

Lotus Beds Reappear In J&K's Wular Lake After 3 Decades

BANDIPORA, Jul 13 : After nearly three decades, the lotus has bloomed once again in the Wular Lake in north Kashmir - the second largest fresh-water lake in Asia - thanks to conservation efforts after the devastating floods in 1992 had wreaked havoc with its rich ecosystem.

A sea of pink lotuses - not just crucial for ecology but for the livelihoods of locals - can be seen in a part of the lake, which is spread in a total area of 200 square km, covering almost 24 km in length, stretching from the foothills of the Haramukh mountain range in the Bandipora district to Sopore town in the neighbouring Baramulla district.

"This is nothing short of a miracle," Abdul Hameed, a resident, said.

He said that earlier, the locals used to disperse the lotus seeds into the lake, but they achieved nothing. "It did not work. They could not grow because of silt," Hameed said. Kashmir Valley witnessed a devastating flood in 1992 that caused damage to the rich ecosystem of Wular Lake, situated about 70 km from Jammu and Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar.

The flood deposited a large quantity of silt in the lake that buried the lotus vegetation over the years.

However, owing to the conservation efforts by Wular Conservation and Management Authority (WUCMA) - including desilting of the lake - in the last few years, the lotus beds have appeared once again.

"Last year, there were signs of revival of lotuses. Then this year, the WUCMA dispersed lotus seeds in the lake, and there was a bloom," said Mudassar Ahmad, an official of the lake authority.

Ahmad, who is the zonal officer at WUCMA, said the bloom has spread to nearly

three sq km of the lake, and the turnaround was achieved by desilting the lake as part of the restoration of the water body.

Chief Conservator of Forests, Kashmir Division, Irfan Rasool, said the return of the lotus is a strong indicator of the improving ecological health of the lake, which



had suffered significant degradation over decades, with heavily silted area reported up to 27 sq kms, impacting its water holding capacity, ecological functions and the livelihoods of communities.

He said WUCMA embarked on the major project by utilising Cutter Suction Dredgers.

Rasool said the project aimed to restore the critically silted-up area by undertaking dredging.

"As of July 2025, around 80 lakh cubic metres of silt has been cleared by WUCMA from Wular lake. By removing vast quantities of silt, the project has successfully restored nearly five sq km of the lake's area, significantly increasing its water holding capacity," he added.

The desilting initiative has been instrumental in restor-

ing the lake's original depth and improving water flow, the official said.

Rasool said it restored sunlight penetration to the lake bed and revitalised conditions, allowing the dormant root structures of the lotus plant to regrow.

The return of lotuses has renewed hopes among the

ing and desilting that we are seeing lotuses blooming once again. This is a blessing from God," Hameed said.

He implored the people to safeguard the biodiversity of the lake and stop polluting it.

"We have to mend our ways now. It was taken away from us once, and if we do not change, it may be taken

away again," he added.

And it is not just the comeback of lotuses. The increased water depth and improved water quality in the lake have also created a more hospitable environment for diverse aquatic flora and fauna, Rasool said.

"This ecological revival has thus contributed to attracting a greater variety of migratory birds, enhancing the lake's biodiversity," the chief conservator of forests said.

The rare migratory birds sighted in the lake in the last two years include Great Bittern, Long-tailed Duck, Falcated Duck, Horned Grebe, Western Reef Heron, Smew Duck, Pacific Golden Plover, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Marbled Teal, Pallas's Fish-eagle, Common Pochard, and Greylag Geese.

The economy of the local population would get a boost now, he said.

Hameed expressed gratitude to the WUCMA for the dredging undertaken in the lake, saying it contributed to the revival of the aquatic plant.

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Adhikari Should Visit Kashmir, Says BJP Leader Raina After Controversial Remarks By Party's Bengal Leader

Jammu, Jul 13 : As BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari's remarks asking people of West Bengal not to visit Kashmir or any Muslim-majority area sparked a row, a senior leader of his party from J-K on Saturday said Adhikari should visit Kashmir to experience the patriotism and nationalism of its people for the country.

BJP's national executive member and former president of J-K unit Ravinder Raina also reminded Adhikari, the Leader of Opposition in West Bengal Assembly, that numerous youths of Kashmir have sacrificed their lives for the country in the fight against terrorism over the past three decades.

In his remarks, Adhikari said that people of Bengal should avoid visiting Kashmir or any other area with a large Muslim population for the sake of their security, and that they can go to Jammu or other states like Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Odisha. He said he was not speaking as a BJP MLA and that it was his personal view as a citizen.

The remarks came close on the heels of the recent visit of J-K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to the state as part of his efforts to revive tourism in the Valley, which was badly hit following the Pahalgam terror attack.

Abdullah also met West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and invited her to visit Kashmir.

"I would like to request Adhikari to come to Kashmir. He should come and see that

every Kashmiri loves India. When the terrorists killed humanity in the meadows of Pahalgam on April 22, it was the people of Kashmir who reached the spot barefoot to rescue the injured tourists,"

Kashmir and Jammu and Kashmir is in the heart of India. Every Indian should come to Jammu and Kashmir," Raina said, inviting Adhikari and the people of West Bengal to visit the

reflects the BJP's persistent agenda of sowing communal discord.

Such statements are not only a direct assault on the idea of India but also an insult to the composite culture and pluralistic ethos of Jammu and Kashmir," Gupta said in a statement.

He said the people of Kashmir, regardless of their religion, have always welcomed tourists with open arms.

"Reducing the Valley to a religious demographic to incite fear and hatred is not only factually wrong but also highly irresponsible. Such rhetoric has the potential to damage the national fabric and cause deep fissures in society," he asserted.

Calling the BJP's approach a "politics of polarisation", the senior NC leader alleged that the party thrives on Hindu-Muslim divisions by creating fear among communities.

The NC leader called upon the people of West Bengal and the entire nation to reject any such "hate-mongering" and instead embrace the spirit of unity, secularism and mutual respect.

Gupta appreciated the decision of Banerjee that she would visit Kashmir after Durga Puja and said the people of Jammu and Kashmir, both from Jammu and the Valley, want peace, progress and brotherhood, not communal poison.

He urged the BJP leadership to rein in its leaders and "stop weaponising religion for political gains".



Raina said in a statement to PTI here.

"It was the people of Kashmir who sheltered the tourists and helped them reach their homes safely. Mohammad Maqbool Sherwani sacrificed his life in 1947 by hoisting the tricolour in Baramulla and gave the slogan 'beware Pakistani attackers, we Kashmiris are ready'," Raina said.

He said thousands of Kashmiri youths have sacrificed their lives for the security of the country, serving in various security agencies.

"There are so many Kashmiri activists (from the BJP) who achieved martyrdom fighting the terrorists. India lives in the heart of every citizen of Jammu and

valley to experience the "patriotism and nationalism of local residents".

He said the people of J-K are true Indians. "This is our motherland and Kashmir is the crown of India. Every Kashmiri is our brother and they are our own."

"They have rendered numerous sacrifices for the country and if the tricolour is flying high in Kashmir proudly, it is because of the people of Kashmir," Raina said.

Meanwhile, National Conference provincial president Rattan Lal Gupta condemned the "provocative and communally charged" remarks of Adhikari.

"Adhikari's appeal... is not only appalling but also

Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Mela: Appointment Letters Presented To 237 Candidates In Jammu Division

Jammu, July 13 : Appointment letters were today presented to 237 candidates under Prime Minister Employment Fair organised by the Northern Railway, Jammu Division at a function held here at Convention Centre.

The letters were provided to newly appointed employees in various ministries and departments of the Central Government.

The appointment letters were given to the newly appointed young men and women by the Union Minister of State Jitin Prasad in the presence of Lok Sabha MP Jugal Kishore.

During this program, Prime Minister Narendra Modi provided appointment letters to 51000 youth across the country through video conferencing under the 16th Employment Fair.

This is the first job fair of Jammu Division under the leadership of Divisional Railway Manager Vivek Kumar after the formation of Jammu Division.

Uchit Singh, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Jammu Division

Divisional Railway Manager Vivek Kumar said, "this job fair is an important

active role in nation building." The newly appointed personnel will also be given



was also present on the occasion. This job fair was launched by the Prime Minister on October 22, 2022 under 'Mission Mode'.

initiative towards the Prime Minister's commitment of 'employment for all'. It aims to empower the youth and motivate them to play an

online orientation training through 'Karmayogi Prarambh', so that they can gain efficiency in government service, he added.

School Timing Revised After Consultations With All Stakeholders: Sakina Itoo

SRINAGAR, Jul 13 : Education minister Sakina Itoo Saturday said that the government decided to revise the school timing following consultations with the concerned stakeholders.

Speaking to reporters, the minister said the government sought feedback and suggestions from the directors of both regions and secretary of school education department regarding the change in school timing.

She said keeping in view

the change in weather and suggestions from the relevant stakeholders they have decided to revise the school timing.

"There was no possibility of extending the summer break for schools in Kashmir despite demand from various stakeholders."

We had already closed schools for many days recently. If summer break had been extended further, the syllabus could not have been completed," she said.



Our focus on welfare of retired cops : SSP Mehta



DODA, July 13 : To address the concerns of retired cops, SSP Doda, Sandeep Mehta here today organised a meeting with retired Police officers and officials to ensure that retirees remain connected to the Police organization and are well-informed about the welfare measures available

to them.

More than 30 retired cops participated in the meeting and the SSP assured them that the Police Department remains committed to their well-being and emphasized that they were still valued members of the Police family.

SSP Doda encouraged

the retirees to approach any officer or unit whenever in need and welcomed their suggestions.

During the meeting, various welfare initiatives for the retired personnel and their families were highlighted. The retired officers also raised their issues and concerns, to which the SSP

Doda assured that their issues would be promptly forwarded to the appropriate authorities for resolution.

The meeting was also attended by Addl. SP Doda, Mohd Aslam and DySP Hqrs Doda, Ajay Anand.

The session concluded with a vote of thanks.

Three-day Blind Cricket Tournament concludes in Bhaderwah

BHADERWAH, JULY 13 : The three-day Blind Cricket Tournament concluded today at the Sports Stadium, Government Degree College Bhaderwah. Held from JULY 11 to 13, the event brought together visually impaired players from various regions, celebrating the spirit of inclusive sports.

Organised by the Cricket Blind Association J&K in collaboration with District Administration Doda,

Bhaderwah Development Authority (BDA) and the Social Welfare Department, the tournament aimed to empower visually impaired athletes and promote equal opportunities in sports.

The tournament was inaugurated by Additional Deputy Commissioner Bhaderwah, Sunil Kumar Bhutyal, who highlighted the administration's commitment to supporting specially-abled sportspersons.

The opening match featured

a thrilling contest between the Blue and Red teams, with the Blue team emerging victorious.

Over three days, players impressed spectators with their coordination, skilled batting and sharp fielding, proving that passion for the game knows no boundaries.

In his message, Deputy Commissioner Doda Harvinder Singh praised the organisers and applauded the players' spirit. "This

tournament is a reminder that disability is not inability. These players are an inspiration for everyone," he said.

The closing ceremony included trophy and certificate distribution, with appreciation from attendees, volunteers and officials. The organisers expressed their commitment to making this an annual event to promote inclusivity, sportsmanship and unity.

Inter-zonal district level U/14 and U/17 tournament held at Indoor Sports Stadium Doda

DODA, JULY 13 : The Department of Youth Services and Sports (DYSS) Doda today conducted the second phase of the inter-zonal district level tournament for U/14 and U/17 boys and girls at the Indoor Sports Stadium Doda.

The event was organised as per the approved 2025-26 activity calendar issued by the Directorate of Youth Services and Sports, J&K UT. It was held under the

direction of Director General Youth Services and Sports, J&K UT, Anuradha Gupta, and guidance of Joint Director Jammu Vinakshi Koul, with overall supervision by DYSSO Doda, Jaffar Haider Sheikh.

The tournament featured high-energy competitions in Boxing, Karate, Judo, Wushu, Thang-ta, Fencing and Badminton. These events serve to identify top performers for participation in higher-level competi-

tions. Young athletes competed with notable skill, determination and enthusiasm.

The DYSSO expressed gratitude to participants, officials and supporters for their role in the event's success. He stressed the importance of promoting a culture of sports excellence and holistic development among youth. He also encouraged students to stay away from drugs and contribute to making the dis-

trict "Nasha-Mukt" (drug-free).

The events were officiated by a panel of experts and departmental officials including PELs, PEMs, PETs, REKs, ground staff and NYCs. The tournament not only encouraged physical fitness but also helped instil values of discipline, teamwork and resilience among students, supporting the department's mission of building a healthier youth community.

Dharti Aaba Abhiyan: DAJGUA & PM-JANMAN Benefit Saturation Camp Held at Nilgrar

GANDERBAL, JULY 12 : Under the umbrella of the Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJGUA) and Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN), a mega benefit saturation and awareness camp was held at Nilgrar, a designated tribal village in Ganderbal district.

The initiative aims at saturating government schemes in tribal areas

through convergence, transparency, and participatory governance.

The camp witnessed active participation from multiple line departments including Health, ICDS, Education, Rural Development, Social Welfare, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and Revenue, who collectively delivered doorstep services and enrolled beneficiaries for flagship schemes such

as: Ayushman Bharat (PM-JAY) Golden Card generation, PM Ujjwala Yojana connections, PM-KISAN and Soil Health Card distribution, Aadhaar enrolment and corrections, Scholarship assistance for ST students, Awareness on Forest Rights Act (FRA), land entitlement, and livelihood schemes under PM-JANMAN

Special attention was given to the Gujar and

Bakarwal Shina Dard and Balti communities, ensuring focused outreach under PM-JANMAN, which seeks to empower Tribal Groups through housing, education, healthcare, and livelihood support.

Officials reiterated the government's vision of "Janjatiya Vikas se Rashtriya Vikas", emphasizing equitable development and last-mile service delivery.

honoured with a memento by Pharmexil Chairman Namit Joshi for his distinguished services. On this occasion apart from Joint Drug Controller Ranga Chandra Shekhar, National President of Pharma Entrepreneurs Association and members of the Chief Executive Committee of All India Drug Control Officers Welfare Association were also present.



Jammu, July 13 : Drug Control Officer, Food and Drugs Control Organisation, Jammu and Kashmir, Amit Bali was honoured as the Best Drugs Control Officer of Jammu and Kashmir in the national convention held at Ramoji Film City, Hyderabad. During this programme organised by All India Drug Control Officers Welfare Association, Amit Bali was

Amit Bali honoured with best drug control officer award