


# Good Morning Kashmir

17th Year Of Publication

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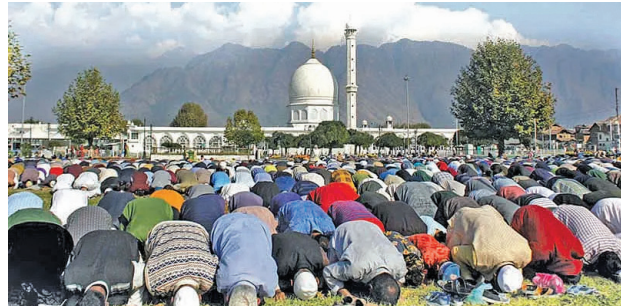


In Jammu & Kashmir, we have completed key safety and commuter facility works on NH-44 with a total project cost of about ₹171.25 crore. The initiatives include blackspot rectification at SIDCO Chowk and the Gole Mela-Sangoor stretch, construction of an LVUP with service roads at Samba, and development of modern Wayside Amenities at Jhajjar Kotli, Qazigund, and Marhama.

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## Kashmir Observes Jumat-ul-Vida With Religious Fervour

Over 1.5 Lakh Devotees Gather At Hazratbal Shrine



REHAN QAYOOM

**SRINAGAR:** Walking with the support of a wooden stick and moving slowly through the sea of people, 80-year-old Ghulam Nabi finally found a place in the front rows of devotees gathered at the revered Hazratbal Shrine on Friday. Each step was slow but determined. For Nabi, age was no barrier as devotion pulled him towards the shrine on the last Friday of Ramdan—Jumat-ul-Vida. "I have been coming here for decades for Jumat-ul-Vida prayers. Even if my legs grow weak, my faith brings me here," he said moments before joining thousands of worshippers in prayer. Nabi was among an ocean of devotees who thronged Hazratbal to offer congregational prayers on Jumat-ul-Vida, one of the most spiritually significant days for Muslims.

From the early hours of the morning, streams of devotees from different districts of Kashmir could be seen heading towards the shrine. Many walked long distances while others arrived in buses and private vehicles, filling the roads leading to Hazratbal with people eager to offer prayers and supplications. The lawns, courtyards and adjoining roads around the shrine turned into a vast congregation as worshippers raised their hands in prayer seeking peace, prosperity and wellbeing for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Officials said that to facilitate the massive gathering, authorities had put in place elaborate arrangements across Srinagar. They said special bus services from Jammu and Kashmir State Road Transport Corporation (JKSRTC) and Srinagar • P-06

## LG Urges Literature Practitioners, Artists To Preserve Rich Heritage For New Generation

Says Jammu's Traditions In Literature, Culture Have Taught Us To Rise Above Divisions Of Caste, Creed

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU:** Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday urged the practitioners of literature and arts to preserve Jammu division's rich heritage, promote its legacy, and connect the new generation to their roots. "Jammu's traditions in literature, culture, and spirituality have taught us to rise above divisions of caste, creed, and artificial boundaries. The values embedded in our culture embody an ideology that places humanity above all," the Lieutenant Governor said. The Lieutenant Governor was speaking at the inaugural ceremony of two-day literary-cultural conclave "Sahitya Sanskriti Samagam", organised by University of Jammu. He commended the University of Jammu for its steadfast commitment to preserving and promoting the region's cultural ethos and making its mark among the country's top universities. The Lieutenant Governor said the society shaped by our abundant literary and cultural



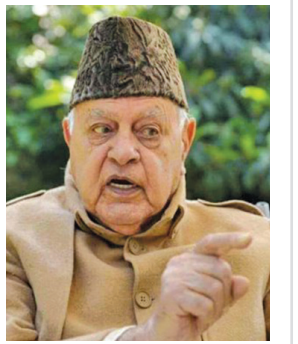
wealth will determine who we are and what we can become. He urged everyone to reflect in this festival of literature and culture on the true identity that binds us and instills a profound sense of belonging. "True confluence of culture and literature means engaging with the soil through diverse art forms, infusing new resonance into society's soul," he said. Paying homage to great luminaries and illustrious literary personalities, the

Lieutenant Governor emphasised that a region's identity is not defined merely by economic achievements; it shines through its stories, songs, and the vibrant hues of its artisans. He said that the society's enlightened minds must recognize folk arts and folk literature as Jammu's living vitality. "Our folk traditions do not dwell in libraries; they thrive in writers' quills, singers' songs, folk dance footprints, and artists' brushes and • P-06

- » Values embedded in our culture embody an ideology that places humanity above all
- » Region's identity is not defined merely by economic achievements; it shines through its stories, songs, and the vibrant hues of its artisans
- » Society shaped by our abundant literary and cultural wealth will determine who we are and what we can become
- » I urge everyone to reflect in this festival of literature and culture on the true identity that binds us
- » True confluence of culture and literature means engaging with the soil through diverse art forms

**JAMMU'S TRADITIONS IN LITERATURE, CULTURE, AND spirituality** have taught us to rise above divisions of caste, creed, and artificial boundaries. The values embedded in our culture embody an ideology that places humanity above all,"

## Cabinet Condemns Attack On Farooq Abdullah



AGENCIES

**JAMMU:** The Jammu & Kashmir Cabinet on Friday unanimously condemned the attack on National Conference president Dr. Farooq Abdullah, sources disclosed. Sources said that the cabinet meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, condemned the assassination attempt on Dr. Farooq Abdullah and demanded a deeper investigation into the incident. Dr. Farooq Abdullah had a narrow escape on Wednesday evening when a person, identified as Kamal Singh Jamwal, a resident of Purani Mandi, Jammu, approached him from behind with a pistol and opened fire. The accused was quickly overpowered by two officers of the Jammu and Kashmir Police's security wing, and the shot fired by him missed the target— (KNO) • P-06

## Vinai Kumar Saxena Takes Oath As 4th LG Of Ladakh

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**LEH:** Vinai Kumar Saxena Friday took oath as the 4th Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh at a ceremony held at the Arya Nagarjuna Auditorium of the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies (CIBS) in Choglamsar. The oath of office and secrecy was administered by the Hon'ble Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, Justice Arun Palli. Earlier, Chief Secretary Ashish Kundra read out the warrant of appointment issued by the President of India, following which Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena signed the charge certificate. Saxena succeeds Kavinder Gupta as the Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh. Following the swearing-in ceremony, Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena was accorded a ceremonial guard of honour by the Ladakh Police.



Interacting with the media after the ceremony, the Lieutenant Governor expressed his gratitude to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and the Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah for entrusting him with the responsibility of serving the people of Ladakh. Describing Ladakh as the "crown of India", he assured that he would work wholeheartedly in accordance with the aspirations and • P-06

## Evacuation Process Gains Pace

## First Batch Of Kashmiri Students Cross Armenian Border From Iran

JAHANGEER GANAIE

**SRINAGAR:** The first batch of Kashmiri medical students stranded in Iran has crossed into Armenia and is heading to temporary accommodation, with around 150 students from Kashmir expected to land in Delhi and Mumbai on March 15 as the repatriation process gathers pace. According to details obtained, students from Urmia University have already crossed the Armenian border and are safe and in stable condition. Those with confirmed flight tickets for March 14 are expected to proceed to the airport shortly for their onward journey to India. A second group that departed from Qom has reached the border and is awaiting immigration clearance before crossing



into Armenia. Students from Shiraz Medical University have safely reached Qom after being relocated from their campuses and are expected to move towards Azerbaijan or Armenia once their visas are processed. Around 27 students from Arak Medical University, along

with several other Indian students, have also reached the border safely and are staying at a hotel near the crossing while awaiting further travel arrangements. Their flights to India are scheduled for March 20. Despite the progress, concerns persist. • P-06

## Cabinet Approves 18% Passenger Fare Hike Gives Go-Ahead To Enhancing Allowances Of Ministers, MLAs

AGENCIES

**JAMMU:** The Cabinet on Friday approved an 18 percent hike in fares for all passenger vehicles, sources disclosed. Sources said that Chief Minister Omar Abdullah chaired a Cabinet meeting here this morning in which several important decisions were taken. The proposals cleared by the Cabinet will go to the Lieutenant Governor for approval. According to sources, the Cabinet greenlighted the proposal of an 18 percent hike in fares for all passenger vehicles and fixed e-rickshaw fare at Rs 15 per kilometre, e-auto at Rs 25 for the first kilometre and Rs 20 thereafter. Sources said the • P-06



The Cabinet approved the proposal to amend rules to enhance their allowances for travel, medical care and housing and car loan facilities. The Cabinet is understood to have also given its go-ahead to the creation of 136 faculty posts (27 Professors, 109 Associate Professors) in Government Medical College Jammu and Government Medical College Srinagar. Sources said the • P-06

## Panel Led By HM Shah Clears Additional Disaster Relief Aid Of Rs 330.34 Crore For J&K

SAJID RAINA

**SRINAGAR:** The Centre has approved 330.34 crore as additional financial assistance to Jammu and Kashmir from the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) to support relief measures for natural disasters during 2025, the Union Home Ministry said on Friday. The assistance, was cleared by a high-level committee chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah. According to an official statement, the funds have been sanctioned for areas affected by floods, flash floods, cloudbursts, landslides and cyclonic storm 'Montha' during 2025. The committee approved a total of Rs 1,912.99 crore as additional central assistance for six states and Union ter-



ritories. Of this, Rs 330.34 crore has been allocated to Jammu and Kashmir. Other states receiving assistance include Andhra Pradesh (Rs 341.48 crore), Chhattisgarh (Rs 15.70 crore), Gujarat (Rs 778.67 crore), Himachal Pradesh (Rs 288.39 crore) and Nagaland (Rs 158.41 crore). The assistance will be

provided from the National Disaster Response Fund and will be subject to adjustment of 50 per cent of the opening balance available in the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) for the year, the ministry said. The Union government said the additional assistance is over and above the funds already released to

states under the SDRF. The ministry said that during the financial year 2025-26, the Centre has released Rs 20,735.20 crore to 28 states under the SDRF and Rs 3,628.18 crore to 21 states from the NDRF. It added that Rs 5,373.20 crore has also been released to 23 states from the State Disaster Mitigation Fund and Rs 1,189.56 crore to 21 states from the National Disaster Mitigation Fund. The government said it continues to support states and Union territories affected by natural disasters and provide necessary assistance for relief and rehabilitation measures. Notably, J&K witnessed a series of severe weather-related disasters in 2025, resulting in significant loss of life and • P-06

## J&K Govt To Overhaul Rules For Class IV Jobs

AGENCIES

**JAMMU:** In a significant move, the Jammu and Kashmir Government has decided to review the rules governing the appointment of Class IV employees, commonly referred to as multi-tasking staff. To initiate the process, the government has constituted a high-level committee under the chairmanship of the Administrative Secretary, Finance Department. The committee also includes the Administrative Secretary, General Administration Department; Administrative Secretary, Skill Development Department; and Administrative Secretary, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Department. The committee has been mandated to review the statutory order issued by the General Administration Department on January 29, 2022, which re-designated all "Class IV" jobs in Jammu and Kashmir as "Multitasking Staff (MTS)," except sanitation workers and posts requiring technical qualifications. It has also been tasked with reviewing relevant statutes to suggest appropriate measures • P-06

## Tehran To Give Safe Passage To Indian Ships In Strait Of Hormuz: Iran

IANIS

**NEW DELHI:** Iran's Ambassador to India, Mohammad Fathali, on Friday, indicated that Indian ships could soon get safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz amid escalating tensions in the Middle East, which has brought transit through the crucial waterway to a standstill. Pointing out that India and Iran share common interests in the region, Fathali said, "Yes, because India is our friend. You will see it within two or three hours. We believe that Iran and India share common interests in the region." "As far as Iran is concerned, we feel • P-06

"As ambassador in India, I say that the Indian government in this situation, after the war, helped us in different fields," he added. The Ambassador's statement comes a day after Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi said that Tehran has permitted ships from some countries to transit the Strait of Hormuz. He also dismissed allegations about Iran laying mines in the Strait, saying "this is not true, it is closed during the war". The Minister said Iran will not let enemy countries use the Strait. "As far as Iran is concerned, we feel • P-06



# DDC Anantnag reviews progress of RDD Sector

Emphasizes inclusive, sustainable Rural Development

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**ANANTNAG:** To assess the physical and financial progress of Capex and Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) implemented by RDD in the district, District Development Commissioner (DDC) Anantnag, Dr. Bilal Mohiud Din Bhat on Thursday chaired a review meeting at Dak Bungalow, Khanabal.

During the meeting, the DDC conducted a comprehensive review of key rural development programmes, including MGNREGA Scheme, PMAY(G), RGSA, Panchayat Ghars, Common Service Centres (CSCs) and other works being executed under District Capex, UT Capex and MPLADS.

Reviewing implementation of MGNREGA, the DDC assessed both physical and financial progress, including workforce participation and key performance indicators under the scheme. It was informed that out of 9412 works taken up during 2025-26, 7686 have been completed and 31.44 lakh PDs were generated.

The DDC laid emphasis on maintaining transparency in execution of works besides timely completion of approved projects.

On PMAY-G, the meeting was informed that 324 landless beneficiaries in the district were identified under



the AWAASPlus PWL Survey; land was allotted for 31 of those by revenue authorities and houses have been sanctioned in their favor. Further, 276 cases were rejected after verification, and 17 cases are presently under consideration.

The DDC directed concerned officers to expedite the resolution of pending cases and ensure that eligible beneficiaries receive housing assistance without delay.

In connection with RGSA, the meeting discussed initiatives aimed at strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions through capacity build-

ing, improved governance practices and institutional strengthening at the grassroots level. The DDC stressed the effective utilization of RGSA funds for enhancing the functional capacity of Panchayats.

The progress of Panchayat Ghars and Common Service Centres (CSCs) for the financial year 2025-26 was also reviewed. Officials briefed the chair that against a target of 58 Panchayat Ghar Works, 54 have been allotted, 47 taken up and 30 stand completed/handed over indicating a progress of 64 against taken up works. Similarly, 30 CSCs have been completed/handed over out of total

48 taken up against a target of 59 CSCs.

On Initiative of Panchayat Learning Centres (PLCs), one is partly operational and 4 more have been nominated in FY 2025-26. Advances made on Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI), which aimed at evaluating governance performance of Panchayats across various development indicators, were also discussed.

Taking stock of works under District Capex, UT Capex and MPLADS, the DDC stressed strict adherence to timelines, quality standards and effective monitoring of projects. He directed officers to remove bottlenecks and ensure developmental benefits reach rural communities in effective manner.

Reiterating the administration's commitment to inclusive and sustainable rural development, Dr. Bilal issued instructions to identify and prioritize works for developing playfields in Panchayats without these amenities. He also called for enhancing rural sanitation and cleanliness through effective implementation of SBM(G) and other initiatives.

The meeting was attended by ADC, CPO, ACR, ACD, Exen REW, BDOs, AEs, AEs and other concerned officials.

# Kathua Admin holds mega employment drive amid overwhelming youth participation

Over 500 candidates screened, 393 shortlisted and 116 selected on spot

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**KATHUA:** In a major initiative to connect local youth with employment opportunities, the District Administration Kathua in collaboration with the District Employment and Career Counselling Centre (DE&CC) organised a Mega Job Fair here on the Sports Stadium.

The event was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Sharma, who interacted with participating employers and job seekers, while appreciating the initiative.

The job fair witnessed enthusiastic participation of youth from different parts of the district, with more than 600 job seekers attending the event to explore career opportunities across multiple sectors.

More than 20 industries and companies participated in the recruitment drive, offering over 500 vacancies for skilled, semi-skilled and fresh candidates. Prominent participating organ-



isations included Godrej Consumer Products, Varun Beverages, Chenab Textile Mills, Raxa Security, Kandhari Beverages Pvt. Ltd., OPI Agro Group, LIC, SBI Life Insurance and several other local industries.

The available job roles spanned sectors such as manufacturing, sales, marketing, finance and technical services, catering to a

wide range of professional interests and skill sets.

During the recruitment process, more than 500 candidates were screened by participating companies. Out of these, 393 candidates were shortlisted while 116 candidates were selected on the spot for various positions.

The Deputy Commissioner personally reviewed

the arrangements and encouraged youth to actively avail such platforms to connect with industries and explore employment opportunities. He also appreciated the efforts of the District Employment and Career Counselling Centre and participating industries for facilitating employment linkages for local youth.

A dedicated Mission YUVA awareness and registration desk was also set up at the venue to inform youth about the objectives and benefits of the Mission YUVA initiative. The desk also provided information about the Job Matching Platform under Mission YUVA, where employers can post their vacancies and interested youth can explore and apply for suitable job opportunities.

The Job Fair was coordinated by the District Employment and Career Counselling Centre under the supervision of Assistant Director Employment Piyusha Khajuria.

## SKUAST-K joins ICAR-NCVTC Network as Mycoplasma Repository



GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** In a move that cements Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technologies of Kashmir's status as a premier research institution, varsity's Faculty of Veterinary Sciences & Animal Husbandry Shuhama has been formally inducted into the Indian Council of Agricultural Research's National Centre for Veterinary Type Culture (ICAR-NCVTC) network.

The prestigious national recognition designates the Veterinary Faculty Shuhama as a specialized repository unit for Mycoplasma cultures, positioning SKUAST-K at the forefront of national efforts to combat economically important livestock diseases.

The inclusion was formalised during the XIVth Annual Review Meeting of the ICAR-NCVTC Network Project held at the NASC Complex, New Delhi.

The meeting was chaired by Dr Raghavendra Bhatta, Deputy Director General, Animal Science, ICAR, and attended by Dr Divakar Hemadri, ADG, Animal Health; Dr TK Bhattacharya,

Director, ICAR-NRCE, and Dr RK Vaid, Head of Division, NCVTC.

As a designated repository unit, the Mycoplasma Laboratory at Shuhama will play a vital role in the collection, identification and preservation of veterinary pathogens. The collaboration is set to significantly enhance the university's research capacity and its contribution to national biosecurity.

Dr Mohammad Iqbal Yatoo, Associate Professor, Division Veterinary Clinical Medicine, has been designated as the Principal Investigator (PI) for the unit.

Vice Chancellor SKUAST-Kashmir, Prof Nazir Ahmad Ganai, congratulated the veterinary scientists particularly Dr Yatoo, for their dedicated efforts. "The development is a matter of great pride for SKUAST-Kashmir," Prof Ganai stated. "Our inclusion in the ICAR-NCVTC network is a testament to the growing research excellence and national relevance of our university. It reinforces our commitment to addressing critical challenges in animal health at a national and global level", he added.

## B'pora Admin Celebrates Jal Arpan Diwas under Jal Mahotsav Pakhwada

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**BANDIPORA:** As part of the ongoing Jal Mahotsav Pakhwada, the District Administration Bandipora celebrated Jal Arpan Diwas at two Water Supply Schemes (WSS) in the district Friday.

The programmes were



organised at WSS Konan Babagund in Block Arin and WSS Pehlipora Chandergaer, where the completed water supply schemes were formally handed over to the local communities for operation and maintenance.

Officials from the Jal Shakti Department, (Hydraulic) Division Bandipora, along with representatives of Panchayati

Raj Institutions and local residents, participated in the events.

During the programmes, speakers highlighted the objectives of the Jal Jeevan Mission and emphasised the importance of community participation in the operation and maintenance of water

supply schemes to ensure sustainable and reliable drinking water services under the Har Ghar Jal initiative.

Awareness sessions and demonstrations on water quality testing were also conducted to sensitise the public about the importance of safe drinking water and regular monitoring of water quality.

## Mission YUVA Potential Entrepreneurship Mela organized at Pahalgam



GMK NEWS NETWORK

**ANANTNAG:** Department of Employment, Anantnag in collaboration with Sub-Divisional Administration Pahalgam, Friday organised a Potential Entrepreneurship Mela under Mission YUVA at Town Hall Pahalgam.

The event was attended by SDM Pahalgam, Qaiser Mehmood as Chief Guest and was also attended by District Employment Officer (DEO), officers from various line departments, representatives from banks, members of Team Mission YUVA and aspiring entrepreneurs.

Addressing the gathering, the DEO briefed about the objectives and opportunities being provided under Mission YUVA, emphasizing the importance of youth entrepreneurship and self-employment initiatives launched by the Government.

During the programme, representatives from various banks assured youth of timely processing and disbursement of financial assistance under Mission YUVA.

The highlight of the programme was the success-

ful entrepreneurs sharing their inspiring stories and motivating youth to take up entrepreneurship as career option.

Speaking on the occasion, SDM Pahalgam urged the youth to actively avail the benefits of Mission YUVA and encouraged them to explore self-employment opportunities under different government schemes. He asked the bank representatives to ensure disbursement in respect of all pending eligible cases so that the youth are provided meaningful employment in a time bound manner.

He further advised the successful entrepreneurs to serve as ambassadors for motivating others and become catalysts for effective implementation of the flagship initiative.

Earlier, the SDM inspected the stalls installed by the concerned departments and financial institutions associated with implementation of Mission YUVA and other self-employment schemes.

The event served as an important platform to connect youth with financial institutions and concerned government agencies.

## Agri Deptt organizes Valley-Wide Training Program on Scientific Beekeeping

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR:** In a significant initiative to promote beekeeping as a viable livelihood option and equip beekeepers with the latest scientific practices, the Directorate of Agriculture Kashmir Friday launched a comprehensive seven-day training program on Scientific Beekeeping across the Kashmir Valley.

The program was inaugurated by Director Agriculture Kashmir, Sartaj



Ahmad Shah, at Directorate hall Lalmandi Srinagar. The training at Lalmandi serves the central districts, while parallel sessions are being conducted for North Kashmir at the Faculty of Agriculture, Wadura, and for South Kashmir at the DAK Bungalow, Anantnag.

The training aims to acquaint existing and aspiring beekeepers with modern, scientific methods of apiculture, including colony management, disease prevention, honey extraction techniques, value addition of hive products, and strategies to enhance pollination services for better crop yields, particularly in oilseed and horticultural crops.

Sartaj Ahmad Shah, while inaugurating the program at Lalmandi,

emphasized the importance of scientific beekeeping in boosting rural economies, generating employment opportunities, and supporting sustainable agriculture in the region. He highlighted that beekeeping not only provides additional income to farmers but also plays a crucial role in enhancing biodiversity and agricultural productivity through improved pollination.

The seven-day program features expert-led sessions, practical demon-

strations, and interactive discussions covering all aspects of modern beekeeping practices tailored to the agro-climatic conditions of Kashmir. Participants include progressive farmers, youth entrepreneurs, and established beekeepers from various districts of the Valley.

This initiative aligns with the broader goals of the Government of Jammu and Kashmir to diversify agricultural activities, promote allied sectors, and empower rural communities under various developmental schemes.

The Directorate of Agriculture Kashmir invites interested beekeepers and stakeholders to actively participate and benefit from this capacity-building effort.

## RDD releases ₹196 crore to Strengthen Rural Infrastructure, Programme Implementation

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU:** Rural Development Department (RDD) and Panchayati Raj Department has sanctioned a total outlay of ₹195.96 crore under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to support rural infrastructure development and ensure timely honorarium payments to programme staff across the Union Territory.

According to Order No. 79-JK (RD&PR) of 2026 issued by Secretary, Rural Develop-

ment and Panchayati Raj, Mohammad Aijaz Asad, sanction has been accorded for the release of Rs 174 crore under the material component for the financial year 2025-26.

In a separate order, Government Order No. 76-JK (RD&PR) of 2026, the department has also sanctioned ₹21.58 crore as honorarium for staff engaged in the implementation of MGNREGA from November 2025 to March 2026, besides ₹38.57 lakh as honorarium for court case staff handling legal matters related to the scheme

during the same period.

Secretary said that the timely release of funds will significantly strengthen the implementation of rural development programmes and accelerate the execution of key projects across the Union Territory.

Meanwhile, Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Javid Ahmad Dar, expressed gratitude to the MoRD for the timely release of a major chunk of funds under the MGNREGA for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

## 2 of family die, 2 injured in Bharderwah road mishap

DC visits GMC to ensure specialized medical care

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**DODA:** A husband and wife died and their two children were injured after the car they were travelling in met with a road accident near Basti Pul Nalthi on the Bharderwah-Bani road, this morning. Four members of the same family were travelling in the vehicle at the time of the mishap.

The deceased have been identified as Zulfikar Ali (47) son of Abdul Latief, resident of Lawang Bani and his wife



Rehana Begum (42). Their two sons, Kamran and Arish sustained injuries in the accident. The injured were immediately shifted to Sub-

District Hospital Bharderwah for treatment and were later shifted to government medical college Hospital Doda. As per doctors, the victims

sustained multiple injuries but are stable and are presently under observation.

The District Administration Doda promptly ensured that the injured persons received immediate medical attention and all required treatment.

Meanwhile, Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh telephonically spoke with Deputy Commissioner Krishan Lal and directed the district administration to ensure proper care of the injured and extend all pos-

sible assistance. Meanwhile, the Deputy Commissioner visited the Government Medical College here to enquire about the condition of the injured.

The hospital authorities briefed the Deputy Commissioner about the condition of the injured and the treatment being provided to them at the hospital. He directed the Chief Medical Officer and attending doctors to ensure the best possible medical treatment and proper care for the injured.

# NC MPs call on President Murmu, highlight issues concerning UT

IAN S

**SRINAGAR:** Parliament members of the ruling National Conference (NC) called on President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi on Friday and submitted a memorandum highlighting issues concerning Jammu and Kashmir.

A statement issued by the NC said that members of Parliament from the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference in the Rajya Sabha -- Chowdhary Ramzan, Sajjad Ahmed Kichloo and Shammi Oberoi on Friday called on President Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhawan and submitted a memorandum highlighting pressing issues concerning Jammu and Kashmir.

"The Members strongly urged the early restoration of full statehood to Jammu



and Kashmir in line with the assurances made on the floor of Parliament."

"They emphasised the need to protect land and job rights of the local population and called for a comprehensive economic and employment package to address the growing unemployment crisis among the youth," the statement added.

"The MPs also pressed for the return of major

hydroelectric power projects presently operated by NHPC Limited to Jammu and Kashmir, saying that the region must receive a fair share of benefits from its own natural resources."

"They further highlighted the serious environmental challenges facing the region, including the impact of climate change and the rapid retreat of glaciers such as the Kola-

hoi Glacier, and called for urgent scientific and policy interventions to safeguard the fragile Himalayan ecosystem."

Chowdhary Mohammad Ramzan, Sajjad Ahmed Kichloo and Shammi Oberoi are NC Rajya Sabha members.

In October last year, four members to the Rajya Sabha were elected in Jammu and Kashmir.

In addition to these three belonging to the NC, Sat Sharma of the BJP had won the fourth seat to the Rajya Sabha from the Union Territory.

All these four seats had been vacant since February 2021 because there was no state Assembly in Jammu and Kashmir till October 2024 when elections were held after Jammu and Kashmir was under the President's Rule in June 2017.

# Javid Dar attends virtual event for release of 22nd instalment of PM-KISAN

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU:** Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar, Friday attended the virtual event marking release of the 22nd instalment of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) from the Civil Secretariat here.

The installment was released by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who transferred ₹18,640 crore directly into the bank accounts of 9.32 crore farmers across the country through Direct Benefit Transfer with a single click.

In connection with the nationwide programme, the Union Territory level function was organised at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Jammu (SKUAST-Jammu), where "PM-KISAN Utsav Diwas" was celebrated at Krishi Vigyan Kendra, R.S. Pura Campus.

MLA, Suchetgarh, Gharu Ram Bhagat; SKUAST-J Vice Chancel-



lor, Professor B N Tripathi; Secretary in APD, Nitu Gupta; Director Extension, Dr Amrith Vaid; Director Animal Husbandry Jammu, Dr Sanjay Gupta; Director Horticulture Jammu, Gul Sayed and Director Agriculture Jammu, Anil Gupta besides scientists, officials of the Agriculture Production Department and other stakeholders were present on the occasion.

Javid Dar stated that the PM-KISAN scheme has emerged as a landmark initiative in providing assured financial support to farmers and strengthening the

rural economy. He said that the timely release of instalments plays an important role in helping the farmers meet agricultural input costs and undertake allied farming activities.

The Minister reiterated that under the PM-KISAN Samman Nidhi Yojana, eligible farmers receive ₹6,000 per year, which is provided in three equal installments of ₹2,000 each, directly credited to their bank accounts through Direct Benefit Transfer.

Meanwhile MLA, Gharu Ram Bhagat lauded the Government of India's continued commitment towards

farmers' welfare and appreciated the role of SKUAST-Jammu in bridging the gap between agricultural research and farmers' fields. He encouraged farmers to adopt modern technologies and avail themselves of various government support schemes aimed at enhancing the farm productivity and income.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Punit Choudhary, Chief Scientist and Head, KVK Jammu, who expressed gratitude to the dignitaries, officials, scientists and farmers for their participation.

# Live Streaming of 22nd installment of PM-KISAN held in Jammu

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU:** The Department of Agriculture Production & Farmers Welfare, Jammu Friday organised a live streaming of the release of the 22nd installment of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi from the Jyoti-Bishnu International Cultural Centre, Khanapara, Guwahati, Assam.

The programme, held at Baba Jitto Kisan Kendra, Talab Tillo, was attended by MLA Jammu West Arvind Gupta as the chief guest.

Among others present were Ashwani Kumar, Joint Director (Inputs); Aman Jyoti Sharma, Joint Director (Farms/SLUB); Manohar Lal Sharma, Chief Agriculture Officer Jammu; Rakesh Sharma, DSSO, Anil Angral, Mandal Pradhan, other sectoral heads and officers of the department, besides more than 150 farmers from various parts of Jammu district. Veena Wazir, AEA conducted the proceedings of the programme.

Meanwhile, Neetu Gupta Secretary, Agriculture Production Department, Anil Gupta, Director Agriculture Jammu and Sanjay Anand Joint Director Agriculture (Extension) Jammu attended the UT-level programme organised for the release of the 22nd installment of PM-KISAN at the Confer-



ence Hall, Faculty of Veterinary Sciences & A.H., KVK R.S. Pura, Jammu.

During the national event, the Prime Minister released the 22nd installment of PM-KISAN amounting to ₹18,640 crore, which will be directly transferred to the bank accounts of more than 9.32 crore farmers across the country. The financial assistance aims to support farmers in meeting agricultural input costs and allied expenses, thereby enhancing their overall welfare.

Speaking on the occasion, Arvind Gupta, MLA Jammu West, described the PM-KISAN scheme as a mark of respect to the nation's "Annadata" and a significant step towards strengthening the financial security of farming families. He encouraged farmers to adopt modern and scientific agricultural practices to enhance productivity and profitability and also urged educated youth to explore agri-

culture as a viable and rewarding profession.

"Around 4.20 lakh active beneficiaries of PM-KISAN across Jammu division have benefited from the current installment alone, with ₹84 crore disbursed today," Arvind Gupta added. He further stated that a total of ₹1839.27 crore has been disbursed to farmers of the Jammu region under the scheme so far. Highlighting the significance of the initiative, he said that PM-KISAN, one of the world's largest Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) programmes, reflects the Government of India's steadfast commitment to building a robust and inclusive agricultural economy.

Similar live streaming programmes and awareness events were organised across all districts, sub-divisions, blocks and panchayats of the Jammu region by the Agriculture Department, making the release of the 22nd installment a participatory and inclusive celebration of farmer empowerment.

# Dry weather till March 14, rain likely from 15: MeT

SAJID RAINA

**SRINAGAR:** Erratic weather conditions are likely to continue across Jammu and Kashmir till March 20, with spells of rain and snowfall expected at several places, the Meteorological Department said on Friday.

According to the Meteorological Centre Srinagar, the Union Territory is expected to witness gener-

ally dry weather on March 13 and 14.

From the night of March 15 to the morning of March 16, the weather is likely to remain generally cloudy with spells of light to moderate rain in the plains and snowfall in higher reaches at many places.

The MeT department informed that between the night of March 17 and the morning of March 18, brief spells of light rain or snowfall over higher reaches are expected at isolated to scattered places.

Another spell of generally cloudy weather with the possibility of light to moderate rain and snowfall in higher areas is likely at many places between the possibility of thunderstorms accompanied by gusty winds at a few places on the evening of March 15.

Farmers have been advised to resume farm operations during the relatively stable weather window between March 13 and 14.

Meanwhile, the weather during the past 24 hours till 8:30 am Thursday saw temperatures remain above normal in many parts of the Kashmir division and several areas of the Jammu division.

Precipitation was reported at several stations across the region, with moderate rainfall recorded in some areas, the department said—(KNO)



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# Jumat-ul-Vida

# All roads lead to Hazratbal, special buses ferry devotees

REHAN QAYOOM

**SRINAGAR:** Thousands of devotees thronged the revered Hazratbal Shrine on Friday for Jumat-ul-Vida prayers, prompting authorities to press special buses into service to facilitate their movement, even as the massive rush led to heavy traffic congestion on several routes across the city.

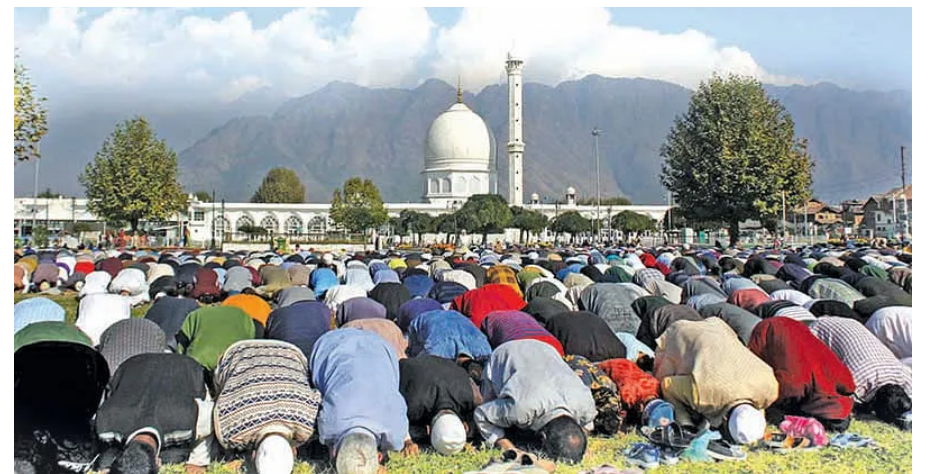
authorities, several roads leading to Hazratbal and adjoining areas witnessed heavy congestion as thousands of people converged on the shrine.

Devotees said the roads remained choked for long periods due to the overwhelming rush of vehicles and pedestrians.

"We remained stuck in traffic for quite some time before and after the

"There was a huge rush of people and vehicles on the roads. While the buses helped many reach the shrine, the traffic situation became difficult to manage once the prayers concluded," another devotee said.

Notably, traffic personnel were deployed at various junctions to regulate the movement of vehicles, while authorities



Officials said that around 22 buses of the Jammu and Kashmir State Road Transport Corporation (JKSRTC) and 25 buses operated by Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL) were deployed to ferry devotees from different parts of Srinagar to Hazratbal and back.

Despite the transport arrangements and traffic diversions put in place by

prayers and eventually had to walk as the roads were completely packed," said Nazir Ahmad, a devotee who had come to offer prayers at Hazratbal.

Several others also reported similar experiences, saying that movement of vehicles became extremely slow due to the large number of devotees returning from the shrine at the same time.

maintained that special arrangements, including additional buses and diversions, were made to ensure devotees could attend the prayers without major inconvenience.

However, the large gathering led to traffic bottlenecks at several points around the shrine and adjoining localities, locals and eyewitnesses said—(KNO)

# Gender Targeting, Inclusion Sensitisation workshop held in Kathua

GMK NEWS NETWORK

**KATHUA:** A Gender Targeting and Inclusion Sensitization Workshop under the Jammu and Kashmir Climate Innovation Programme (JKCIP) was Friday organised at the Office Complex of the Chief Agriculture Officer, Kathua, to strengthen gender-inclusive approaches and promote enhanced participation of women in agriculture and allied sectors.

Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Sharma was the chief guest. Addressing the participants, the DC underscored the huge potential for empowerment of women in agriculture and allied sectors. He observed that women play a vital role in sustain-

ing rural livelihoods and enhancing agricultural productivity, adding that sensitization initiatives of this nature would help create equitable opportunities and encourage greater participation of women in development processes.

The workshop was attended by Chief Horticulture Officer, Chief Animal Husbandry Officer, Scientist and Head Krishi Vigyan Kendra, District Social Welfare Officer, District Development Manager NABARD, Lead District Manager, District Sericulture Officer, District Employment Officer and Cluster Head JK Bank.

Chief Agriculture Officer Jatinder Kumar Khajuria delivered the welcome address and highlighted the objective of the work-

shop. He emphasised the significant role played by women in the agriculture sector in Kathua district, noting that women contribute extensively to farming activities, agri-based enterprises and value addition. He stressed the need for institutional support, capacity building and access to resources to further strengthen their role.

During the technical sessions, Head Krishi Vigyan Kendra Dr Vishal Mahajan, along with scientists Dr Narinder Pal and Dr Anamika Jamwal, besides the District Sericulture Officer, delivered lectures on gender mainstreaming, inclusive agricultural practices and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in agriculture and allied sectors.

# Anantnag's Nagam village bakes its way to US, Saudi Arabia, Russia

15 bakery shops, 200 workers; traditional taste, quality ingredients drive demand abroad

UMAISAR GULL GANIE

**KOKERNAG:** Nagam village in the Kokernag area of south Kashmir's Anantnag district is gaining recognition for its traditional bakery products, which have found their way to the United States and several other foreign countries due to their distinctive taste.

Local bakers said that the village has a long-standing tradition of preparing Kashmiri bakery items, which are now reaching overseas markets informally through relatives and traders living abroad. They said the unique flavour, traditional preparation methods and use of quality ingredients have made these products popular among Kashmiris living overseas.

Residents said visitors to the area often carry these bakery items to countries such as the United States and parts of Europe,

where the demand for traditional Kashmiri bakery products continues to grow.

Ghulam Mohammad Malik, an elderly resident, said the bakery profession in the village began nearly four decades ago. He said Nagam Bakery has earned a strong reputation because of the quality ingredients used in its preparation.

"High-quality ingredients are used in the traditional bakery here. Bakers from this village have reached every corner of India due to the unique taste of their products," he said.

He added that the bakery items are now reaching countries like the United States and Saudi Arabia, as people travelling abroad often carry them along. "Even Hajj pilgrims take these bakery items to Saudi Arabia and preserve them for months," he said.

Malik said the business has

been expanding steadily, with many young people in the village now earning a livelihood through bakery units.

"Around 15 bakery shops are operating in this single village, and the younger generation is also actively joining the trade," he said. He added that with limited employment opportunities in the Valley, small business ventures like a bakery provide a reliable source of income.

Locals said many people from neighbouring villages are also finding employment in Nagam's bakery shops, with each unit employing around six to ten workers.

Mohammad Iqbal Shah, whose father introduced the bakery business in the village, said their products are well known across the Valley and are now reaching foreign countries as well.

"Our bakery products are known for their taste, and cus-

tomers are attracted to the village for this reason. We receive orders throughout the year, especially during weddings and other functions. Around 200 people in the village are associated with this business," he said.

Another baker, Bashir Ahmed, said the use of high-quality ingredients like pure ghee has contributed to the popularity of the bakery products.

He said the items are now reaching countries such as the United States, Saudi Arabia and Russia, while the business itself has been firmly established in the village for nearly two decades.

He said that many young people are now turning to the bakery as a source of livelihood. "There are very limited employment opportunities in Kashmir, so starting small businesses like bakery units is a better option for many youth," he said—(KNO)

Good Morning Kashmir

EDITORIAL

## Fare Hike Raises Eyebrows

The Government of Jammu and Kashmir has approved an 18 percent hike in fares for all categories of passenger vehicles following a cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah. While transporters have long demanded a revision due to rising fuel and maintenance costs, the increase is likely to place an additional burden on thousands of daily commuters who depend on public transport. Under the decision, fares for e-rickshaws have been fixed at 15 per kilometre, while e-autos will charge 25 for the first kilometre and 20 for every additional kilometre. The move may bring some much-needed clarity and regulation to the growing electric transport sector, though its success will depend largely on proper enforcement. However, the decision has drawn public attention because it came alongside the cabinet's approval to enhance travel, medical, housing and other allowances for ministers and legislators. At a time when ordinary citizens are being asked to pay more for basic transport, increasing perks for those in power risks sending the wrong message. On a positive note, the cabinet also approved the creation of 136 faculty posts in Government Medical Colleges in Jammu and Srinagar, a step that could help strengthen the region's healthcare and medical education system. The proposals will now be sent to Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha for final approval. While fare revisions may be necessary, decisions that affect public finances must be handled with sensitivity to ensure that people do not feel unfairly burdened.

Good Morning Kashmir

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### Land, Legacy, And The Law

# Why J&K Must Update Its Historic Revenue Statutes

MOHD AMIN MIR

Land has always occupied a central place in the socio-economic life of Jammu and Kashmir. In a region where agriculture historically shaped livelihoods, culture, and social hierarchy, land ownership has never been merely a legal concept. It represents security, dignity, and identity. For generations, the legal structure governing land relations has rested on two monumental legislative pillars—the Land Revenue Act of 1996 Bikrami and the Agrarian Reforms Act of 1976.

Both these laws were products of their time. The Land Revenue Act established an elaborate administrative system for maintaining land records and collecting revenue, while the Agrarian Reforms Act brought about one of the most radical transformations in land ownership by transferring land from large landlords to the actual tillers. Together they shaped the rural economy and social order of Jammu and Kashmir for decades.

However, the passage of time has dramatically altered the realities of governance, administration, and economic life. The state is now witnessing the emergence of digital governance, online record systems, modern infrastructure development, and rapidly changing patterns of land use. In this transformed environment, legal frameworks that were designed in the early twentieth century and the mid-1970s inevitably face limitations.

The question, therefore, is not whether these laws were historically significant—they unquestionably were—but whether they can continue to serve the needs of a modern society without meaningful reform. Increasingly, the answer appears to be no. The continued application of these laws in their original form has begun to create practical difficulties in land administration, legal interpretation, and economic development.

The time has therefore come for a thoughtful and comprehensive review of these historic statutes so that their spirit can be preserved while their provisions are updated to meet contemporary realities. One of the most transformative developments in recent years has been the digitisation of land records in Jammu and Kashmir. For generations, the Jamabandi registers maintained by Patwaris constituted the most authoritative documentation of land ownership, cultivation patterns, and revenue obligations. These records were handwritten, meticulously maintained, and periodically updated through mutations reflecting changes in ownership.

While this system served the administration for more than a century, it also suffered from serious limitations. Paper registers were vulnerable to deterioration, loss, manipulation, and delays in verification. Searching for records often required time-consuming manual examination of registers stored in village offices.

Recognising these challenges, the government initiated an ambitious programme to digitise Jamabandies and other revenue records. Through large-scale scanning and digital archiving, thousands of Jamabandi registers have now been converted into electronic



format. These digitised records are increasingly accessible through modern administrative platforms. The introduction of the Scanario system has further strengthened this transformation by enabling scanned revenue records to be securely stored and retrieved in digital form. This system ensures the preservation of historical land documents while facilitating faster verification and public access.

Digitised Jamabandies have significantly improved transparency and administrative efficiency. Citizens can now obtain land records with greater ease, and revenue officials are able to process verification requests more quickly than before. Yet this technological progress has also exposed a fundamental contradiction: the legal framework governing land records has not kept pace with the digital revolution.

The Land Revenue Act of 1996 Bikrami was drafted in an era when all records were maintained manually. Its provisions assume that Jamabandies, mutation registers, and other documents exist only in physical form. The Act contains no explicit recognition of digitised records, scanned documents, or electronic verification systems. This legal gap creates uncertainty in certain circumstances, particularly in litigation where questions may arise regarding the evidentiary value of digitised Jamabandies. Although courts often accept digital copies as reliable records, the absence of clear statutory recognition can still create ambiguity.

Another challenge arises from the integration of historical mutations into digitised Jamabandies. Many mutations that were attested before the digitisation process have not yet been fully incorporated into the digital database. As a result, discrepancies sometimes arise between physical mutation registers and the digital Jamabandi entries. Such discrepancies have led to a large number of rectification cases. Revenue officials must painstakingly verify old records to reconcile them with digitised databases. This process consumes

administrative time and often leads to unnecessary disputes.

If the Land Revenue Act were amended to explicitly recognise digitised Jamabandies and electronic mutation systems, much of this confusion could be eliminated. A modernised legal framework could establish clear procedures for updating digital records, incorporating historical mutations, and correcting errors through transparent mechanisms. In addition, legislative reform could facilitate the integration of digitised land records with modern technologies such as satellite mapping and geographic information systems. Such integration would significantly improve land management, urban planning, and environmental protection.

The digitisation of Jamabandies therefore represents not merely a technological innovation but a fundamental shift in the way land governance operates. To fully realise the benefits of this transformation, the legal framework must evolve accordingly. Reforming the Land Revenue Act and the Agrarian Reforms Act does not mean abandoning their historic achievements. On the contrary, such reforms would strengthen their legacy by ensuring that they remain relevant in the twenty-first century.

First, it should provide explicit statutory recognition to digitised land records and electronic administrative systems. This would eliminate ambiguity and strengthen the credibility of digital governance. Second, procedures related to mutation, correction of records, and verification of ownership should be simplified and time-bound. Transparent processes would reduce delays and limit opportunities for corruption.

Third, land use provisions should be updated to accommodate the evolving needs of development while safeguarding agricultural land and environmental sustainability. Fourth, the responsibilities of revenue officials should be clearly defined in the context of modern administrative practices and digital technologies. Finally, mechanisms should be introduced to ensure

that historical land records and mutations are fully integrated into digitised databases so that discrepancies can be permanently resolved.

Such reforms would not only improve administrative efficiency but also reduce litigation and strengthen public confidence in the land governance system.

The Land Revenue Act of 1996 Bikrami and the Agrarian Reforms Act of 1976 represent two of the most important legislative landmarks in the history of Jammu and Kashmir. These laws laid the foundations of a structured land administration system and brought about one of the most significant social transformations in the region's history. Yet laws, like societies, cannot remain static. The administrative realities of today are vastly different from those that existed when these statutes were first enacted. The rise of digital governance, changing economic patterns, and new environmental challenges demand a legal framework that is adaptable, modern, and forward-looking.

The digitisation of Jamabandies and the introduction of systems like Scanario demonstrate that Jammu and Kashmir has already embarked on the path of modernising land administration. What is now required is a corresponding reform of the legal framework so that technological progress is supported by clear statutory authority. A comprehensive amendment of these historic laws would not weaken their legacy; rather, it would revitalise it. By aligning the principles of agrarian justice with the tools of modern governance, policymakers can ensure that the land administration system continues to serve the people effectively.

Land has always been the foundation of economic life and social stability in Jammu and Kashmir. Strengthening the laws that govern it is therefore not merely a technical exercise; it is an essential step toward ensuring transparency, equity, and sustainable development for generations to come.

The author can be mailed at miramin354@gmail.com

## How Robotic Kidney Transplant Is Changing Outcomes



DR. SHAFIQ AHMED

Kidney failure affects millions in India, turning everyday lives upside down with dialysis dependence and endless fatigue. But a quiet revolution is underway in our operating rooms: robotic kidney transplants. This advanced technique is delivering better results, faster recoveries, and renewed hope for patients.

Traditional Challenges: Open kidney transplants have saved countless lives, but they come with hurdles. Surgeons make large incisions, about 15-20 cm long, leading to significant blood loss, intense post-operative pain, and higher infection risks. Hospital stays



often stretch to a week or more, with patients battling slow wound healing and complications like hernias. Recovery can take months, delaying return to work or family duties. These issues burden patients, especially those with obesity or diabetes, common in our population.

Robotic Precision at

Work: Robotic kidney transplant flips the script using a da Vinci system. The surgeon controls tiny instruments and a high-definition 3D camera through small ports, just 1 cm each, via a console. This magnification—up to 10 times normal vision—enables pinpoint accuracy in connecting the donor kidney's blood vessels and

ureter. Though surgery time is longer, around 4 hours, blood loss drops dramatically to under 100 ml. The new kidney starts working almost immediately in most cases, with minimal tissue trauma.

Everyday Impact: Imagine a young mother from Delhi, exhausted by dialysis, heading home sooner with significant-

ly less wound pain and vastly improved physical comfort. Or picture a working professional able to resume light duties weeks earlier because the surgical trauma was so minimal. We've seen this at our centre: faster relief from post-operative pain means a smoother transition back to an empowered life. Even complex cases, from living or deceased donors, benefit from robotics' gentle touch, reducing rejection triggers like inflammation.

A Brighter Future: Robotic kidney transplant isn't just surgery—it's transformation. As technology spreads, it promises equitable access, shorter waits, and optimal outcomes for all. If you or a loved one faces kidney issues, explore this option. Health restored is life reclaimed—our team stands ready.

Author is Senior Director - Urology, Andrology & Renal Transplant, BLK-Max Super Speciality Hospital

IDEAS, OPINIONS AND VIEWS EXPRESSED IN ARTICLES PUBLISHED ARE WRITERS' OWN AND MAY NOT BE FOUND IN ACCORD WITH THOSE OF GOOD MORNING KASHMIR

# Wasted Potential: When Unemployment Becomes A Permanent Condition



DR. RATAN BHATTACHARJEE

**L**ong-term unemployment among youth in India is not just a temporary setback, it often leads to permanent unemployability due to skill erosion, psychological distress, and loss of economic relevance. This crisis undermines national productivity and demands urgent structural reforms. India is home to one of the largest populations of educated youth globally, yet it faces a paradoxical crisis: high unemployment among this demographic despite significant investments in higher education. The issue is not merely about joblessness, it's about the long-term consequences of being unemployed, which can render young people unemployable. This phenomenon is a silent emergency, eroding the capabilities, confidence, and competitiveness of an entire generation. India is addressing unemployment through a mix of skill development programs, infrastructure investment, and reforms to boost manufacturing and entrepreneurship, but challenges remain as job creation lags behind the growing workforce. Recent budgets emphasize fiscal discipline and capital spending, yet critics argue they sidestep the urgency of the jobs crisis. Programs like Skill India Mission and Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) aim to train millions of youth in industry-relevant skills. These schemes focus on vocational training, apprenticeships, and certification to improve employability.

India is trying to replicate China's manufacturing-led growth by promoting Make in India, Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes, and attracting foreign direct investment. The goal is to shift workers from low-productivity agriculture into higher-value manufacturing jobs. The Union Budget 2026-27 increased capital expenditure to 12.2 trillion, focusing on roads, railways, and energy projects. This is expected to generate jobs in construction and allied sectors. India has expanded credit access and eased compliance for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), which are crucial for job creation. Startup India initiatives encourage entrepreneurship and innovation. Platforms



care, knowledge becomes obsolete quickly. A graduate who remains unemployed for two or three years may find that the tools, platforms, or methodologies they learned are no longer relevant. Employers, seeking candidates who are up-to-date and adaptable, often overlook those with long employment gaps. This creates a vicious cycle: the longer one remains unemployed, the harder it becomes to re-enter the workforce. Beyond technical skills, long-term unemployment affects soft skills and workplace readiness. Communication, teamwork, punctuality, and problem-solving are honed through experience. Without exposure to professional environments, young people may struggle to meet the behavioral expectations of employers. This gap is especially pronounced in rural and semi-urban areas, where access to internships, apprenticeships, and industry exposure is limited.

Psychologically, prolonged unemployment can be devastating. It breeds anxiety, depression, and a sense of hopelessness. Young people begin to internalize failure, questioning their worth and potential. This mental toll affects motivation, learning capacity, and even physical health. In extreme cases, it leads to social withdrawal and increased vulnerability to substance abuse or radicalization. The unemployability crisis is not just economic, it is deeply human.

that limit hiring. Third, public sector jobs have stagnated, and recruitment processes are often delayed or opaque.

Additionally, socio-cultural factors play a role. In many families, there is pressure to pursue traditional career paths, even when opportunities lie elsewhere. Gender biases further restrict employment for young women, especially in conservative regions. Caste and regional disparities also influence access to jobs and networks. These structural barriers compound the effects of unemployment, making reintegration into the workforce even harder. Digital platforms and gig work offer some relief, but they are not a panacea. While freelancing, ride-sharing, and delivery services provide income, they often lack stability, benefits, and career progression. Moreover, not all youth have the digital literacy or resources to participate in the gig economy. Without targeted interventions, these options may only widen the gap between urban and rural youth. To address this crisis, India needs a multi-pronged strategy. First, education must be reformed to align with market needs. Vocational training, coding bootcamps, and industry partnerships should be integrated into curricula. Second, the government must incentivize job creation through tax breaks, infrastructure support, and ease of doing business. Third, mental health support and career counseling should be made accessible in schools

inclusive, innovative, and resilient.

Unemployment in Kashmir remains one of the most pressing socio-economic challenges facing the region. Despite its rich cultural heritage, strategic location, and abundant natural beauty, the region has struggled to provide sustainable employment opportunities for its youth. The problem is not just statistical, it is deeply human, affecting aspirations, mental health, and social cohesion. In a region where political instability and economic stagnation have long coexisted, unemployment has become a chronic condition, particularly among educated young people. The roots of unemployment in Kashmir are complex and multifaceted. Decades of political unrest have disrupted economic development, discouraged private investment, and limited the growth of industries that could absorb the region's educated workforce. Frequent shutdowns, curfews, and internet restrictions have further hampered business continuity and innovation. As a result, many young people find themselves trapped in a cycle of education without employment, leading to frustration and disillusionment.

Education levels in Kashmir have improved significantly over the years, with a growing number of students graduating from universities and professional colleges. However, the job market has not kept pace. The mismatch between academic qualifications and market demand is stark. Many graduates in fields like engineering, management, and the humanities struggle to find jobs that match their skills. The public sector, once a major employer, has slowed recruitment, while the private sector remains underdeveloped and risk-averse. Tourism, which could be a major source of employment, has been inconsistent due to security concerns and travel advisories. Agriculture, another traditional sector, faces challenges due to land fragmentation, outdated practices, and climate change. Handicrafts and small-scale industries, though culturally significant, lack the scale and modernization needed to compete in national and international markets. These limitations mean that even those willing to work in traditional sectors often find few viable options.

The psychological impact of unemployment is profound. Young people in Kashmir often speak of feeling "stuck" or "forgotten," with little hope for the future. This sense of stagnation can lead to mental health issues, including anxiety and depression. In some cases, prolonged unemployment contributes to social unrest or radicalization, as disaffected youth seek meaning or agency through alternative, and sometimes destructive, paths. The lack of economic opportunity becomes not just a personal crisis but a societal risk. Government initiatives have attempted to address the issue through skill development programs, entrepreneurship schemes, and employment drives. However, these efforts often fall short due to poor implementation, lack of follow-up, and limited reach. Many youth are unaware of available programs, or find them irrelevant to their aspirations. Moreover, without a robust private sector to absorb trained individuals, such programs risk becoming exercises in futility.

Digital platforms and remote work offer some promise, especially in IT and content creation. However, frequent internet disruptions and limited infra-

structure make it difficult for Kashmiri youth to fully participate in the digital economy. The region needs stable connectivity, targeted training, and mentorship to unlock the potential of its tech-savvy population. Ultimately, solving unemployment in Kashmir requires a holistic approach. Political stability is essential to attract investment and foster entrepreneurship. Education must be aligned with market needs, and vocational training should be prioritized. Mental health support, career counseling, and community engagement can help youth navigate uncertainty. Most importantly, Kashmir's youth must be seen not as a problem to be managed, but as a resource to be empowered. Only by investing in their potential, through policy, infrastructure, and empathy, can Kashmir move from a narrative of despair to one of opportunity. The region's future depends not just on peace, but on prosperity. And that begins with giving its young people the chance to build meaningful, dignified lives.

Unemployment is not confined to any one country or region; it is a global problem that affects societies across continents, cutting across economic systems, cultures, and levels of development. It is one of the most persistent challenges of modern economies, undermining growth, stability, and human dignity. The issue is particularly acute among young people, but it also affects older workers displaced by technological change, women excluded from labor markets, and marginalized communities struggling against systemic barriers. At its core, unemployment represents a failure to match human potential with economic opportunity. In developed nations, structural unemployment often arises from automation, outsourcing, and shifts in industry. Factories close, jobs move overseas, and workers find themselves unable to adapt to new skill requirements. In developing nations, unemployment is frequently linked to underdeveloped industries, weak infrastructure, and political instability. In both contexts, the result is the same: millions of people willing to work but unable to find meaningful employment.

Globalization has intensified the problem. While it has created new opportunities, it has also exposed workers to fierce competition. Jobs can be relocated to regions with cheaper labor, leaving communities in wealthier nations struggling with job losses. At the same time, developing countries often fail to absorb the influx of workers into formal employment, leading to widespread underemployment and informal labor. This dual pressure creates a paradox: a world of interconnected economies where prosperity grows, yet millions remain excluded from its benefits. Long periods of unemployment erode their confidence, skills, and employability, creating a cycle of despair. This not only wastes human capital but also threatens social stability, as frustrated youth become vulnerable to unrest, migration pressures, or radicalization. Technology, while a driver of progress, also contributes to unemployment. Automation and artificial intelligence are replacing routine jobs in manufacturing, services, and even professional sectors. While new jobs are created in tech-driven industries, they often require advanced skills that many workers lack. This creates a widening gap between those who can adapt and those who cannot, deepening inequality. Citizens who feel excluded from economic progress lose faith in governments and may turn to populist or extremist movements.

Addressing unemployment as a global problem requires coordinated action. Education systems must be reformed to align with evolving labor markets, emphasizing skills such as digital literacy, problem-solving, and adaptability. Governments must invest in infrastructure, innovation, and industries that create sustainable jobs. International cooperation is essential to manage the effects of globalization, ensuring that trade and investment benefit workers across regions. Social safety nets must be strengthened to support those displaced by economic transitions, while mental health services should address the psychological toll of joblessness. By treating unemployment as a shared challenge, nations can build a future where work is not a privilege but a right, and where human potential is matched with opportunity across the world.

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for e-commerce, delivery services, and freelancing are absorbing some youth into flexible employment, though these jobs often lack stability and benefits. Schemes like MGNREGA continue to provide rural employment guarantees, while new programs aim to modernize agriculture and create value chains that employ more people. India's demographic dividend, its large youth population, can be a strength if harnessed through effective job creation. Success will depend on aligning education with industry needs, accelerating manufacturing growth, and ensuring inclusive opportunities across rural and urban areas. Without urgent reforms, the risk is that unemployment could erode social stability and economic progress.

When youth remain unemployed for extended periods, their skills begin to deteriorate. In fast-evolving industries like technology, finance, and health-

Economically, the consequences are severe. A large unemployed youth population means lost productivity, reduced consumer spending, and increased dependency on families or the state. It strains public resources and undermines national growth. Moreover, it creates a mismatch in the labor market: industries face skill shortages while millions of educated youth remain idle. This disconnect reflects systemic inefficiencies in education, training, and employment policies. The root causes of long-term youth unemployment are multifaceted. First, there is a mismatch between education and industry needs. Many degrees do not equip students with practical skills or job-ready competencies. Second, the formal job market is unable to absorb the growing number of graduates. The private sector, especially MSMEs, faces regulatory and financial constraints

and colleges to help youth navigate uncertainty.

Public-private partnerships can play a transformative role. Corporations should invest in skill development programs, mentorship, and internships. NGOs and community organizations can bridge gaps in awareness and access. Digital platforms should be leveraged to provide remote training and job matching, especially in underserved regions. Ultimately, the crisis of youth unemployability is a national emergency. It threatens social cohesion, economic progress, and democratic stability. India's demographic dividend will become a demographic disaster if millions of young people remain excluded from meaningful work. The solution lies not just in creating jobs, but in creating pathways to employability, through education, exposure, empathy, and empowerment. Only then can India unlock the full potential of its youth and build a future that is

# Northern Army Commander chairs weekly coordination meeting of key stakeholders in Jammu

YOGESH

**JAMMU:** The General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (GOC-in-C) of the Army's Northern Command, Lieutenant General Pratik Sharma, chaired a weekly coordination meeting of key security stakeholders at Police headquarters here.

According to the details available, Director General of Police Nalin Prabhat and other senior officers from various paramilitary forces and security agencies attended the meeting.

It reviewed the prevailing security situation and deliberated upon the steps taken to strengthen counter-terror coordination across Jammu and Kashmir, said a source.

"The discussions focused on strengthening real-time intel-

ligence sharing and ensuring seamless operational integration among different agencies to enable swift responses to emerging security challenges," it said, adding, "The meeting also reviewed the ongoing counter-terror strategy in the Union Territory, with participating agencies reiterating their commitment to maintaining a strong operational posture and adopting a coordinated approach against terrorism."

"Emphasis was laid on maintaining a mission-ready framework and further enhancing synergy among the security forces operating in the region," the source added.

Earlier, the Northern Army Commander visited Basantgarh in Udhampur district to assess the ground security situation

and review ongoing counter-terror operations in the area.

During the visit, he was briefed on the existing intelligence grid and the measures being undertaken to strengthen the security architecture in coordination with other stakeholders. "Discussions during the field review focused on reinforcing security mechanisms and ensuring effective coordination between the Army, police and other agencies to counter potential threats," an official said, adding, "The Army Commander also interacted with troops deployed in the area and appreciated their professionalism, commitment and operational readiness in maintaining security and stability in Jammu and Kashmir."—(KNO)

...West Asia conflict

# 2 Indian Nationals Killed, Several Injured In Oman Attack

IANIS

**NEW DELHI:** Two Indian nationals were killed and several others injured in an attack in Oman's Sohar amid the ongoing conflict in West Asia, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Friday.

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a post on X that the Indian mission in Oman is in contact with local authorities and the employer company and is providing assistance to those affected.

"We lost two Indian nationals today in an attack in Sohar, Oman, in the ongoing conflict in West Asia. Several other Indian nationals were also injured. We express our deepest condolences to the families of the deceased and wish a speedy recovery to the injured," Jaiswal said.

He added that the Indian embassy in Oman is closely monitoring the situation and extending all possible help to the victims and their families.

"Our Mission in Oman is in touch with the local authorities as well as the employer company and is extending all possible assistance," the MEA spokesperson said.

The incident comes amid heightened tensions and security concerns in parts of West Asia, where ongoing hostilities have affected several areas and raised concerns about the safety of foreign nationals working in the region.

Sohar, an industrial port city in Oman, hosts a number of industrial facilities and employs a large expatriate workforce, including many Indian nationals working in various sectors.

India maintains a sizeable diaspora presence in Oman, with hundreds of thousands of Indians employed across sectors such as construction, industry, services and trade.

The Indian embassy in Muscat regularly coordinates with Omani authorities and employers to address issues related to the welfare and safety of Indian workers in the country.

Earlier on Friday, External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar held another telephonic conversation with Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi, discussing bilateral cooperation and matters concerning BRICS, where India is the current chair and Iran a member of the grouping.

This marked the fourth such conversation between the two ministers amid the escalating

crisis involving Iran, the United States and Israel.

The interaction followed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's conversation with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Thursday night to review the serious situation unfolding in the West Asian region.

Taking to social media platform X on Friday, EAM Jaishankar said: "Had another conversation with Iranian FM Seyed Abbas Araghchi yesterday night. Discussed bilateral matters as well as BRICS-related issues."

According to the Iranian Foreign Ministry, Araghchi briefed EAM Jaishankar on the latest situation resulting from the "acts of aggression and atrocities" committed by the United States and the Israeli regime against Iran, as well as the consequences for regional and global stability and security.

## FROM THE FRONT PAGE .....

### Kashmir Observes

Smart City Limited (SSCL) with a fleet of modern air-conditioned Tata Ultra EV electric buses were arranged from several parts of the city to ferry devotees to Hazratbal and back, while the traffic department implemented diversions and parking plans to manage the large influx of vehicles.

Officials from the shrine management said that over 1.5 lakh devotees gathered at Hazratbal, situated along the beautiful banks of Dal Lake.

Several devotees complained of heavy traffic congestion on roads leading to the shrine due to the massive rush of people. Some said vehicles remained stuck for long periods, forcing many to walk to their destinations.

One of the devotee Nazir Ahmad said, he had to walk towards Lal Bazar as the roads remained packed with vehicles after the prayers. Others also flagged similar concerns, stating that despite traffic diversions and special arrangements, managing the large influx of devotees proved challenging at several points around the shrine.

Security was also significantly enhanced across Srinagar and other parts of the Valley for the peaceful observance of Jumat-ul-Vida.

Personnel from the Jammu and Kashmir Police and other security agencies were deployed in large numbers around Hazratbal and other major religious places to ensure smooth conduct of prayers and maintain law and order.

Among the worshippers at Hazratbal was veteran political leader Dr Farooq Abdullah, president of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference.

After offering prayers, Abdullah said he prayed for lasting peace and stability in Jammu and Kashmir and hoped that conflicts across the world would soon come to an end.

While Hazratbal witnessed massive participation, congregational prayers were not allowed at the historic Jama Masjid Srinagar in the old city.

According to the managing body, Anjuman Auqaf Jama Masjid, a statement issued said authorities locked the mosque gates from all sides and placed Kashmir's chief cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq under house arrest, preventing him from delivering the Friday sermon and leading the prayers.

The Auqaf said that for the seventh consecutive year, devotees were not allowed to offer Jumat-ul-Vida prayers at the Valley's central congregational mosque.

Meanwhile, mosques and shrines across the Kashmir Valley witnessed huge congregations as thousands of devotees offered Jumat-ul-Vida prayers.

From North Kashmir districts of Baramulla and Kupwara to South Kashmir's Anantnag, Pulwama and Shopian, people gathered in mosques and prayer grounds to seek divine mercy and pray for peace, harmony and prosperity.

For many like Ghulam Nabi at Hazratbal, the day was about faith that transcends age and hardship.

"Ramdan teaches patience and compassion," he said after the prayers. "Today we prayed for peace for our homes, for Kashmir and for the whole world."

It is important to mention that Jumat-ul-Vida, observed on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramdan, holds special spiritual significance for Muslims across the world. On this day, large congregational prayers are offered in mosques and shrines as believers seek forgiveness, mercy and blessings before the conclusion of Ramzan—(KNO)

### LG Urges Literature

With deep responsibility, I call upon everyone, especially youth to serve literature and culture. It upholds the living legacy of values passed down through generations, entrusting you not just with an inheritance but with the duty of its cultural-literary bequest. This tradition teaches us the virtue of inclusion," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor observed that safeguarding our language preserves our memories; nurturing regional art forms builds self-assurance.

"Let us focus on local tales, dialects, and

artistic traditions, for every individual's identity draws nourishment from these roots. When generations gather to exchange experiences, cultural and literary heritage transcends the past—it becomes a living dialogue," he further said.

The two-day literary-cultural conclave features cultural processions, stalls showcasing indigenous attires, handicrafts, traditional cuisines, books and arts, panel discussions, and series of activities highlighting region's unique identity, honouring languages, folklore, customs, creativity and literary heritage.

On the occasion, the first edition of Jammu University's multilingual magazine 'The Litzine' was also released.

Prof. Umesh Rai, Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu; Prof. Pragati Kumar, Vice-Chancellor, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University; Prof. K.S. Chandrasekar, Vice Chancellor, Cluster University of Jammu; eminent journalists Shri Rajkishor, Consulting Editor, Amar Ujala and Shri Jai Prakash Pandey, Editor, Sahitya Tak India Today Group; Prof. Neelu Rohmetra, Dean Research studies; Dr Neeraj Sharma, Registrar; Prof. Sadaf Shah, Coordinator, Sahitya Sanskriti Samagam; Heads of Departments, faculty members of Jammu University, senior officials, prominent citizens and students in large number attended the inaugural ceremony.

### Vinai Kumar Saxena

requirements of the people.

Highlighting his development approach, Shri Saxena stated that he intends to visit villages and remote areas across Ladakh to understand the problems faced by people on the ground and identify practical and sustainable solutions. He noted that Ladakh possesses tremendous tourism potential and emphasised that one of his key priorities would be to make Ladakh one of the most beautiful and sought-after tourism destinations in the country and the world.

The Lieutenant Governor also stressed the importance of sustainable and environmentally responsible development, noting that Ladakh's fragile ecosystem requires careful planning. He spoke about the need to increase greenery through plantation drives, afforestation initiatives and the development of water bodies. He also highlighted the importance of improving urban infrastructure, including cleanliness and the expansion of sewage treatment facilities.

Reiterating the commitment of the administration towards the welfare of the people, Shri Saxena said that, as entrusted to him by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he would ensure that the people of Ladakh are never disappointed. He added that he would work in close coordination with the people and seek their cooperation in transforming Ladakh into a developed and progressive Union Territory. He further stated that he would make every effort to meet people from different sections of society and address their concerns.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor also interacted with people from diverse backgrounds who had gathered to greet him and convey their best wishes on assuming charge as the Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh. The ceremony also featured a cultural performance in his honour, showcasing Ladakh's rich cultural heritage.

Vinai Kumar Saxena brings with him over three decades of extensive experience in the corporate and social sectors. Prior to this appointment, he served as the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, where he initiated several measures aimed at strengthening urban governance, environmental conservation and public infrastructure. During his tenure in Delhi, he was credited with restoring urban forests such as Sanjay Van, developing green public spaces along the Yamuna riverfront, initiating land management reforms, strengthening citizen-centric civic amenities and overseeing city beautification initiatives.

Among those present at the swearing-in ceremony were Chief Executive Councillor, LAHDC Kargil, Dr Mohd Jaffer Akhoun; Member of Parliament from Ladakh, Mohamad Haneefa Jan; His Eminence Drukpa Thuksey Rinpoche; DGP Ladakh, Mukesh Singh; GOC 14 Corps Lt Gen Hitesh Bhalla; Founder of Mahabodhi International Medi-

tation Centre, Bhikkhu Sanghasena; former Member of Parliament from Ladakh, Jamyang Tsering Namgyal; Principal District and Sessions Judge Leh, Spalzes Angmo; Executive Councillors from LAHDC Kargil, Administrative Secretaries, Deputy Commissioner Leh, Romil Singh Donk; Deputy Commissioner, Kargil, Rakesh Kumar; SSP Leh Raam; Directors and Heads of Departments, representatives from various political, religious and civil society organisations, state awardees, prominent citizens, senior government officials, law officials and officers from the Indian Army, ITBP and Ladakh Police.

### First Batch Of Kashmiri

The All India Medical Students Association (AIMSA) said it received distress calls from several Arak University students on the evening of March 12 after a building adjacent to their dormitory was attacked, triggering panic among those still in the area.

Students from Isfahan University have also requested immediate relocation, citing growing security concerns in the region.

Dr Mohammad Momin Khan of AIMSA, who has been coordinating closely with students and authorities throughout the evacuation, urged the Indian Embassy in Iran to expedite relocation for all remaining students. "AIMSA has been in constant contact with Indian students across different universities in Iran to ensure their safety and smooth evacuation," he said, appealing to the Embassy to immediately shift all Indian citizens to safer locations given the evolving security situation.

Among the returning students, around 150 belong to different districts of Kashmir. Parents in the Valley expressed relief as the evacuation moved forward, but urged the government to continue facilitating the safe return of all students still in Iran.

Students are expected to land at airports in Delhi and Mumbai before proceeding to their respective home states—(KNO)

### Cabinet Approves 18%

Cabinet has also given its consent for Ladakh to use the Jammu & Kashmir Real Estate Appellate Tribunal as a joint Real Estate Appellate Tribunal—(KNO)

### Panel Led By HM

widespread damage across several districts.

According to official data shared with the Ministry of Home Affairs, about 199 people were killed during the year due to incidents such as flash floods, cloudbursts, landslides and heavy rainfall triggered by intense monsoon activity.

The disasters also led to the death of nearly 11,700 livestock, while more than 8,400 houses were damaged across the Union Territory. Agricultural losses were also substantial, with around 77,915 hectares of crop land affected.

The Jammu division recorded the worst damage, particularly during August when multiple extreme weather events struck the region.

On August 14, a cloudburst in Chashoti area of Kishtwar district triggered flash floods and landslides that killed at least 68 people, including pilgrims travelling along the Machail Mata Yatra route. Several others were injured and some were reported missing following the incident.

Later in the month, on August 26, heavy rainfall triggered landslides along the route to the Vaishno Devi shrine, leaving at least 34 people dead.

The same spell of rainfall also caused flooding in parts of Jammu city, where rising water levels in the Tawi river inundated several residential areas and damaged public infrastructure.

Rescue and relief operations were carried out by local authorities with the assistance of the Indian Army and teams from the National Disaster Response Force.

Officials have linked the frequency and intensity of such events to erratic weather patterns in the Himalayan region, raising concerns about disaster preparedness and early warning systems in vulnerable mountain areas—(KNO)

### J&K Govt To Overhaul

regarding the recruitment of Multitasking Staff by recruiting agencies.

The committee will examine the minimum and maximum qualification criteria and recommend the provision of specific qualifications or skill tests to ensure the recruitment of manpower suited to departmental needs.

As per existing rules, the minimum qualification for Class IV jobs is matriculation (10th pass), while the maximum qualification is 12th pass (10+2). Candidates with higher qualifications are not eligible for these posts.

The move comes at a time when 12351 posts of multi-tasking staff are vacant in government departments. Apart from these posts, 3808 gazetted posts and 24507 non-gazetted posts are also lying vacant in J&K—(KNO)

### Tehran To Give Safe

that those countries that joined the aggression should not benefit from safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz," he added.

The Strait of Hormuz, is one of the world's most vital shipping lanes through which 20 per cent of the world's oil and gas exports transit.

The Ministry of Ports and Shipping said on Thursday that the number of Indian-flagged vessels operating in the Persian Gulf region, remains unchanged at 28 and all Indian vessels and crew are being actively monitored for their safety and security.

As many as 24 of these Indian ships are located west of the Strait of Hormuz, carrying 677 Indian seafarers, and four vessels are on the east of the Strait with 101 Indian seafarers on board.

"Authorities, ship managers, and recruitment agencies are closely coordinating with Indian embassies and local authorities to ensure safety, and render medical assistance," the statement said.

Advisories issued on precautionary measures to safeguard Indian seafarers, Indian-flagged vessels and maritime trade operations issued by Director General Shipping on February 28, 2026, remain in force.

The Ministry continues to closely monitor the prevailing maritime situation in the Persian Gulf region and has strengthened monitoring and preparedness measures in view of the evolving maritime situation in that region, the statement added.

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# PM-Kisan has become major social security support for small farmers: PM Modi

SIANS

**GUWAHATI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) scheme has emerged as a significant source of social security for marginal farmers across the country, while accusing the Congress party of spreading misinformation about the initiative when it was first launched.

Addressing a public programme in Khanapara in Guwahati, the Prime Minister said, "When the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana was launched, the Congress party spread rumours suggesting that although Prime Minister Modi was providing financial assistance under this scheme, the recipients would have to return the money after the elections. They have become experts at spreading misinformation."

The Prime Minister added that despite such allegations, the scheme has become a crucial support system for the country's marginal farmers.



Highlighting the government's efforts to strengthen direct financial support to farmers, Prime Minister Modi said that the latest instalment of the PM-Kisan funds

had just been credited to the accounts of millions of farmers across the country.

"Just a little while ago, a message has reached the accounts of millions

of farmers that the PM Samman Nidhi has been deposited," he said.

The Prime Minister noted that many of the beneficiaries did not even have bank accounts or mobile phones before 2014, but are now directly receiving financial assistance through the government's digital and banking infrastructure.

"More than Rs 4.20 lakh crore have been deposited in the accounts of millions of such farmers so far," he said.

PM Modi also said that over Rs 18,000 crore under the PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme had been transferred to crores of farmers across the country on Friday.

Prime Minister Modi further announced that many families associated with Assam's tea gardens have been granted land titles now.

Congratulating the beneficiaries, PM Modi extended his greetings to the people of Assam, tea garden workers and farmers across the country.

# Cong's Nana Patole stokes row with objectionable comments at CEC Gyanesh Kumar

SIANS

**MUMBAI:** Former Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole ignited fresh controversy on Friday by making disparaging remarks against Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar and likening him to a fourth-class employee, subservient to the Prime Minister and the government.

The 'bizarre' claim is understood to have raised hackles within the BJP camp, though the latter is yet to respond.

Patole's objectionable slur at the CEC comes close on the heels of Opposition parties submitting a notice to move an impeachment motion against him, seeking his removal.

The Congress leader alleged that CEC Gyanesh Kumar was working under the aegis of the Central government with a motive to benefit the ruling party in the upcoming Assembly elections.

Speaking to newsmen, he stated that the Opposition parties were justified in seeking his ouster from the post, as he has been



working in tandem with the ruling party to damage and destroy the democratic fabric of the nation.

Patole's remarks come on the back of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) moving an impeachment motion against the Chief Election Commissioner. TMC has reportedly submitted two notices in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha seeking his ouster, with about 120 members and 60 members signing the motion, respectively.

The notice against CEC allegedly lists seven charges

against him, ranging from 'partisan conduct to mass disenfranchisement, as under the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR).

Patole, pointing to 'high-handedness' and 'opaqueness under the incumbent CEC, claimed, "It was during Rajiv Gandhi's tenure that the Election Commission was given autonomous status, but with people like him at the helm, the institution's authenticity and credibility is being withered away."

Patole's direct attack on the CEC came during a demonstration against the LPG shortages in the city. He, along with other Congress leaders were protesting with LPG cut-outs, to raise the pain of common people as well as small businessmen.

They claimed that various restaurants and eating outlets were starting at closure due to the LPG crisis and demanded government take accountability for the same. They held the government responsible for 'black marketing and hoarding' of gas cylinders.

# Govt urges consumers to avoid panic buying as petrol, diesel, LPG supply is normal

SIANS

**NEW DELHI:** The Centre on Friday advised consumers to avoid panic buying of petrol, diesel, and LPG as adequate stocks are available across the country.

No cases of fuel dry-outs have been reported at any of the 1 lakh retail outlets by the Oil Marketing Companies. Adequate stocks of petrol and diesel are available, and supplies are being maintained regularly, a senior Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry official said.

The official underlined that India currently has a refining capacity of around 258 MMTPA and is the fourth largest refining hub in the world. The country is self-sufficient in the production of petrol and diesel, and no imports of petrol and diesel are required to meet domestic demand. All refineries are currently operating at high levels, including some of them even above 100 per cent capacity.

All Indian refineries are also currently maintaining adequate crude oil inventories, and supplies are being continuously received through diversified import sources and shipping routes.

The Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry official briefed the media on the



current energy supply situation and the steps being taken to ensure the continued availability of petroleum products and LPG despite concerns about supply due to the prevailing geopolitical situation and closure of the Hormuz Strait.

The Government has also issued a Natural Gas Control Order on March 9 under the Essential Commodities Act, which directs 100 per cent supply of PNG and CNG with no cuts. So, there is no need to panic and supplies to industrial & commercial consumers are being regulated at 80 per cent, the official said.

Around 3.73 MMSCM per day of gas is being consumed across the Domestic PNG segment, for which adequate gas supply is available across geographical areas.

More than 1.5 crore PNG households in India are currently being served nat-

ural gas in their homes and will continue to be served without any hindrance. In view of the prevailing geopolitical situation, it is advisable to promote the use of domestically supplied PNG for residential consumers so as to conserve domestic LPG cylinders. The conserved LPG cylinders may be diverted for use in other consumer areas, where PNG connectivity is not available, the official pointed out.

In order to ease the supply concerns related to LPG, the government is taking up with different City Gas Distribution (CGD) entities authorised in major urban centres in the country to immediately offer new PNG connections to the affected commercial and industrial consumers. The commercial and industrial consumers can contact their local city gas distribution company to get a new connection.

# India, US continue talks for mutually beneficial trade deal: Commerce Ministry

SIANS

**NEW DELHI:** The Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Friday said that India and the United States continue to remain engaged in discussions for a mutually beneficial bilateral trade agreement, rejecting media reports that suggested a pause in negotiations.

In a statement, the ministry clarified that there has been no hold on bilateral engagement between the two countries.

It said both sides are actively working towards a trade agreement that will benefit businesses and economic cooperation in both nations.

"We have noted a media report regarding ongoing trade talks with the US. It is denied that there is any hold off in bilateral engagement. It is reiterated that the two sides remain engaged for a mutually beneficial trade agreement," the ministry said.

The clarification comes at a time when India and the US are increasing diplomatic and economic engagement across multi-



ple areas, including trade, defence and supply chain cooperation.

Earlier this month, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met United States Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau on the sidelines of the Raisina Dialogue 2026 in New Delhi.

Landau visited India from March 3 to 6 to represent the US at the global conference and to discuss several aspects of bilateral cooperation.

According to the US State Department, the visit focused on strengthening ties in areas such as defence, critical minerals and counternarcotics, while also working to deepen commercial

and economic relations between the two countries.

The discussions also aimed to expand market access for American businesses and advance the shared vision of both nations for a free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.

The Raisina Dialogue, India's flagship conference on geopolitics and geo-economics, brought together global leaders, policymakers, industry representatives and strategic experts to discuss major international issues.

The three-day event was organised by the Observer Research Foundation in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs.

# Pentagon blames Iran for Strait of Hormuz disruption

SIANS

**WASHINGTON:** The Pentagon on Friday said Iran, not the United States or its allies, was responsible for disruptions to commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical energy corridors.

At a Pentagon news conference, U.S. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said commercial traffic could move through the waterway but was being threatened by Iranian actions during the ongoing conflict.

"The only thing prohibiting transit in the Straits right now is Iran shooting at shipping," Hegseth said.

The Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf with global markets and carries a significant share of the world's oil shipments, making any disruption closely watched by energy-importing countries, including India.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Dan Caine said U.S. forces were actively targeting Iranian capabilities used to threaten maritime traffic.

"Our bases or our partners there are continuing to destroy the Iranian Navy," Caine said, adding that American forces were also attacking Iran's mine-

laying capabilities and naval infrastructure.

"This means going after Iran's mine-laying capability and destroying their ability to attack commercial vessels," he said.

Caine said U.S. strikes had already significantly degraded Iranian naval strength during the campaign. "In less than two weeks, we've rendered the Iranian Navy combat ineffective," he said.

Despite the progress, he cautioned that Iran still retained the ability to threaten shipping.

"Iran still can harm friendly forces and commercial shipping, and our work on this effort continues," Caine said.

Hegseth said the United States had long anticipated the possibility of Iran attempting to disrupt shipping through the strait.

"For decades, Iran has threatened shipping in the Strait of Hormuz," he said.

"We have a plan for every option here."

He added that Washington was coordinating with other government agencies and international partners to ensure energy supplies continued to flow.

"We're working with our interagency partners... to make sure that energy flows," Hegseth said.

# Andhra: DRI busts Alprazolam factory, seizes drugs worth Rs 47 crore

SIANS

**AMARAVATI:** In a significant crackdown on the illicit manufacture of synthetic drugs, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has busted a clandestine facility engaged in the production of Alprazolam, a psychotropic substance under the NDPS Act, 1985, in Andhra Pradesh.

The DRI raided the factory at Kondapalli Industrial Development Area of NTR district and seized 237 kg of drugs worth Rs 47 crore. It also seized 3.5 tonnes of chemicals and arrested two persons.

An intelligence-driven and well-coordinated operation codenamed "Operation White Hammer", carried

out on March 11-12, revealed a full-fledged industrial setup for the production of Alprazolam, operating under the guise of a chemical manufacturing unit.

Searches at the premises resulted in the seizure of 237 kg of Alprazolam having an estimated market value of Rs 47 crore, along with over 800 kg of key raw materials, 2860 litres of various chemicals, and industrial-scale equipment such as reactors, driers and a centrifuge, demonstrating an organised, large-scale clandestine manufacturing facility, the DRI said in a release.

Preliminary investigation revealed the operation was orchestrated by a chemist with over 20 years' experi-

ence in the chemical and pharmaceutical sector, in collusion with his associate, who arranged raw materials and distribution in Hyderabad.

The accused had rented the factory premises for clandestinely manufacturing Alprazolam. Both masterminds have been arrested.

During the current financial year, DRI has dismantled eight clandestine drug manufacturing units through intelligence-based operations, reaffirming its firm commitment to the government's Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan and to safeguarding society and people from the menace of narcotic and psychotropic substances.

**KATHMANDU:** The government of Nepal has decided to stop providing visa-on-arrival facilities to Iranian citizens visiting the country amid the ongoing US-Iran conflict in West Asia, the country's Department of Immigration said on Friday.

"The move is aimed at preventing an influx of Iranian citizens into Nepal due to the ongoing conflict in the region," Ram Chandra Tiwari, Director General of the department, told SIANS. "We have been adopting similar policies for other nations affected by conflicts."

He said that, based on the recommendation of the department, the Ministry of Home Affairs decided to stop providing visa-on-arrival facilities to Iranian citizens.

"The decision was taken on national security grounds, as there is also a possibility that Iranians

# Nepal halts visa-on-arrival facility for Iranian citizens

SIANS



could enter the country via India through the porous border," he said.

Under the new provision, Iranian nationals — except those holding official and diplomatic passports — will now be required to obtain a visa from a Nepali Embassy or diplomatic mission abroad before entering Nepal, the department said. With this

decision, the number of countries whose citizens are not eligible for visa-on-arrival in Nepal has reached 13.

The other countries or territories whose citizens are not eligible for visa-on-arrival include Nigeria, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Cameroon, Somalia, Liberia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan,

and Syria.

The Nepali government has also maintained that individuals travelling with refugee-status travel documents must obtain a visa from a Nepali diplomatic mission abroad before entering the country.

Nepal has been expressing concern about a potential influx of foreign nationals who could seek refugee

status after arriving in the country. In the past, hundreds of Rohingya refugees arrived in Nepal due to the war waged by Myanmar's military government against them. Nepal also hosted more than 100,000 Bhutanese refugees for two decades since the early 1990s, before most of them were resettled in several Western countries.

When asked whether the decision was also aimed at addressing US security concerns regarding Iranian nationals in Nepal, Tiwari said this was not a factor behind the decision.

"We have not received any diplomatic communication from the US about any threat posed by Iranian nationals in Nepal," Tiwari said.

The department said the latest measure regarding Iranian nationals is part of Nepal's immigration regulations governing entry procedures for certain nationalities.

# BAN vs PAK: Salman Agha run out in bizarre fashion after picking up the ball in 2nd ODI

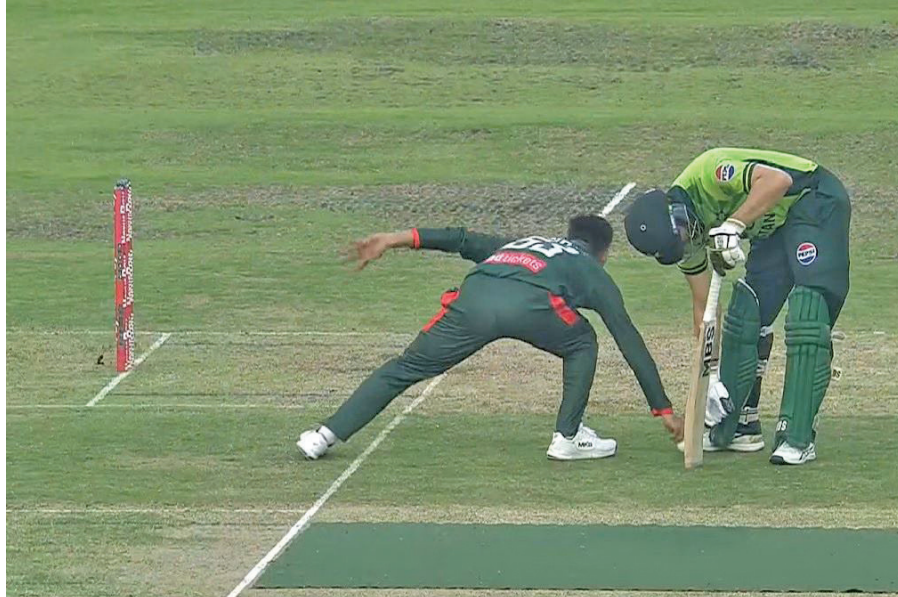
IAN S

**DHAKA:** Pakistan batter Salman Ali Agha was involved in a rare and controversial dismissal during the second ODI against Bangladesh played at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka on Friday.

The incident occurred in the 39th over of Pakistan's innings when the visitors were building a strong partnership. Agha and Mohammad Rizwan were on the crease and had added 109 runs for the fourth wicket after Pakistan lost three early wickets.

On the fourth delivery of the over, bowled by Bangladesh captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Rizwan played a gentle push down the ground. The ball rolled towards Agha, who was standing outside his crease at the non-striker's end after backing up.

As the ball made contact with his pads, Agha bent down and picked it up before handing it back. Miraz quickly collected the ball and broke the stumps with Agha still outside the crease, appealing for a run-out.



The on-field umpire upheld the appeal and referred the decision upstairs. The third umpire also ruled in Bangladesh's favour, confirming Agha's dismissal. The decision left Agha visibly frustrated as he walked back to the pavilion. Visuals showed the Pakistan batter expressing his displeasure after the dismissal.

The incident also led to brief exchanges between players from both sides on the field. Rizwan was seen in discussion with the Bangladesh players, while Litton Das defended the appeal made by Miraz. The unusual run-out quickly became the talking point of the match, drawing attention to the circumstances surrounding the dismissal. Many users took to X in support

of Agha, while others said that Pakistan's T20I captain forgot his basic duty of getting back to his crease. Meanwhile, after Agha's dismissal, Pakistan's team got bundled out for 274 runs in 47.3 overs, with Maaz Sadaqat being the top scorer with 75 runs. Pakistan has already lost the first match of the series, and this is a must-win for them to remain alive.

# 'CSK is incomplete without Dhoni, this season might be his last': Pathan

IAN S

**NEW DELHI:** Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan believes the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League (IPL) could mark the final appearance of legendary wicketkeeper-batter MS Dhoni in the yellow jersey for Chennai Super Kings (CSK).

Highlighting Dhoni's importance to the five-time champions, Pathan said it is difficult to imagine both CSK and the IPL without the iconic wicketkeeper-batter.

"CSK is incomplete without MS Dhoni. This season might be the last time we see him in the yellow jersey, and it's tough to imagine CSK and the IPL without him. This season, Dhoni will play an important role in bringing everyone together. I'm not sure how many games he



will play. But his presence in the dressing room will help a lot. Ruturaj Gaikwad is the leader. But as a group, two or three guys are being groomed for the future. That is where MS Dhoni comes in. I hope he makes a difference," Pathan told Jio Hotstar.

According to Pathan, CSK's management is likely to take a careful approach regarding Dhoni's workload throughout the season and will also try to give a good farewell to their stalwart by winning the sixth title. "Questions about his

fitness, batting position, and whether he will play all games will still come up. The CSK team management will take it step by step. They will definitely look to give him a perfect farewell by lifting their sixth IPL trophy," he added.

Dhoni is one of the most influential players in the CSK ranks and is a core member of the leadership group. He has won five titles for the team during his captaincy stint.

CSK had a poor run last season. The team finished last in the points table. The five-time champions were only able to win four matches out of fourteen.

Dhoni is still one of the finest batters in IPL history, with 5,439 runs in 278 matches and 242 innings at an average of 38.80, a strike rate of 137.45, and 24 fifties, with a best score of 84 not out.

# IPL 2026: 'Chennai wicket will suit Samson's game,' says Piyush Chawla

IAN S

**NEW DELHI:** Former Indian spinner Piyush Chawla feels that Chennai Super Kings (CSK) home ground MA Chidambaram Stadium's pitch will suit the batting style of Sanju Samson, who is gearing up for his first season with the five-time champions.

Samson is coming to the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 on the back of some great knocks in the recently concluded ICC T20 World Cup, where the wicketkeeper batter scored back-to-back half-centuries in the Super8s match against the West Indies, the

semi-final vs England and the Summit clash against New Zealand. According to Chawla, Samson getting in good touch before the IPL 2026 is a blessing for CSK.

"Sanju Samson is a match-winner in himself. He proved his doubters wrong with three back-to-back impactful knocks against West Indies, England and New Zealand in the T20 World Cup. CSK will be very happy with his form because Samson has peaked right before the start of the IPL. That is great news for their fans. Coming to Chennai, the way the wicket plays there will definitely suit

his game," Chawla said on JioHotstar.

Samson has been traded from the Rajasthan Royals to CSK in place of Ravindra Jadeja and Sam Curran before the IPL 2026 auction. Samson has played 177 IPL matches and scored 4707 runs at an average of 30.95.

Chawla added that Samson's aggressive batting style will help cure CSK's slow opening problem. According to the 37-year-old, Samson will open with India's U19 captain Ayush Mhatre, who impressed with his skills last season. "Opening the innings, his aggressive style will benefit CSK a lot. Last

season, they struggled to get quick starts. Only after Ayush Mhatre arrived did CSK start scoring runs in the powerplay. Now, with Samson in, their opening problems will finally be solved. They need that experienced opener alongside Ayush Mhatre. Samson's trade move to CSK is going to be a blockbuster one," he said.

# 'This trophy belongs to every Indian, we exist because of your support & blessings: SKY

IAN S

**NEW DELHI:** Captain Suryakumar Yadav expressed heartfelt gratitude to fans across the country after India's triumphant campaign in the ICC T20 World Cup 2026, dedicating the title to millions of supporters who stood beside the team throughout the tournament.

In an emotional message, Suryakumar thanked Indian fans for their unwavering support, saying the team's success would not have been possible without their prayers and encouragement.

"Dear Team India fans, first of all, a heartfelt thank you. We exist because of your support and blessings. This World Cup trophy belongs to the whole of India," Suryakumar said in a video released by the BCCI on Friday.



The skipper emphasised that the victory was not just the team's achievement but a shared dream of cricket lovers across the country. "When we win, it is not just our victory. It is the dream of those children who grow up with a

bat and ball and dream of playing for the country. It is for the fans who fill stadiums and make them feel like home, and for the millions who support us from their homes," he added. Suryakumar further acknowledged the role of

fans' prayers and unconditional love in inspiring the players during challenging moments in the tournament.

"Your prayers and unconditional love give us strength. Words are not enough to express our gratitude to all of you. In the end, cricket is not just a game in India; it is an emotion. And this victory is for all of you," Suryakumar concluded.

India sealed the title with a commanding 96-run win over New Zealand in the final at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Sunday. The victory made India the first team to win three T20 World Cup titles and the first to defend the trophy on home soil successfully.

With this win, Suryakumar has also joined a special club with MS Dhoni and Rohit Sharma, who have won the T20 World Cup silverware as captains.

# 'I want my peak years to be here': Reece James signs new six-year contract with Chelsea

IAN S

**LONDON:** Captain Reece James has pledged to dedicate his 'peak years' to Chelsea Football Club after signing a new six-year contract that will keep him at the club until 2032.

James' previous deal with the London club was due to expire in 2028, but Chelsea moved early to secure the future of their skipper by extending his contract before it entered its final stages.

A product of Chelsea's academy, James first joined the club as a six-year-old and has since risen through the ranks to become one of the key figures in the first team. The England player has made 225 appearances across all competitions since making his senior debut in 2019 and was appointed club captain in 2023.

The right-back has already enjoyed considerable success at Stamford Bridge, winning five major trophies, including the UEFA Champions League title in 2021. Despite those achievements, the 24-year-old believes his best years are still ahead.

"I am over the moon to have extended my contract - Chelsea means so much to me," he told the club's official website.

"I have always said I want my peak years to be here, and I truly believe we



have everything it takes to build on our previous successes. I'm excited for the future under this ownership, sporting directors, coaching staff, and all the staff, and hopefully we will lift many more trophies together over the coming years," he added.

Chelsea's sporting directors, Paul Winstanley and Laurence Stewart, hailed the extension as a significant moment for the club.

"On behalf of ownership and everyone connected to Chelsea, it is a proud moment for all of us to have Reece extend his contract," they said in a joint statement. "He is the leader of this team, both on and off the pitch."

The ongoing season has

been James' most consistent in terms of playing time after injuries to his knee and hamstring disrupted much of the previous two campaigns.

Chelsea have carefully managed his workload this term, implementing a structured plan to ensure he is not overextended. The defender has featured 35 times across all competitions this season - his highest appearance tally since the 2021/22 campaign.

Former England defender Kyle Walker recently backed James to become the national team's first-choice right-back following his own international retirement, describing the Chelsea captain as a 'complete' player.

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