

'Year-End 2024': Despite reforms, successes in 2024, J&K's health sector continues to face challenges

Region has just two PET scan machines: new GMCs, district hospitals lack MRI facilities: thousands of posts remain vacant

GY CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, DEC 19

Jammu and Kashmir witnessed crucial reforms and new developments in the health sector in 2024, with AIIMS Jammu becoming functional and AIIMS Awantipora nearing completion.

AIIMS Jammu, which started its operations in August this year, is expected to become fully operational in the coming year, while AIIMS Awantipora in Kashmir is projected to be completed by June 2025, with operations starting shortly thereafter. The government has added 2,000 medical seats across Jammu and Kashmir to address the shortage of doctors and has upgraded health facilities. Primary Health Centres (PHCs) have been elevated to Sub-District Hospitals (SDHs) to meet Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS). The objective of these upgrades is to provide quality and affordable healthcare services to peo-

ple's doorsteps by optimising existing facilities and creating new ones. The initiation of dialysis centres at district and sub-district hospitals has been a commendable step, directly benefiting the public. Separate geriatric wards have also been introduced to ensure better care for elderly patients.

J&K has made notable progress in the elimination of tuberculosis, and the region is expected to be declared TB-free next year. The much-anticipated Cancer Institute in Jammu became fully operational this year, providing critical services to patients in the Jammu division. Certain procedures were also conducted for the first time in J&K hospitals this year. A 300-bedded, high-tech Bone and Joint (B&J) Hospital was made functional in Jammu, while the new building at Srinagar's B&J Hospital is expected to be completed within the next 2-3 months. Construction

on a new block at LD Hospital is set to begin soon.

Chemotherapy units have been established in all district hospitals, benefiting hundreds of patients. Digital payment and "scan and share" facilities have also been extended to all hospitals in J&K, which have improved efficiency across the region. The government plans to start a medical university at SKIMS, under which all medical colleges will operate. This initiative is expected to be a major milestone in the health sector.

Challenges Despite infrastructure-focused reforms, Jammu and Kashmir continues to face health challenges. The population is grappling with the dual burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases.

Emerging communicable diseases, such as Ebola, bird flu, swine flu, Zika virus, and dengue pose persistent threats.

Dengue, in particular, has become a major challenge, with thousands of cases reported annually, especially in Jammu.

Non-communicable diseases such as anaemia, hypertension, diabetes, cancer, heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure, obesity and mental health disorders are also on the rise. At least 7.8% of the population in J&K and Ladakh currently suffers from diabetes, while over 10.5% are in the prediabetic stage. Experts said the rise in such cases is due to lifestyle changes and the adoption of Western diets.

Doctors called for adopting a healthy lifestyle, including regular physical activity, a balanced diet and avoiding smoking. Addressing environmental pollution and ensuring access to clean water are also critical, according to them.

Anaemia continues to be a challenge, particularly among women and children, primarily due to nutritional deficiencies

and a lack of awareness about menstrual health.

Drug abuse and mental health Drug abuse continues to plague the region, with an estimated 13.5 lakh people consuming drugs, including over 5 lakh opioid addicts, according to a parliamentary report.

Intravenous drug use has increased, which exposes a person to severe health risks. However, emerging addiction treatment facilities are proving to be a beacon of hope for those seeking recovery.

Mental health issues are also on the rise, with thousands of calls received on helplines over the past two years. Virtual autism has become a growing concern among children who spend excessive time on screens.

Infrastructure needs J&K Health Minister Sakina Itoo acknowledged the region's lagging health infrastructure and has called for urgent upgrades.

The region has just two

PET scan machines (one each at SKIMS and GMC Jammu), which is insufficient given the increasing number of cancer cases. No MRI or radiotherapy facilities are available at the new medical colleges or district hospitals. CT scan and ultrasound facilities are absent in most sub-district hospitals and Community Health Centres. There is also an urgent need for specialist doctors at district hospitals to reduce the burden on tertiary care facilities, where 50% of cases could be managed locally.

Recruitment challenges Nearly 60% of positions at SKIMS remain vacant, along with thousands of posts in the Health and Medical Education Department and the Directorate of Health Services in both Kashmir and Jammu. At many hospitals, essential equipment lies defunct due to a lack of technicians. Filling these vacancies is critical to improving healthcare delivery in J&K.

J&K Soft Tennis contingent leaves for participation in National School Games

GY CORRESPONDENT JAMMU, DEC 19

The J&K contingent of Soft Tennis players today left for participation in National School Games scheduled to be held in Madhya Pradesh from 20th to 24 December.

The J&K Soft Tennis contingent comprises of Madhavendra Singh Sambyal, Soham Bhat, Shreemal Bhat, Antekshika, Saksham Koul Jafari, Harshita Jalali, Harikesh Dutt, Aditya Dutt, Rehmandeep Singh, Yatin Manhas, Akashi Sharma, Swadhi Sharma, Yajit Sharma and Simran Sharma. These promising players would be taking part in the national games in different categories including under 14, under 17 and under 19.

Green Drive organized at Ganpat Pul Doda

DODA, DEC 19

The Department of Social Forestry, Jammu and Kashmir, organized a significant Green Drive today at Ganpat Pul, Doda, under the theme "Ek Ped Ma Ke Naam".

The event, spearheaded by the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of the Social Forestry Division Doda, witnessed enthusiastic participation from district administration and the community.

Deputy Commissioner Harvinder Singh inaugurated the plantation drive alongside the DFO of Social Forestry Division and Tehsilidar. Teams from the forest department and local volunteers actively participated in planting a variety of saplings to enhance green cover and promote environmental awareness.

The Deputy Commissioner highlighted the importance of community participation in such initiatives and emphasized the role of trees in combating climate change, preserving biodiversity, and improving overall quality of life. The theme "Ek Ped Ma Ke Naam" was appreciated as a heartfelt dedication to mothers and the nurturing role trees play in sustaining life.

The Green Drive serves as a step towards making Doda greener and more sustainable, aligning with the government's vision of environmental conservation. The Department of Social Forestry extends gratitude to all participants and encourages the community to continue supporting such efforts for a healthier and greener future.

District Hospital Ramban achieves major landmark in Surgical Excellence

GY CORRESPONDENT RAMBAN, DEC 19

The District Hospital Ramban has achieved a remarkable landmark in healthcare by successfully performing six major surgeries in a single day, under the expert guidance of Dr. Yassar Arafat and Dr. Muzamil. This extraordinary accomplishment, encompassing a range of complex surgical procedures, highlights the hospital's unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional medical care with the available resources. The procedures included four cholecystectomies for gallbladder removal, a critical surgery for patients suffering from gallstones or inflammation, ensuring pain relief and preventing complications. Additionally, an anal fistula surgery (Fistula in Ano) was conducted to address a condition causing significant discomfort, while an open TAR (Transversus Abdominis Release) surgery was performed for abdominal wall reconstruction, improving patients' quality of life.

The success of these surgeries was supported by the skilled anaesthesia team led by Dr. Riyaz Dagloo and Dr. Shahid from GMC Srinagar, ensuring patient safety and comfort throughout. Despite operating with a single operating theatre and one surgery day per week, the hospital's surgical department continues to deliver results comparable to leading state medical institutions. Dr. Yassar Arafat expressed gratitude to the District Administration, the Medical Superintendent of District Hospital Ramban, and the Chief Medical Officer Ramban, OT staff for their steadfast support. This milestone underscores the dedication and expertise of the hospital's surgical and support teams, setting a new benchmark in healthcare delivery for the region.

DC Rajouri inspects TB Hospital, Medical Supplies Store, Jay Shree Library

GY CORRESPONDENT RAJOURI, DEC 19

Deputy Commissioner Rajouri Abhishek Sharma today conducted a comprehensive inspection of the Tuberculosis (TB) Hospital to review its functioning and assess the progress under the Nikshay Mitra initiative. The initiative, aimed at eradicating tuberculosis, was evaluated for its impact on patient support and treatment outcomes.

During the inspection, the Deputy Commissioner interacted with the hospital staff and patients to understand the challenges faced in providing quality healthcare services. He emphasized the importance of community participation in the Nikshay Mitra program and directed the health officials to ensure timely assistance and proper follow-up of TB patients.

The Deputy Commissioner also inspected the Medical Supplies Store to evaluate the availability and quality of essential medicines and equipment. He instructed the concerned officials to maintain an adequate inventory of medical supplies to meet the needs of patients effectively.

Indian Army Organized Ex-Servicemen Rally at Solki, Rajouri



GY CORRESPONDENT RAJOURI, DEC 19

The Indian Army organized an Ex-Servicemen Rally at Solki, District Rajouri, highlighting its commitment to the welfare of veterans. The major highlights of the event were interactions with Ex-Servicemen and Spars registration, as well as a grievance counter. The event brought together over 35 Ex-servicemen and served as a platform to

address grievances and disseminate information about various welfare schemes. An assistance booth was established to resolve queries and provide guidance on accessing benefits like the Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme and Canteen Stores Department related issues. The Indian Army expressed gratitude to the veterans and their families for their sacrifices, emphasizing the

Indian Army's unwavering support. The event also highlighted that such initiatives strengthen the bond between the Indian Army and its Ex-Servicemen, ensuring their welfare and honoring their legacy. The Ex-servicemen Meet was a testament to the Indian Army's dedication to its veteran community, demonstrating respect, gratitude, and an enduring commitment to their well-being.

Indian Army Organized Motivational Lecture On "Join Indian Army" for Girls at Lam, Rajouri



GY CORRESPONDENT RAJOURI, DEC 19

In its ongoing efforts to integrate local youth into the mainstream and motivate girl students to join the defense forces, the Indian Army organized a motivational talk on "Join Indian Army" for the girl students of Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Nowshera. The lecture aimed to inspire students to join the Armed Forces and familiarize them with various entry schemes and qualification requirements for joining the Indian Army through different entry

channels. The students were introduced to the inspiring stories of success and achievements of women officers in the Indian Army, showcasing snippets of a "Life Less Ordinary." The lecture focused on highlighting the unique opportunities for job satisfaction and the adventurous lifestyle that the armed forces offer. The students were informed about the educational qualifications required for each entry, including officer-level entry and the Agniveer entry scheme. Special schemes such as permanent and short

service commissions were also discussed in detail. The representatives of the Indian Army addressed students' queries and provided guidance. The program was attended by 100 students and five teachers from Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Nowshera. The attendees expressed their gratitude to the Indian Army for organizing such an inspiring event. This motivational lecture is expected to have a lasting impact, encouraging students in the region to join the Armed Forces and serve the nation with pride.

On the second day of the 9-day long Gau Gopal Maha Yagya in the Presence of Shri Ganga dhar Maharajji



GY CORRESPONDENT JAMMU, DEC 19

On the second day of the 9-day long Gau Gopal Maha Yagya being held at the sacred Samadhi of Shri Dwarika Nath Shastri Ji Mah araj on the occasion of his birth anniversary, after completing the work of Dev Poojan and Das Mahadaan with Vedic mantras, 108 Kalashes were filled with jal from the Samadhi Sarovar and placed on each of 108 kunds of the Yagnya shala in the Kalashyatra.

As usual, the national flag was hoisted at 12 noon. On this occasion, Deputy Inspector General of police of Jammu Kathua

Range Shiv Kumar Sharma was also present. Shri Sharma Ji said that along with being religious, it is also necessary to be a patriot. How will the nation be safe without this? Giving an example of national service, he also mentioned Bashir Jawan who was martyred while fighting the terrorists in Kathua last year. Revered Shri Gangadhar Ji also told about martyr Bashir Jawan that he had recorded the discourses of Shastri Maharaj on his mobile and used to listen to them in his free time. Shri Gangadhar Ji clearly said that no matter what religion someone belongs to,

if he is a patriot like Bashir Jawan or Ashfaqulla Khan, then he is also worthy of our respect. But not only if he is a traitor Hindu, but even if he is our relative, he should also be given death penalty. Senior Superintendent of Police Shri Ajay Sharma also expressed moral and national service in front of thousands of listeners.

On the first day, Additional District Magistrate of Jammu Ms. Anasuya Jammal and Police Officer Kartikeya Ji have also attended this confluence of Veda Yagna, Anna Yagna and gyan that no matter what religion someone belongs to,

Sant Mela Singh College Hosts Extension Lecture on NEP 2020

Dr. Anuradha Goswami Highlights Key Features of NEP 2020 at Extension Lecture*

GY CORRESPONDENT JAMMU, DEC 19

Sant Mela Singh College of Education, Digiama Jammu organised an Extension Lecture on the topic "National Education policy 2020: An Overview" today in the college premises. Programme started with welcome address by Prof Charanjit Kour. Resource person, Dr. Anuradha Goswami, Senior Assistant Professor CDOE, University of Jammu deliberated upon the various features of NEP 2020. She highlighted that National Education Policy 2020 is a progressive and futuristic document aimed at transforming Indian education by making it more inclusive, holistic and multidisciplinary in nature. She stated



that the policy is designed to remove rigid boundaries and create new possibilities for students to choose and learn the subjects of their choice. She acquainted the students and staff with the key initiatives of NEP 2020 that can help increase employability of the emerging workforce at different levels of education. Dr Kiran

Luthra, Principal of the College presided over the function. On this occasion in her address, she highlighted the importance of the topic saying that such kind of programmes serve as an effective platform to exchange informations, ideas and experiences which enhance the academic ambience of the institution.