

## 'Save Apple, Save Kashmir': NH blockade sparks outcry

Political leaders accuse admin of neglect; Seek relief, storage facilities, urgent restoration of traffic

GY CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR, SEP 16

Amid growing outrage over disrupted movement of fruit-laden trucks, the political parties on Tuesday backed growers and urged urgent steps to restore highway access and safeguard the Valley's fruit industry. Srinagar Member of Parliament Aya Ruhullah voiced concern over the prolonged closure of the highway during the peak apple season, warning that the disruption is inflicting heavy losses on growers.

Speaking at the Fruit Mandi in Shopian, he alleged that halting fruit trucks appeared to be an attempt to undermine Kashmir's economy. Ruhullah said trucks from Jammu were being allowed movement towards Srinagar, while apple-laden vehicles remained stranded. He urged authorities to restore traffic on the highway and cautioned that growers may be forced to protest if the situation continues.

Peoples Conference (PC) President and MLA Handwara Sajad Gani Lone criticised the government over the prolonged closure of the highway.

In a post on X, Lone said it takes "hundreds of crores of losses in terms of rotting apples to wake up a wandering CM to actually issue a statement."

He said the apple industry forms the backbone of Kashmir's economy, and that an economy already affected by tourism losses is now facing heavy setbacks in horticulture as well.

Lone said that expression of concern from those in power was not enough. "Mere expression of concern from the ruling establishment is a luxury," he wrote.

He also questioned the role of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) in handling the road closure and asked why there was no coordination with local authorities to address the issue.

"What stopped the shawl gifting CM sahib to land in Delhi, meet ministers and ensure expeditious clearance of the highway. Did you even go there. Did you even pretend to be bothered," Lone asked. He said that while he could understand the Union Government treating the blockade like any other highway

closure, the state administration should have recognised that the situation had a far greater impact on local livelihoods.

"I can understand Union Government treating it like yet another highway closure. But you should have known it is not yet another closure," he added. CPI (M) leader and MLA Kulgam, M. Y. Tarigami said that the floods in September had resulted in loss of lives, property and crops. He said the prolonged closure of the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway had affected farmers and fruit growers. Tarigami said that despite assurances from the National Highway authorities, the situation on the road remained uncertain during the peak season when apple produce needed to be transported to markets outside the Valley. He urged the Government of India to take immediate steps to ensure smooth passage of trucks carrying apples.

He said intermittent rains had caused leaves and apples to fall prematurely, leading to losses. He added that 5 h e r - i - K a s h m i r University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology should have given timely advice to farmers on preventive measures.

According to him, the recommendations of Dr. Swaminathan Commission on distressed agriculture had not been implemented fully, and apple had not been included under the Minimum Support Price.

He further said that despite the launch of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana in 2016, apple had not been covered under the scheme, while insurance companies had earned large amounts of premium.

Tarigami said there was a need to reintroduce the Market Intervention Scheme so that rotten apples could be procured for juice and jam manufacturing. If the Government of India did not support the scheme, he said, the UT administration should include it under the CAPEX Budget to horticulture sector.

He pointed out that cold storage facilities were insufficient in the Valley, despite announcements that government land was available for this purpose.

"The government cannot remain indifferent. Protecting horticulture means protecting the livelihood of farmers, which is central to Kashmir's economy," Tarigami said. He demanded that the Government of India announce sufficient relief for flood victims and for apple growers and traders who had suffered losses because of weather, floods, and the highway blockade. Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has also raised concern over the crisis faced by apple growers in Jammu and Kashmir following highway disruptions, with party leader Ilitja Mufti writing to Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha seeking urgent intervention. In her letter, she said horticulture forms the backbone of the Union Territory's economy, contributing nearly seven percent to the GDP and providing livelihood to over 25 lakh people. She noted that recent floods, landslides, and consequent road closures have brought the apple trade to a halt, adding that the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway has remained shut for two weeks, leaving trucks carrying apples stranded while vehicles with other goods were allowed passage.

Ilitja urged the administration to expedite repair work on the highway and announce an interim relief package for affected orchardists. She said the Mughal Road and Mughal Tunnel had failed to ease the situation due to their limited capacity. Stressing the importance of the sector, she wrote that horticulture had supported the economy during the years of militancy by providing livelihood and dignity to thousands of families. She appealed for immediate relief to end the distress that has gripped apple growers in the Valley.

People's Democratic Front (PDF) President and former Minister Hakeem Mohammad Yaseen expressed deep concern over the frequent closure of the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway, stating that it has badly hit the economy of Kashmir, particularly the horticulture sector.

He said it is unfortunate that despite the highway being known for frequent disruptions, successive governments have failed to put in place a long-term and concrete plan to address the crisis.

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Another protesting student said, "We have spent lakhs of rupees on our education, and now we are being told our degrees will have no national value. Who will be responsible for our careers?"

Parents, who had joined the demonstration, also expressed anguish. "Our children were admitted through proper government channels, yet today they are being pushed into uncertainty. Authorities must intervene immediately to safeguard their future," one of the parents said.

Meanwhile, responding to the issue, College Administrator, Dr. Mohammad Isaq said the institute's state registration remains valid. "Regarding INC registration, we will address the matter urgently. We appeal to students not to panic, he assured."

Students said the decision has jeopardized their future and accused the college administration of remaining silent. "INC has withdrawn recognition for our college. Now, we cannot apply for jobs outside J&K or sit in national-level exams," said one student. "We got

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## Man injured in shootout in JK's Samba

GY CORRESPONDENT  
JAMMU, SEP 16

A man was injured when a criminal allegedly fired at him in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district on Tuesday, officials said. The incident took place in the Sarore area of the Bari Brahmana belt, where a criminal, Lahu Gujjar, along with his accomplice, fired at one

Gulab Din, they said. He was injured and shifted to the Government Medical College (GMC) hospital in Jammu for treatment. The accused escaped from the spot after the firing. Bari Brahmana police have registered a case and launched a search operation to trace the accused involved in the incident.

## NH blockade crushing Kashmir's horticulture sector: MP Ruhullah

*'It seems like a deliberate war on J&K's economy, nobody safe under this regime'*

GY CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR, SEP 16

Member of Parliament (MP) from Srinagar Lok Sabha Constituency, Aya Syed Ruhullah Mehdi and senior National leader Tuesday strongly criticised repeated restrictions on truck movement and the partial closure of the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway during the peak apple season, calling it a "deliberate war" on Kashmir's economy that is pushing farmers and traders to the brink.

Speaking to reporters at the Fruit Mandi in Shopian, Mehdi said the news agency said the valley's horticulture — particularly apple cultivation — is the backbone of the local economy and must be protected from what he described as avoidable administrative decisions.

"Horticulture is the backbone of Kashmir's economy," he said, adding that nearly 70 per cent of the valley's economy is linked to the sector and that it is far more important than tourism for many families.

He expressed deep concern that trucks laden with apples and other fruit are repeatedly being stopped, citing last year's deliberate stoppages and a repeat of similar restrictions this season. "Last year, trucks were intentionally stopped, and this year the same situation is being repeated," he said. "This is not merely an administrative issue — stopping trucks during the peak season is an attack on the economic survival of our farmers and traders."

He warned that the curbs come at the worst possible time. "Today is the peak of the apple season. Preventing trucks

from moving is not an administrative inconvenience; it is an assault on our growers' livelihoods," Mehdi said. Traders at the Mandi have already warned that fruit worth millions of rupees could spoil further if supply lines are not restored without delay. He also questioned the logic behind permitting vehicles from Jammu into the valley while allegedly stopping fruit-laden trucks moving towards Srinagar towards Jammu. "There is no justification for allowing vehicles into the valley from Jammu while preventing our produce from being transported out," he said.

Calls For Immediate, Concrete Administrative Action The MP urged the administration to ensure that apples and other perishables reach external markets unimpeded. "Authorities must take concrete steps to protect the Kashmiri economy and prevent further loss to our orchardists and traders," he said, warning that continued neglect of the problem would prove even more destructive for the valley's economy.

He welcomed a recent Supreme Court order halting the implementation of certain clauses of the Waqf Amendment Act and said the law must be applied uniformly across faiths. He criticised arrests under the Public Safety Act (PSA), saying the law poses a threat to every citizen. "Under the PSA, no one is safe — whether MLA, MP or ordinary people. If someone raises their voice for their rights, they are not secure. This will only stop when we all unite and stand against it."

"If we remain silent today, tomorrow we may face the same fate," he said —

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## Over 2200 fruit-laden trucks evacuated via Mughal Road during past 24 hours: Div Com Kashmir



GY CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR, SEP 16

In a major relief to fruit growers and traders of valley, Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Anshul Garg, today informed that over 2,200 fruit-laden trucks were successfully evacuated via the Mughal Road during the past twenty-four hours. Taking cognizance of the situation, Div Com undertook a comprehensive visit to Peer Ki Gali Mughal Road to ensure smooth movement of fruit trucks. He also visited Fruit Mandi Aglar, Shopian, where he held detailed interactions with various stakeholders, including fruit growers, traders, transporters, and representatives of the horticulture sector. During the visit, Div Com reiterated the

administration's commitment to prioritizing the movement of fruit-laden trucks, along with ensuring the uninterrupted supply of fuel and essential commodities to the valley. He emphasized that coordinated efforts between civil administration and security agencies led to the swift clearance of the fruit vehicles, bringing much-needed respite to the horticulture community. Expressing appreciation for the prompt action, President of the Fruit Growers & Traders Association, Mohammad Ashraf extended gratitude to the Chief Secretary J&K for his timely & prompt intervention in directions, which facilitated the smooth transportation

process. Div Com also urged all stakeholders to adhere to traffic regulations and designated movement timings to maintain order and ensure continuous flow along the Mughal Road. He further noted that restoration work on the National Highway (NH) is being carried out on a war footing to enhance connectivity. During the visit, he was accompanied by Director PCS&C, Qwais Ahmad; Deputy Commissioner Shopian, Shishir Gupta; SSP Shopian, Anayat Ali; SSP Traffic, and other senior officials from the district administration, BRO, and traffic departments. Deputy Commissioner Poonch and SSP Poonch also joined Div Com during the visit to oversee coordination from the other end of the route.

## ALC Ramban conducts enforcement drive

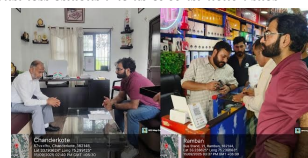
*Inspects schools, business establishments & construction sites*

GY CORRESPONDENT  
RAMBAN, SEP 16

On the directions of the Labour Commissioner J&K, the Labour Department Ramban led by Assistant Labour Commissioner (ALC) Amit Kumar today conducted inspections at different private establishments and work sites.

The team visited NCVI Convent Institute HS Maitra and Kamal Academy, where officials examined records to verify adherence to the provisions of Payment of Wages Act and Maternity Benefit Act. Both institutions were found maintaining wage registers as per rules and paying salaries to their employees in a timely manner, i.e., before the 10th of every month. Further, no issues related to maternity benefits among female staff were

reported. At the NHAI construction site near Marog, records were scrutinized and found in order. All workers were enrolled under Provident Fund schemes, and no instance of child labour was observed. However, some workers without JKBOCWBB registration, for which the company was directed to ensure their enrollment with the Board and for other welfare/pension schemes. Later, the team inspected shops and other Business



establishments in different markets. Five Shops, found in violating the Shops and Establishments Act, were challaned and the owners were asked to appear before the Authority within five days. No child labour cases were detected.

The workers and shopkeepers were also sensitized about the provisions of the Shops and Establishments Act besides various welfare and pension schemes of JKBOCWBB and the Government of India.

## One-Day National Workshop on "Character Building and Personality Development through Indian Knowledge System" held at Cluster University of Jammu



GY CORRESPONDENT  
JAMMU, SEP 16

A one-day national workshop on "Character Building and Personality Development through Indian Knowledge System" was organized by the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) of Cluster University of Jammu, in collaboration with Shiksha Sanskriti Uthan Nyas, Jammu Kashmir & Ladakh Prant under the patronage of Ms Ankur Chaudhary (JKAS), Patron and Registrar, Cluster University of Jammu. The event featured a keynote address by Dr. Atul Kothari, National Secretary of Shiksha Sanskriti Uthan Nyas, New Delhi. The workshop began with the traditional Lamp Lighting Ceremony and Saraswati Vandana, invoking a spiritual ambience for the day's academic proceedings. Dr. Sugandha Mahajan, the workshop moderator, formally welcomed the

dignitaries and participants, outlining the key objectives of the event. Dr. Meenakshi Bandral, Director IQAC, introduced the vision and initiatives of IQAC, emphasizing the need to integrate Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into modern education for the holistic development of learners. The inaugural address was delivered virtually by Sr. Prof. K.S. Chandersekhar, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Cluster University of Jammu. He credited the leadership of the Registrar, Controller of Examinations, and Director IQAC for envisioning the workshop and reiterated the university's commitment to nurturing character and values through indigenous wisdom. In his Keynote Address, Dr. Atul Kothari highlighted the relevance of the Indian knowledge tradition in shaping character and personality,

particularly among youth. He elaborated on concepts such as Panchkosh and a balanced daily routine, offering practical insights for modern life. Prof. Ranvijay Singh, Controller of Examinations, delivered the Vote of Thanks for the inaugural session. The second session, titled "Discussion on Panchkosh", was moderated by Dr. Neetu Kumari, Coordinator, Commerce, Cluster University of Jammu. Jasbir Singh, Rector, Kishtwar Campus, University of Jammu, served as the Subject Expert and offered deep insights into the five sheaths of human existence and their role in holistic personality development. The session was chaired by Prof. Rajinder Sharma from GMC R.S. Pura. Dr. Ankur Kumari from the Department of Commerce concluded the session with a Vote of Thanks.

## SMVDU Cadets Selected for Prestigious All India Vayu Sainik Camp (AIVSC) at Bangalore



GY CORRESPONDENT  
JAMMU, SEP 16

Six Air Wing NCC cadets from Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU) have brought laurels to the university by being selected to attend the prestigious All India Vayu Sainik Camp (AIVSC) to be held at Bangalore. The selected cadets are Charvi Thakur, Sahar Sharma, Shivang, Raina, Vibhansa Sharma, Kritika Chandel, and Mukti Porwal. The cadets successfully cleared a

rigorous selection process conducted by the Air Wing of NCC. Prior to the AIVSC, they also underwent an intensive Pre-AIVSC Camp which played a crucial role in preparing them for the national-level event. During this training, they were groomed in physical training, weapon training, drill practice, skeet shooting, firing practice, flying practice on micro-light aircraft, and aeromodelling. Dr. Varun Dutta, NCC Coordinator,

SMVDU, and Ms. Kirti, In-charge Air Wing, SMVDU, provided constant guidance, motivation, and support to ensure the selection of their cadets for this prestigious camp. Pragati Kumar, Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, SMVDU, and Sh. Ajay Sharma (JKAS), Registrar, SMVDU congratulated the selected cadets and extended their best wishes for their participation at the national level.