeholders.

In a social media post, he said that while development is essential, no decision will be taken by ignoring public sentiments, environmental concerns or interests of locals.

He said instructions had been issued to the principal secretary and concerned officials to initiate a fresh, detailed dialogue

with all stakeholders, experts, residents and public representatives.

"The felling of trees under this project will remain suspended until an atmosphere of trust and a satisfactory consensus among all parties is established," the chief minister said.

"For me, Uttarakhand's environment, public sentiment and the state's development are all equally important. Our government will move forward only after dialogue, consensus and the larger public interest," Dhami said.

There is a proposal to cut around 3,000 trees to widen nearly 20 km of the Rishikesh-Bhanyawala road, which passes through a sensitive ele-

phant corridor of the Rajaji National Park.

Environmentalists, locals, students and others have been protesting against the project in the Saat Mod area for the past several days. Tree-felling work was being carried out under police protection amid the protests.

Dhami said he has taken serious note of the concerns and suggestions expressed by citizens, environmentalists and residents regarding the project over the last few days.

He said the project of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) was being executed in compliance with high court directives and all necessary

statutory and environmental clearances.

The Chief Minister said the project also provides for a nearly 3.5-km underpass and special culverts to facilitate the movement of wildlife, which would help reduce human-wildlife conflict and road accidents involving wild animals.

He reiterated that the felling of trees for the project would remain suspended until a satisfactory consensus was reached.

Dhami said concerned officials have been instructed to re-engage in dialogue with all stakeholders.

He said further action would be taken in accordance with the high court's directives. (PTI)

Australia's most diverse marsupial predators have been hiding their origins for millions of years

SYDNEY, JULY 19: When you think of carnivorous marsupials, you probably picture the Tasmanian devil or perhaps a spotted-tailed quoll. But these famous predators are only the largest members of a remarkable family of marsupials called dasyurids.

Today the dasyurid family contains almost 80 living species. Some live in trees, others in deserts. Some eat insects and weigh only a few grams, while others can weigh up to 14 kilograms and feast on wombats and wallabies. Together they occupy habitats stretching from New Guinea's tropical rainforests to Australia's deserts and alpine woodlands.

Despite this extraordinary diversity, one of the biggest questions about their evolution has remained unanswered. Where did they come from?

Our new research, published today in Australian Zoologist, describes what is now the earliest known member of the dasyurid family -- a mouse-sized predator we have named Miyumba chrisdickmani. It pushes the fossil record of dasyurids back by more than five million years and provides the first clear picture of what the earliest members of this iconic Australian group looked like.

For decades, scientists have puzzled over the origins of dasyurids.

Early researchers assumed they must be an ancient group because their molar teeth exhibit a remarkably primitive design, little changed from the earliest Australian marsupial ancestors.

But DNA studies later suggested something very different. Modern

dasyurids are actually a comparatively young branch of the marsupial family tree, diverging from their closest relatives around 18 million years ago.

The problem was that the fossil record didn't seem to agree.

Almost every fossil dasyurid known was younger than five million years old. One supposed dasyurid, Barinya wangala, from the Miocene Epoch, appeared to have filled this evolutionary gap. But recent work showed it actually belongs to an entirely different family of bizarre snail-eating marsupials called the malleoedectids.

Suddenly, the fossil record contained no confirmed dasyurids at all before the start of the Pliocene roughly 5.3 million years ago. This left an apparent evolutionary ghost lineage stretching back millions of years.

Our new fossil helps solve that mystery.

Miyumba chrisdickmani was about the size of a modern antechinus or large dunnart, weighing only around 30 grams.

It is known from six fossil lower jaws recovered from the Riversleigh World Heritage Area on Waanyi country in northwestern Queensland. This is one of the world's richest fossil deposits. It preserves Australian ecosystems that span more than 25 million years.

Although tiny, the animal's teeth preserve an important evolutionary clue.

For decades, palaeontologists struggled to identify fossil dasyurids because there was no unique dental feature that clearly separated them from their extinct relatives. Miyumba reveals one at last.

In most primitive marsu-

pial predators, the third lower premolar is the largest of the three premolars. In modern dasyurids, however, that tooth is actually smaller than both the first and second premolars. South Asians & Diaspora

Miyumba possesses exactly this arrangement. This makes it the earliest known fossil to display what appears to be a defining feature of the dasyurid family.

That seemingly subtle difference finally gives palaeontologists a reliable way to recognise early members of this important group.

To test where Miyumba belonged, we compared its anatomy with living and extinct marsupials using two different evolutionary analyses.

One examined hundreds of anatomical features preserved in fossils. The other combined anatomical evidence with DNA sequence data from living species while also incorporating the ages of fossil species to estimate when major groups evolved.

Both approaches reached the same conclusion. Miyumba chrisdickmani represents the earliest and most primitive known dasyurid.

The analyses also identified another small Riversleigh fossil, Mayigrampus orbis, as one of the earliest members of the lineage that eventually gave rise to today's dunnarts, planigales and other small arid-adapted dasyurids.

Together these discoveries push the origin of the dasyurid family back to around 23 million years ago, roughly five million years earlier than previous estimates.

Perhaps the biggest surprise is what these fossils

reveal about where modern dasyurids came from.

Today, many of Australia's smallest dasyurids thrive in dry grasslands and deserts. Yet Miyumba lived in the lush rainforest ecosystems that covered much of northern Australia during the Early Miocene. Its anatomy also suggests it was most closely related to modern rainforest species found only in New Guinea.

This hints that the earliest dasyurids evolved in rainforests before some lineages adapted to the increasingly dry environments that spread across Australia over the past 15 million years.

While many ancient rainforest species disappeared from mainland Australia, some of their descendants may have survived in New Guinea's tropical forests, where similar environments persist today.

A second mystery might be solved

The timing may also explain another long-standing mystery.

Early dasyurids appear just as another group of Australian marsupial predators, the keeenamorphians, disappeared from the fossil record.

It's possible that as these older predators declined, early dasyurids expanded into the ecological niches they left behind before eventually diversifying into the remarkable array of carnivorous marsupials we know today.

A handful of tiny fossil jaws may not seem like much. But they reveal the missing opening chapter in the evolutionary history of Australia's most successful marsupial predators and show that sometimes the smallest fossils answer the biggest questions. (The Conversation) (AGENCI-ES)

Chinar Book Festival Celebrates Journalism, Kashmiriat; Astronaut Shukla to speak tomorrow

SRINAGAR, JULY 19: Grey clouds and steady spells of rain did little to dampen the spirit of the Chinar Book Festival as visitors arrived in large numbers at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC) on Sunday – Day 2 of Chinar Book Festival. Families, students, teachers and book lovers filled the festival grounds, where the second day marked the beginning of a series of literary sessions at Authors' Corner along with the ongoing workshops at Children's Corner and engaging cultural performances.

The festival's literary sessions commenced with "Beyond the Headlines: Journalism as Storytelling," a panel discussion, which brought together senior journalists Sanjeev Gupta from Dainik Jagran, Naresh Kaushik from PTI, Prashant Asthana from Navbharat Times and Nayanika Sengupta from Hindustan Times. Moderated by Javaid Malik, the session offered students a rare glimpse into the world of journalism, exploring how news stories are written and reported in current times.

The panel reflected on the evolving media landscape, discussing the changing dynamics of print, television and digital journalism, the growing influence of social media and the responsibilities that accompany reporting in the digital age. Students from BHSS Mujkund, Sultan-ul-



Arifeen School, Kashmir Harvard Educational Institute, Blue Bells School, GHSS Rainawari, Government Polytechnic College Bemina and Government Degree College Kulgam participated enthusiastically, posing insightful questions on career opportunities, newsroom ethics, essential skills and the future of journalism. Drawing from their professional experiences, the panellists encouraged young aspirants to cultivate curiosity, integrity and a commitment to factual reporting.

Another engaging session at the Author's Corner was "Urdu, Kashmiriat and the Rich Tapestry of Shared Cultural Tradition." Moderated by Dr. Hafeezur Rahman, Convenor, Khushro Foundation, New Delhi, the discussion brought together Prof. Mufti Mudassir Farooqui, noted scholar and Head, Department of English, University of Kashmir, and Asiya Qadir, Academic

Head, Birla Open Minds International School. Prof. Farooqui spoke about the deep interconnection between Sufism and the Rishi tradition, observing that Kashmir's culture was shaped through centuries of dialogue and mutual respect, with the Rishis playing a pivotal role in fostering harmony across communities. Speaking on the role of language in building bridges, Asiya Qadir said that learning multiple languages broadens one's worldview and strengthens bonds between people.

More than 4,000 students from schools, colleges and universities from across Srinagar and neighbouring areas participated in various activities on the Day 2 of the Chinar Book Festival. In the Children's Corner, over 2,500 children took part in a series of fun learning activities. In the morning session, young crafters tried their hands on creating paper craft with

"Art Safari" by Rashtriya e-Pustakalaya, bringing colours, sparkles and paper to life through paper butterflies. Students were also introduced to the digital library, an initiative of the Ministry of Education that offers free access to more than 7,000 e-books in 23 languages. Creative imagination was at centre stage in the second session, "Book Cover Design Workshop" by National Centre for Children's Literature (NCCL), the children's wing of NBT. The final session of the day "Harf-o-Hunar: English Calligraphy Workshop" was conducted by Malik Mukhtar where students learned an elegant style of lettering on their own.

Continuing the festival's cultural spirit, Raja Art and Culture, Dilshad Cultural Forum, Kalidas Theatre Group and Pompoush Folk Theatre performed traditional folk theatre of Kashmir. The evening came alive with soulful performances by Dr. Shazia Hameed, Rashida Akhter and Abid Ali, adding melody and warmth to the festival atmosphere.

Day 3 will be headlined by a special interactive session with astronaut Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla, AC, alongside a vibrant programme of children's workshops, literary discussions and cultural performances. The Chinar Book Festival continues till 26 July at SKICC, Srinagar, with something for every age group.