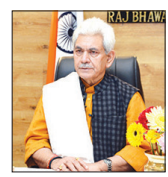


Good Morning Kashmir

17th Year Of Publication

Lok Bhavan Jammu & Kashmir
@LokBhavanJandK



Today I want to state unequivocally: whether an official or anyone in public life, if they are in any way connected to the drug network or lend it support, they will face strict legal consequences. I assure the people that if even the slightest trace of this infection has seeped into our system, it will be mercilessly cut out without hesitation, the Lieutenant Governor said.

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Millions Across J&K Determined To Eradicate Narco-Terrorism: LG

Joins Nasha Mukta Jammu Kashmir Padyatra In Shopian

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday declared that millions across Jammu and Kashmir, united by a single purpose, are firmly determined to wipe out "narcotics-terrorism" from the paradise land.



"From every lane and by-lane of UT, voices are rising in unison, demanding that not a single drug smuggler be spared. What began 43 days ago in Jammu has now surged into a powerful grassroots movement, echoing across communities with unstoppable force," Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said while addressing Nasha Mukta Jammu Kashmir Padyatra in Shopian where citizens from all walks of life vowed that narco-terrorists will be driven out from every corner of UT of Jammu Kashmir.

Addressing the gathering, the Lieutenant Governor said this collective resolve heralds the dawn

of a new era.

The Lieutenant Governor stated that united by a single purpose and a common goal, millions across Jammu Kashmir are determined to eradicate narcotics-terrorism from this land of paradise. "It is now firmly etched in the minds of our people that this is not a distant issue but a challenge confronting us at our very doorstep, one we must face head-on with courage and resolve," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor observed that the poison of drugs is diverting our youth from the path of progress. He said terrorist groups use

proceeds from drugs to buy weapons, and with those weapons the blood of ordinary Kashmiris is being spilled.

"Today I want to state unequivocally: whether an official or anyone in public life, if they are in any way connected to the drug network or lend it support, they will face strict legal consequences. I assure the people that if even the slightest trace of this infection has seeped into our system, it will be mercilessly cut out without hesitation," the Lieutenant Governor said.

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IT IS NOW FIRMLY ETCHED IN THE MINDS OF OUR people that this is not a distant issue but a challenge confronting us at our very doorstep, one we must face head-on with courage and resolve,"

Third Fuel Price Hike In 10 Days Sparks Public Concern

GMK NEWS NETWORK

NEW DELHI: Petrol and diesel prices were increased once again on Saturday, intensifying concerns among consumers already burdened by rising living costs. The latest revision marks the third fuel price hike in less than ten days, pushing retail rates up by nearly Rs 5 per litre during this period.

According to state-owned oil marketing companies, petrol prices were raised by 87 paise per litre while diesel became costlier by 91 paise per litre. In New Delhi, petrol now costs Rs 99.51 per litre against Rs 98.64 earlier, while diesel climbed from Rs 91.58 to Rs 92.49 per litre.

The fresh increase follows a



Rs 3 per litre hike on May 15 and another 90 paise increase on May 19. Officials said the revisions are aimed at adjusting domestic fuel prices in line with rising international crude oil costs triggered by tensions in West Asia and supply concerns linked to production

cuts by OPEC+ countries.

The repeated hikes have triggered anxiety among transporters, farmers, traders and middle-class households, with fears that the increase in fuel prices will soon push up the cost of essential commodities, public transport

and agricultural operations. Diesel price hikes are expected to particularly affect farming activities as several states prepare for wheat harvesting and paddy sowing. Transportation costs for vegetables, fruits and other daily essentials are also likely to rise in the coming days, experts warned.

After keeping rates unchanged for nearly four months, state-run companies including Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum resumed fuel price revisions earlier this month.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently appealed to citizens to reduce fuel consumption by increasingly using public transport and opting

Mecca Welcomes Over 1.6 Million Pilgrims For Annual Hajj

GMK NEWS NETWORK

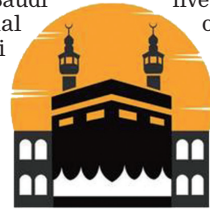
SRINAGAR: More than 1.6 million pilgrims from across the world have arrived in Saudi Arabia for the annual Hajj pilgrimage, Saudi authorities said.

According to the General Directorate of Passports, over 1,626,000 pilgrims entered the Kingdom through air, land and sea routes ahead of Hajj. Most of the pilgrims arrived by air, while arrivals from different countries are still continuing. Saudi authorities expect the number of pilgrims to increase further in the coming days as

preparations for the pilgrimage enter the final phase.

Hajj, performed in the holy city of Mecca, is one of the five pillars of Islam and is obligatory once in a lifetime for Muslims who are physically and financially capable of undertaking the journey.

The Saudi government has put in place extensive arrangements for transport, accommodation, healthcare and crowd management to ensure smooth conduct of the pilgrimage. Authorities have also strengthened safety measures amid rising temperatures



₹36 Crore SVEP Projects Approved In J&K

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Secretary, Rural Development Department (RDD) and Panchayati Raj, Mohammad Aijaz Asad, on Saturday chaired a meeting of the UT-Level Steering Committee (Non-Farm Livelihoods) under the Jammu & Kashmir Rural Livelihoods Mission's (JKRLM) Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP), which accorded in-principle approval to six Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) worth 36 crore aimed at promoting rural entre-



preneurship and sustainable non-farm livelihood opportunities across Jammu and Kashmir.

The approved DPRs pertain to six new SVEP blocks—Sogam Wavoora, Pulwama-Litter, Chadoora-Surasyar,

BJP To File Missing Report Against CM Omar Abdullah: LoP Sharma

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Senior BJP leader and Leader of Opposition in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, Sunil Kumar Sharma targeted Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, alleging that he has remained "missing" from the ground for the past several days while people across Jammu and Kashmir continue to face basic issues.

In a video statement, Sharma said the chief minister was not concerned about the problems of the people, claiming that protests over electricity and water shortages were taking place in different areas.

"The poor people of J&K who made a prince the Chief Minister are now suffering. The prince who was once rejected has been missing for the past few days," Sharma said.

The BJP leader also took a swipe at Abdullah over



his reported foreign visit, saying he did not know whether the chief minister was in "London or England", but alleged that he was "sitting outside" while people were struggling on the ground.

Sharma further said the BJP would soon approach Ram Munshi Bagh police station in Srinagar to file a "missing report" for the chief minister.(KNS).

Jammu-Srinagar Vande Bharat Carries Over 1 Lakh Passengers In Record 22 Days

Indigenous Semi-High-Speed Train Emerges As J&K's All-Weather Lifeline

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Marking a historic milestone for Indian Railways and Jammu & Kashmir, the state-of-the-art Jammu-Srinagar Vande Bharat Express has successfully carried more than 1,01,050 passengers within just 22 days of its commercial operations, reaffirming its growing popularity as a fast, safe and reliable transport link between Jammu and the Kashmir Valley.

According to a statement issued, the indigenous semi-high-speed train commenced regular commercial operations on May 2, 2026, after being flagged off by the Union Railway Minister on April 30. Since then, the Vande Bharat Express has rapidly emerged as a preferred mode of travel for passengers, setting a new benchmark in seamless rail

connectivity in the region.

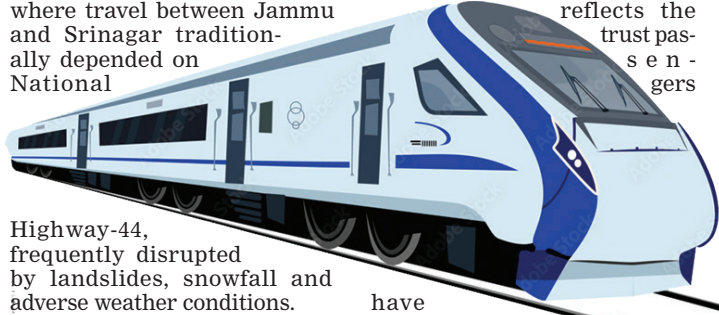
The achievement is being viewed as a landmark moment in the history of rail connectivity in Jammu and Kashmir, where travel between Jammu and Srinagar traditionally depended on National

Highway-44, frequently disrupted by landslides, snowfall and adverse weather conditions.

Over the last 22 days, the train has maintained remarkable punctuality and operational reliability, providing commuters with a comfortable, efficient and dependable all-weather travel alternative.

Expressing satisfaction over the achievement, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Jammu, Uchit Singhal said the overwhelming public response

reflects the trust passengers



have placed in the service.

"Carrying over one lakh one thousand fifty passengers in just 22 days is a moment of immense pride for Northern Railway.

This remarkable

CS Reviews Transport Deptt Performance; Stresses Safer Roads,



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, chaired a comprehensive review meeting of the Transport Department to assess the progress achieved in road safety, traffic enforcement, technology integration and implementation of key recommendations aimed at improving traffic management and reducing road accidents across Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting besides ACS PWD and Principal Secretary, Home was attended by Commissioner Secretary, Health; Commissioner Secretary, Law; Secretary, Transport; IGP, Traffic; Transport Commissioner; SIO, NIC and

other concerned officers.

The meeting focused on the implementation status of the recommendations of the Supreme Court Committee on Road Safety (SCORS), functioning of road safety mechanisms, enforcement initiatives, PM-RAHAT scheme, electronic monitoring systems and other flagship interventions being undertaken by the Transport Department in coordination with allied agencies.

Expressing concern over the recent tragic road accident in Udhampur district in which around 21 people lost their lives, the Chief Secretary directed the Deputy Commissioners to submit comprehensive

'Hailstorms Damage 30% Of Kashmir's Agriculture, Horticulture Sector'

Kashmir Fruit Growers Demand Declaration Of 2026 As Disaster Year

WARIS FAYAZ

SRINAGAR: Kashmir's horticulture and agriculture sector has suffered nearly 30 percent damage due to repeated hailstorms across the Valley this year, leaving growers in deep financial distress and pushing many towards mounting debt, growers on Saturday said.

In a joint press conference in Sopore, President Kashmir Fruit Growers & Dealers Association, Fayaz Ahmed Malik @Kaka Ji, said 2026 has turned into a disastrous year for the agriculture as well as horticulture sector, with widespread damage reported from both South and North Kashmir following multiple



hailstorm incidents over the past two months.

"Hailstorm havoc has caused nearly 30 percent damage to the Valley's agriculture and horticulture sector. Thousands of orchard-

Sopore said more than 12 lakh people associated with the horticulture sector are suffering immensely due to the destruction caused to orchards and crops.

According to Kaka Ji, major damage was reported in Kulgam, Nehama and Shopian areas in April, while hailstorms on May 12 affected orchards in Kreeri, Wagora, Kreeri Kandi belt, Kunzer, Andergam and Lolpora in Baramulla district.

He said another spell of hailstorm on the same day caused losses in Matrigam, Bandipora, Dardpora and Sumlar areas.

Referring to the latest hailstorm on May

2-3 Terrorists Trapped Encounter Underway In Rajouri Forests

YOGESH

JAMMU: An encounter broke out between terrorists and security forces in the forest area of Jammu's Rajouri district on Saturday.

An official said that the gunfight erupted in the Dorimal forests after security forces launched a cordon and search operation based on specific intelligence inputs about the presence of terrorists in the area.

"At least two to three Pakistani terrorists are believed to be trapped. The operation is underway," officials said.

"The hiding terrorists opened fire as security forces tightened the cordon, triggering an exchange of fire. The intermittent firing was continuing when reports last came in."

In a post on X, the Army's White Knight Corps said, "Today at around 11:30 AM, contact was established with terrorists in the general area of Gambhir Muglan, Rajouri during an intelligence-based joint operation conducted

Short-Term Power Markets To Rescue 'J&K's 300 MWs gap'

RIYAZ BHAT

SRINAGAR: With authorities projecting power deficit Upto 300 Megawatts (MWs) on the horizon, J&K State Load Despatch Center (SLDC) has decided to rely on short-term power markets to bridge the gap.

Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission (JERC) in a meeting held in April, said that the authorities from Jammu and Kashmir have indicated that the region may face a minor power deficit of 100-300 MW.

"SLDC indicated a minor deficit (~100-300 MW) to be managed through short-term markets. Revised figures to be submitted," NRPC said.

J&K SLDC has further informed the regulatory commission that J&K may face a power deficit of 152 MWs in the ongoing month and 103 MWs in the month of June.

The NRPC was further informed that there was a 79 MWs power deficit in the month of April.

Earlier in April, reported that in the peak winters of 2025-2026, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh were utilizing nearly 1,000 Megawatts (MWs) of coal and gas energy amid dip in hydel power generation.

The official figures in this regard had revealed that in the month of January-2026, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh were utilizing 999.21 MWs of thermal energy including 870.14 MWs of coal and 129.7 MWs of gas energy from the allocated shares in joint and central sector utilities.

The figures reveal that Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh were allocated with a total of 3767.44 MWs of power from state, private and central share out of which 999.21 MWs were

Kashmir Literature Festival Announces Third Edition

Literary Giants, Diplomats, Cultural Icons to Converge at Srinagar's Most Anticipated celebration

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: The Sriku-la Foundation Saturday officially announced the third edition of the Kashmir Literature Festival (KLF), bringing together some of India's and the world's most distinguished voices in literature, diplomacy, and public life. The announcement was made at a press briefing held near Dal Lake in Srinagar, attended by media representatives from across Jammu & Kashmir.

Naira Manzoor, Assistant Director of the Festival, along with Phillip Naithram and Musaddiq Reyaz, addressed the media on the ethos, essence, and vision of KLF 2026 — and why an event of this scale matters deeply in a place like Srinagar and the broader Jammu & Kashmir region.

Now in its third edition, the Kashmir Literature Festival has grown into a landmark cultural event that extends well beyond the written word. KLF hosts book launches, cover launches, panel discussions, subject-based debates, and dialogues, alongside karaoke, open mic sessions, storytelling, poetry, and a celebration of food and craft. The festival operates under the conviction that literature is one expression of a far wider civilizational culture — and that Jammu & Kashmir deserves a platform that honors that cul-



ture in its full breadth. Geographic Reference

KLF 2026 will bring together an exceptional gathering of literary figures, thinkers, diplomats, and public servants. Confirmed attendees include Mrs Neeraj Mattoo, Prof Khurshid Andrabi, Prof Amitabh Mattoo, Lt Gen Raj Shukla, Ambassador Deepak Vohra, and artist Roubale Nagi, among others.

The festival will also feature senior bureaucrats and diplomatic representatives, scholars, authors and entrepreneurs reinforcing KLF's position as a platform where intellectual rigor meets the highest levels of public and civic life.

The Kashmir Literature Festival gratefully acknowledges the continued support of the District Government and the UT Administration of Jammu & Kashmir. KLF 2026 is proud to count among its valued partners: Rising Kashmir, JIO News, Pausecast, BIG FM, Qafila-e-Mohabbat, SMART, CRL Diagnostics, Rampage Media, and a growing list of

partners to be announced.

"If we inspire five people to write for the very first time, that is a good enough definition of success," the team shared. "Everyone who attends the festival goes back with some value addition when they leave the venue."

At its core, KLF exists to celebrate what Kashmir has always been — a place of poetry, learning, dialogue, and civilizational depth. The festival is free and open to all who value knowledge and culture.

The Kashmir Literature Festival (KLF) is a global festival organized by the Sriku-la Foundation under the leadership of Yuvraj Srivastava. Now in its third edition, KLF is held annually in Srinagar and brings together writers, poets, scholars, diplomats, and thinkers from across India and the world to celebrate the literary and cultural heritage of Jammu & Kashmir. For registration please visit www.kashmirliteraturefestival.com. Entry is free and open for students.

Nasha Mukht Abhiyaan sees widespread public support, intensified enforcement across J&K

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: The ongoing anti-drug campaign, 'Nasha Mukht JK Abhiyaan' has recorded remarkable achievements and impact across awareness generation, rehabilitation, law enforcement, treatment, surveillance and prevention initiatives, reflecting an unprecedented whole-of-government approach against the menace of substance abuse in Jammu and Kashmir.

As on today, the campaign has mobilized lakhs of citizens, strengthened institutional response mechanisms, intensified anti-narcotics operations and expanded rehabilitation support systems throughout J&K.

Under the Drug free J&K -100 days campaign, massive Public Outreach and Awareness Drives are being held across the length and breadth of Jammu and Kashmir.

As part of the extensive awareness and outreach campaign, authorities conducted an extraordinary 16,37,484 awareness events across Jammu & Kashmir, with a staggering public participation of over one crore people, indicating widespread community engagement and growing public support for the anti-drug movement.

The outreach programmes included Mega pad-yatras, road shows, school and college campaigns, village-level awareness drives, signature campaigns, community meetings, youth engagement activities, sports events, cultural events, seminars, counselling sessions, and social



media advocacy initiatives aimed at sensitizing society about the dangers of drug addiction.

Under this campaign, Mental Health and Counselling Support services have also been strengthened as through Tele-MANAS and Counselling Support initiative, around 3,572 calls were received from individuals seeking psychological support, counselling, and guidance related to mental health and substance abuse issues. Strengthening of accessible counselling services has become a critical pillar of the Administration's strategy to ensure early intervention and emotional support for vulnerable individuals and families affected by addiction.

Treatment and Rehabilitation Services have also been expanded across J&K. Addiction Treatment Facilities (ATFs) of Health department have reported substantial patient engagement during the campaign period. 58,603 patients were received at treatment facilities, with 58,138 patients availing OPD treatment services, 465 patients IPD intensive inpatient care, besides 192 patients were cured and released. Simultaneously, the

Social Welfare Department-operated DDAC Rehabilitation Centres provided Treatment and Rehabilitation Services to affected individuals. 634 patients received treatment support, 1,055 individuals underwent counselling sessions, 29 patients successfully recovered and 851 active patients continue to receive rehabilitation support in these centres.

Police department is also providing substantial Counselling and Rehabilitation Support services. Under Police run DDAC and counselling support initiatives, 451 patients were registered, 786 patients received counselling and 138 patients recovered successfully, besides 363 active cases remain under monitoring and rehabilitation support.

Under this ongoing campaign, an Aggressive Crackdown on Drug Networks has also been launched by the enforcement agencies. Police Department's NDPS operations witnessed extensive action against drug trafficking networks and peddlers across J&K.

During the ongoing campaign, 850 FIRs were registered under NDPS-related offences, 942 persons were arrested, 293 drug peddlers

were apprehended and 49 drug hotspots were identified for focused intervention.

The enforcement agencies have also intensified financial investigations against narcotics syndicates as authorities carried out major action against illegally acquired assets linked to drug traffickers.

As on date, 55 drug trafficker houses were sealed or demolished, 71 immovable properties were seized or attached valuing approximately ₹4,632.17 lakh, 34 immovable properties were demolished valuing around ₹1,648.50 lakh, besides 42 movable properties were seized or attached valuing around ₹214.93 lakh.

The campaign also targeted regulatory violations and logistical support systems associated with narcotics trafficking. 414 driving licences were suspended or cancelled, 13 vehicle RCs were cancelled, 118 drug store licences were suspended, 2 drug store licences were cancelled, besides 1,285 Aadhaar cancellation applications were processed and 119 passport impoundment applications were initiated.

During the ongoing campaign, Enforcement agencies achieved significant success in narcotics recovery operations. 6,416.070 grams and 8,019 milligrams of Heroin, 47,206 grams and 871 milligrams of Charas and 251,697 grams and 1,116 milligrams of Ganja were seized till date.

Moreover, 22,474 tablets were seized besides 65 kilograms of Poppy plants were destroyed and 47 kanals of poppy cultivation was also destroyed. These seizures have led to a major setback to narcotics supply chains operating in the region.

Under this campaign, Surveillance and Institutional Monitoring has also been enhanced. As part of preventive surveillance measures, 6,436 chemists were checked, 6,881 CCTV cameras were installed and 2,127 schools and hospitals were inspected.

These surveillance measures are aimed at preventing illegal drug circulation near educational institutions and sensitive public areas.

The Intelligence-Led Prevention measures have also been strengthened under the campaign, with 386 suspects examined, 3,045 drug peddlers and smugglers identified and 36 PIT-NDPS detentions carried out.

These intelligence-based operations are being continuously strengthened to dismantle organized narcotics networks and prevent inter-district and cross-border drug trafficking.

Remarkably, under the campaign significant number of Padyatras have also been organised, witnessing enormous public support and participation, to generate awareness among the masses about the impact of drug abuse on the society. Sports and co-curricular activities are also being held in educational institutions as well as from block and local levels to push youth towards sports for maintaining physical and mental health.

"Nasha Mukht JK Abhiyaan" is not merely an enforcement exercise but a comprehensive program aimed at protecting youth, strengthening families, and building a drug-free Jammu & Kashmir.

Declare 2026 as disaster year for J&K horticulture, agriculture: Sopore fruit mandi chief

BILAL DAR

SOPORE: Expressing alarm over fresh hailstorms, the president of Asia's second-largest fruit mandi in Sopore on Saturday called upon the Jammu and Kashmir government to declare 2026 a 'disaster year' for the horticulture and agriculture sectors, warning that thousands of growers face financial ruin without urgent relief.

Fayaz Ahmed Malik, president of the Sopore Fruit Mandi, told reporters that the horticulture sector sustains nearly 75 per cent of the region's population, with around 12.5 lakh families dependent on it.

He said hailstorms over the last 20-25 days have caused 100 per cent damage in Kulgam, Shopian, Kriari, Wangara, Tangbarak, Kundhar, Andargam and Lolipora. He added that parts of Bandipora, including Matarigam, Dardpora and Sumlar, along with several villages in Rupiabad, Zangem and Baram-



pore, have suffered up to 90 per cent crop loss.

Malik alleged that the weather-based crop insurance scheme, announced by the government, has not been implemented since March, leaving affected growers with no compensation.

He also demanded the rollout of the MIS scheme for C-grade apples and a waiver of Kisan Credit Card (KCC) loans up to Rs 3 lakh.

"In other states, farmer loans are waived before

elections, but that has not happened in J&K," Malik said, appealing to the Chief Minister, the Agriculture Minister and the central government to declare 2026 a disaster year.

He warned that marginal growers with 500 to 2,000 boxes are now debtors to banks and private lenders. "If compensation is not given, people may be forced to take extreme steps. Poor families are associated with this sector. They must get relief in any case," he added.

Director Census Operations J&K reviews Census-2027 preparations at JMC

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: A review meeting regarding the progress of Self Enumeration (SE) and preparations for the smooth conduct of Census-2027 was held Saturday in the conference hall of the Jammu Municipal Corporation under the chairmanship of Chief Principal Census Officer/Director Census Operations, J&K Amit Sharma.

The meeting was attended by Principal Census Officer-(JMC Commissioner) Dr. Devansh Yadav, besides all Census Charge Officers of the Jammu Municipal Corporation.

During the meeting, the Chief Principal Census Officer/Director Census Operations, J&K reviewed the overall progress achieved by JMC in connection with the preparations

for Census-2027 within the JMC jurisdiction and its outgrowth areas.

Detailed discussions were held regarding the implementation of Self Enumeration (SE), mapping of House Listing Blocks and other preparatory activities being undertaken by the charge officers.

The Chief Principal Census Officer-Director Census Operations expressed satisfaction over the efforts and preparedness displayed by the officers and officials of JMC for the successful conduct of Census-2027. He appreciated the coordination among various departments and emphasized the importance of timely completion of all census-related activities.

He further directed the officers of JMC to intensify the Self Enu-

meration process through extensive public awareness campaigns and wide publicity so that the maximum number of citizens may register themselves through the SE platform. Stress was also laid on ensuring accuracy and transparency during the census exercise.

During the meeting, several technical issues related to House Listing Blocks and overlapping of maps for Census-2027 were also discussed and resolved on the spot in consultation with the technical team of the Census Department, Government of India.

The meeting concluded with an assurance from all concerned officers to work in close coordination for ensuring the successful and smooth conduct of Census-2027 in Jammu city and adjoining outgrowth areas.

3rd Round of Mass PTMs Across Kashmir

DSEK Expresses Gratitude to Parents

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Expressing heartfelt gratitude to parents and the wider community for their overwhelming participation, Director School Education Kashmir, Naseer Ahmad Wani (JKAS), has lauded the remarkable success of the third round of Mass Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs) conducted across all schools in the Kashmir Division.

The Directorate of School Education Kashmir (DSEK) successfully organized the Valley-wide Mass PTMs, witnessing an unprecedented turnout of over 5 lakh 70 thousand stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers and community members.

Held in accordance with the academic calendar for the session 2026, a total of 6,892 PTM events were conducted simultaneously across the Valley. As per



official figures, participation included 3,32,173 students, 1,64,365 parents and 73,479 teachers and school heads, reflecting a deep-rooted commitment to collaborative educational progress.

The massive participation across all districts stands as a testament to the growing trust and synergy between educational institutions and the community. These meetings provided a vital platform for constructive dialogue, enabling parents and teachers to engage meaningfully on students' academic performance, behavioral development

and overall well-being. Special emphasis was also laid on the ongoing drug de-addiction campaign across Jammu & Kashmir, with schools conducting awareness sessions and discussions to sensitize parents and students about the dangers of substance abuse and the importance of preventive measures.

Senior functionaries, including Chief Education Officers (CEOs), actively participated in the meetings, personally interacting with parents, addressing their concerns and ensuring prompt redressal wherever possible.

J&K House Chanakyapuri gets modern VVIP makeover to ease dignitary stay in Delhi



GMK NEWS NETWORK

NEW DELHI: Jammu and Kashmir House at Chanakyapuri unveiled its newly redeveloped VVIP accommodation facilities on Friday, adding critical capacity to the Union Territory's hospitality infrastructure for the dignitaries visiting the national capital.

Resident Commissioner, J&K, Ramesh Kumar, inaugurated the modernized 4th floor of C-Block in presence of Additional Resident Commissioner Anil Kumar Sharma and senior officers of the Resident Commission.

The upgrade has come after the reorganization of the erstwhile State of

Jammu and Kashmir, when A and B Blocks were transferred to the Union Territory of Ladakh. That left J&K with only the ageing C-Block, sharply cutting accommodation for the visiting Ministers, MPs, senior civil and police officers, judicial officers and official delegations.

To address the gap, the administration undertook a comprehensive revamp of the 4th floor. The redesigned level now houses three suites including Pashmina, Hangul and Chinara and two VVIP rooms named as Tri-kuta and Saffron. These all have been built on contemporary hospitality standards for comfort, security and a professional environment.

JMC conducts special sanitation drive at Deeli Pond

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: As part of the ongoing CLEAN JAMMU GREEN JAMMU campaign launched by the Jammu Municipal Corporation, a special sanitation drive was conducted Saturday at Deeli area in Ward No. 55. The drive was undertaken by the Health and Sanitation Wing of JMC with the objective of improving sanitation standards, preserving water bodies and promoting environmental sustainability in the area.

During the drive, extensive cleaning operations were carried out inside the pond as well as in the adjoining surroundings. The sanitation workers removed accumulated waste, weeds, silt and other pollutants from the water body and nearby areas to restore cleanliness and improve the overall

environment. The drive also aimed at spreading awareness among the local residents regarding the importance of keeping water bodies clean and preventing the dumping of waste into ponds and drains. The wet waste collected was sent to Bandurakh for composting.

To encourage and boost the morale of the sanitation workers engaged in the operation, Dr. Devansh Yadav personally visited the site and reviewed the progress of the sanitation drive. He interacted with the workers and appreciated their dedicated efforts towards maintaining cleanliness and hygiene across Jammu city. The Commissioner also issued on-the-spot directions to the concerned officers to ensure regular cleaning and maintenance of ponds and other public spaces under the jurisdiction of the Corporation.

Sakeena Itoo inaugurates Primary School Satrajan Bangiward

Lays foundation stone for ACR building at GMS Bangiward

GMK NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo Saturday visited DH Pora Kulgam and inaugurated Primary School at Satrajan Bangiward.

She also laid foundation stone for construction of Additional Classroom (ACR) building at Government Middle School (GMS) Bangiward.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister reiterated the government's commitment towards upgrading educational institutions across Jammu and Kashmir, particularly in rural and far-flung areas. She emphasized that quality infrastructure is essential for creating a conducive atmosphere for effective teaching and learning. "Strengthening education sector and ensuring access to quality education in far-flung and underserved areas is what our Government strives for", she stated.

The Minister underlined that the educational infrastructure forms the backbone of social and economic progress and



the government is prioritizing the development of schools across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister said that the inauguration of the Primary School at Satrajan Bangiward will significantly benefit local students by providing better academic facilities closer to their homes, while the additional classroom block at MS Bangiward will help improve the overall learning environment and accommodate increasing student enrolment.

Emphasizing the importance of holistic educational development, she directed the concerned

officers to ensure timely completion of all ongoing educational projects and maintain high standards in implementation.

Later, the Minister held a massive Public Darbar at Bangiward, where people from various adjoining areas projected a range of public issues and developmental demands. Residents highlighted concerns related to road connectivity, drinking water supply, healthcare facilities, electricity, school infrastructure and other civic amenities.

Sakeena Itoo gave a patient hearing to the grievances and assured

the public that all genuine issues would be addressed in a phased and time-bound manner. She directed the concerned officers to take immediate action on pressing matters and ensure better public service delivery at the grassroots level.

The Minister emphasized that public outreach programmes and direct interaction with people are essential for responsive governance and help bridge the gap between the administration and the public. She added that the government remains committed to equitable development and inclusive progress across all regions.

During the interaction, several delegations and individuals also submitted memorandums highlighting local developmental requirements. The Minister assured them that their concerns would be examined on priority in coordination with the concerned departments.

Locals, parents and school staff appreciated the initiatives and expressed gratitude to the government for addressing the educational and infrastructural needs of the area.

Satish Sharma addresses NCC Cadets at SNIC 2026

Hails youth as pillars of national unity, progress

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Transport, Youth Services & Sports, Information Technology, ARI & Trainings, Satish Sharma, Saturday addressed a grand gathering of NCC cadets and Associate NCC Officers (ANOs) from across the country at the Special National Integration Camp (SNIC) 2026 organised at Badamibagh Cantonment, Srinagar.

The prestigious camp, being attended by nearly 340 NCC cadets representing all 17 NCC Directorates of the country, was attended by the young participants from diverse cultural, linguistic and geographical backgrounds on a common platform of unity, discipline, leadership and national integration. Senior civil and military dignitaries were also present on the occasion.

The programme commenced with a ceremonial Guard of Honour presented by NCC cadets, followed by a vibrant cultural programme showcasing the rich traditions, heritage and cultural diversity of various states and union territories of India. The colourful performances reflected the spirit of "Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat" and highlighted the role of youth in strengthening emotional and national integration.



Maj Gen Anupinder Bevl, VSM, Additional Director General, NCC Directorate Jammu, Kashmir & Ladakh, in his address, highlighted the significance of the Special National Integration Camp in promoting cultural exchange, mutual understanding and lifelong bonds of friendship among the youth. He also appreciated the support and cooperation extended by Chinar Corps, 31 Sub Area and 216 Transit Camp towards the successful conduct of the camp.

Addressing the cadets, Satish Sharma extended a warm welcome to all participants visiting Jammu & Kashmir and expressed happiness over the enthusiasm and discipline displayed by the young cadets. He said that the National Cadet Corps has emerged as one of the country's most influential youth organisations, playing a pivotal role in shaping responsible, patriotic and socially conscious citizens.

The Minister observed that camps such as SNIC provide a unique opportunity to young cadets to experience the cultural richness and diversity of India while fostering brotherhood, unity and national pride. He remarked that the youth are the true ambassadors of peace, progress and harmony and have a crucial responsibility in building a strong, prosperous and inclusive India.

Recalling his personal connection with the armed forces as the son of a soldier, Satish Sharma lauded the role of NCC in instilling values of discipline, dedication, leadership and selfless service among the younger generation. He said that the organisation continues to inspire lakhs of youth across the country to contribute positively towards society and nation-building.

The Minister urged the cadets to remain committed to the ideals of discipline, integrity and social responsibility and encouraged

them to become active participants in developmental and nation-building initiatives. He stressed that youth empowerment through sports, education, technology and skill development is essential for building a progressive and self-reliant nation.

Highlighting the growing menace of drug abuse among youth, Satish Sharma called upon the cadets to become ambassadors against drugs and spread awareness about healthy lifestyles, fitness and constructive social engagement. He said the discipline and leadership qualities imbibed through NCC can play a transformative role in guiding society towards a positive direction.

The Minister also appreciated the initiative of organising the "NCC Unity Run - Run with Pride, Run for India" scheduled to be held at Nishat on May 24, stating that such activities promote fitness, unity and patriotic spirit among the youth.

Interacting with the cadets, Satish Sharma appreciated the warm camaraderie and enthusiasm witnessed during the camp and commended the efforts of NCC authorities, Army personnel and organisers for providing meaningful exposure to the participants regarding the culture, heritage and scenic beauty of Jammu & Kashmir.

Javed Rana reviews implementation of Forest Rights Act in J&K

Calls for wider awareness on FRA, SC-ST Atrocities Act among tribal communities

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, Saturday chaired an exhaustive meeting to review implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister took a comprehensive review of the status of claims filed under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), functioning of various committees constituted under the Act and measures being taken for safeguarding the rights of tribal communities.

Emphasizing the need for greater public outreach, the Minister directed the concerned officers to intensify awareness campaigns among tribal communities regarding the provisions of the Forest Rights Act and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. He said that the eligible beneficiaries must be made fully aware of their legal and constitutional



rights so that they can avail the benefits guaranteed under the law.

The Minister also reviewed the nomination of members to Block, District and UT-level committees constituted under the Act. He stressed the need for timely nomination and effective functioning of these committees to ensure prompt disposal of claims and transparent implementation of the Act.

During the meeting, the Minister directed that all unattended claims be examined on priority and due action be taken strictly in accordance with the provisions of law. He reiterated that the objective of the Act is to protect the legitimate rights of forest dwellers and ensure justice to tribal communities.

The meeting was informed that Forest Rights Committees have

largely been constituted across the Union Territory and the implementation process is underway in different districts.

The Minister further directed that any step regarding eviction, wherever required, must strictly follow due procedures established under law and in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court. He said that the rights and dignity of tribal communities must be protected at all costs.

"The basic rights of tribal communities cannot be snatched and every action must remain within the framework of law and justice," the Minister asserted while reiterating the government's commitment towards safeguarding the rights and dignity of Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.

J&K govt enforces austerity measures, restricts official expenditure

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government has announced a series of austerity measures for the financial year 2026-27, including a ban on official dinners and restrictions on purchase of new vehicles, foreign travel and creation of posts, officials said on Saturday.

The measures were issued through Government Order No. 198-F of 2026 dated May 22 by the Finance Department as part of efforts to enforce fiscal discipline and rationalise expenditure.

According to the order, departments have been directed to avoid holding seminars, conferences and workshops outside the Union Territory unless unavoidable. Conducting official meetings and events in private hotels and commercial venues has also been prohibited, with departments asked to use government infrastructure instead.

The government has imposed a ban on official lunches, dinners, receptions and hospitality events,

except those hosted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Chief Minister.

Purchase of new government vehicles has also been restricted and will be allowed only in exceptional circumstances after approval from the Finance Department. Departments have been directed to ensure pooling and optimum use of existing vehicles to reduce fuel and maintenance expenses.

The order said foreign travel by officials would require specific approval from the Finance Department, while officers travelling within the country have been asked to travel in economy class irrespective of entitlement. Departments have also been advised to rely more on video conferencing to cut travel expenditure.

To reduce operational costs, departments have been instructed to minimise use of generators, air-conditioning systems, lighting and official vehicles. Offices have also been directed to reduce paper consumption and shift towards digital governance practices.

The Finance Department

has further barred hiring of new office spaces without prior approval and restricted procurement of furniture except for newly established offices. Old furniture and condemned vehicles are to be auctioned.

In another major decision, the government said no new posts would be created, while vacant posts lying unfilled for more than two years could be surrendered. Hiring of consultants, outsourcing agencies and contractual staff will also require prior approval and assessment of necessity.

The order also prohibits fresh financial commitments for schemes not included in the approved Budget Estimates for 2026-27 and restricts spending on non-priority works under the Capex Budget unless specifically cleared by the Finance Department.

Administrative Secretaries have been made responsible for ensuring compliance with the austerity measures, while Finance Directors and Financial Advisors have been asked to submit periodic reports to the Finance Department, officials said. (KNS).

Ravinder Raina Says BJP Has 'Concrete Proof' of Transfer Corruption



GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Senior BJP leader Ravinder Raina on Saturday alleged corruption in transfers and postings, claiming that his party possesses concrete evidence and that ministers were involved in the alleged malpractice.

Talking to reporters, Raina said the allegations were being made "with responsibility" and asserted that evidence could be produced if the government was willing to examine the matter.

"We have evidence of corruption in transfers. If the government wishes, we can produce evidence. We have concrete proof," Raina told reporters.

He further alleged that ministers were involved in the process and claimed

that money had allegedly been demanded or accepted in connection with transfers. "There is involvement of ministers. We are talking with responsibility," he said.

Raina said employees from whom money was allegedly demanded or taken, as well as those who allegedly paid money, could be produced before the Chief Minister if the government showed interest in investigating the claims.

"All the employees or evidence from whom money was taken or demanded or who gave money will be produced before the Chief Minister if he is interested," he said.

The BJP leader, however, did not publicly disclose names, documentary proof, or specific instances while speaking to reporters. [KNT]

CM not missing, he is human being who can go anywhere: Chowdry Ramzan

Hits out at opposition over 'fake cases', defends Abdullah

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Senior National Conference leader and Rajya Sabha member Choudhary Muhammad Ramzan on Saturday dismissed opposition charges that Chief Minister was "missing", asserting that he is a human being who can go anywhere.

Reacting to remarks by opposition leaders, Ramzan said, "Isn't the Chief Minister a human being? Can't he go anywhere? He was here all the time. If he goes somewhere for 2-3 days, why should we give a missing report?" He termed the opposition's statement as

unworthy of comment.

Defending NC president Dr Farooq Abdullah, Choudhary Ramzan hit out at the opposition over what he called "fake cases" and warned of land scrutiny against BJP leaders. Responding to a query regarding Leader of Opposition's claim that Abdullah's Jammu residence is on forest land, Ramzan said the NC president had bought the land himself 20-30 years ago.

"If scrutiny begins, thousands of canals of land will be exposed from Sunil Sharma and his party people," Ramzan said, claiming to have records from his two tenures as Forest Minis-

ter in 1987 and 1996. "I know everything... So don't talk too much. He is the best," he added.

On the demolition drive in Sidra area, the former Forest Minister termed the eviction of poor landless people a "heinous crime" and said the government is waiting for a probe report. He said minister Rana visited the spot and a committee has been formed.

"The government's job is not to demolish landless poor people. If someone has built illegally, the government didn't make them do it," Ramzan said, urging authorities to take action against the guilty. (KNS).

Javid Dar tours hailstorm hit Rafiabad, assures relief to affected farmers

GMK NEWS NETWORK

BARAMULLA: Amid growing concerns over weather-induced losses to the Horticulture and Agriculture sectors, Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar, on Saturday undertook an extensive tour of hailstorm-affected areas in Rafiabad constituency of Baramulla district to assess the damage caused to crops and orchards.

During the visit, the Minister conducted on-the-spot inspection of affected agricultural fields and orchards, where the standing crops and fruit-bearing plants have suffered exten-

sive damage following the recent hailstorm and inclement weather conditions. He interacted with the farmers, orchardists and local residents, who apprised him of the scale of losses incurred and sought immediate government intervention.

Expressing deep concern over the hardships faced by the farming community, Javid Dar assured the affected families that the government remains fully committed to support them during this challenging period. He said that all genuine cases of crop and orchard damage would be thoroughly assessed and relief measures extended in accordance with government norms.

"The welfare of farmers



remains the government's top priority. Every possible support will be provided to mitigate the losses suffered by the affected growers," the Minister said while interacting with locals.

He directed the officers of the Agriculture and Horticulture Departments to

immediately undertake a comprehensive field survey and submit a detailed assessment report at the earliest to facilitate timely compensation and relief measures.

The Minister also instructed the concerned departments to intensify

awareness campaigns among the farmers regarding modern crop protection measures, disaster mitigation practices and various government-sponsored schemes aimed at safeguarding the agricultural produce from weather-related calamities. He further stressed the need for ensuring maximum coverage of farmers under crop insurance schemes as per the prescribed guidelines.

Highlighting the increasing vulnerability of the agriculture sector to extreme weather events, Javid Ahmad Dar emphasized the importance of strengthening the crop protection infrastructure and improving disaster response mechanisms to minimise future losses.

Good Morning Kashmir

EDITORIAL

Rising Fuel Prices

For the third time in less than ten days, the numbers at the fuel pumps across Jammu and Kashmir have ticked upward. While to some it might just look like a minor adjustment on a digital screen, to the people living here, it feels like another heavy weight added to an already exhausting load. In Kashmir, fuel isn't just about keeping cars moving; it is the invisible thread that ties the entire local economy together. When petrol and diesel prices climb, the shockwaves are felt almost instantly, not just by drivers, but at kitchen tables, in local markets, and across farmlands. For the region's transport operators, the timing couldn't be worse. Right now, Kashmir is in the middle of its peak tourist season. Drivers who ferry visitors to the breathtaking vistas of Gulmarg, Pahalgam, and Sonamarg are watching their profit margins evaporate into their fuel tanks. There is a quiet anxiety among tourism-dependent businesses that higher travel costs might push visitors to cut their trips short, hurting a season everyone relies on to survive the winter. Meanwhile, out in the rural areas, farmers are stepping into their fields for the paddy sowing season. Tractors need diesel. Irrigation pumps need diesel. Market transport needs diesel. Against a backdrop of unpredictable weather and shrinking returns, this latest hike feels like another penalty for simply trying to grow food. The government point to rising international crude oil prices and ongoing tensions in West Asia as the culprits. But global geopolitics offer little comfort to a farmer wondering why a basket of vegetables or a bag of cement suddenly costs more than it did last week. Similarly, advice from New Delhi suggesting people switch to public transport or embrace work-from-home options doesn't quite fit the reality on the ground. In many parts of Kashmir, reliable public transport is a luxury, not a given. For thousands of people, relying on private vehicles or local shared cabs isn't a lifestyle choice—it's the only way to get to work, school, or a hospital. "Fuel price hikes may begin at oil depots, but their impact reaches every home."

With unemployment and economic uncertainty already weighing heavily on the region, this latest round of price increases has reignited a desperate plea for relief. There is a growing chorus calling on both the Central government and the Union Territory administration to step in—perhaps by slashing local taxes on fuel—to give transporters, farmers, and middle-class families some breathing room. At a time when the people of Kashmir are simply looking for a period of stability and a chance to build a secure future, these compounding costs are making the simple act of navigating everyday life feel like an uphill battle.

Qurbani With Wisdom

Protecting Faith, Law, And Communal Harmony On Eid-Ul-Azha



DR. REYAZ AHMAD

Eid-ul-Azha is one of the most meaningful occasions in the Islamic calendar. It is not merely a festival of food, gathering, and celebration; it is a spiritual reminder of sacrifice, obedience, humility, and compassion. The act of qurbani is connected with the great example of Prophet Ibrahim, peace be upon him, whose willingness to surrender before the command of Allah became a timeless lesson for humanity. Therefore, qurbani is not only about the animal that is sacrificed; it is about the intention, discipline, generosity, and moral transformation that the sacrifice should create within a believer.

However, in the present social and political context, especially in places where cow sacrifice has become a sensitive issue, Muslims need to approach Eid-ul-Azha with both faith and wisdom. A religious act should never become a cause of unnecessary conflict, legal difficulty, social tension, or communal misunderstanding. The real beauty of religion lies not only in performing rituals, but in performing them with responsibility, dignity, and awareness of the society in which we live.

In India, the question of cow slaughter is legally and emotionally sensitive. Laws related to cattle slaughter are not uniform across the country; they differ from state to state. Some states have strict bans, some allow slaughter under specific conditions, and some impose age, certification, or veterinary approval requirements. Recent reports around Eid-ul-Azha have also shown religious leaders advising people to follow government rules, avoid confrontation, and choose permissible alternatives such as goats or sheep where cattle sacrifice may create tension. (The Times of India)

This is where wisdom becomes essential. Islam has never made qurbani dependent on only one animal. Depending on local custom, affordability, and legal permission, qurbani may be performed through goats, sheep, cattle, buffaloes, or camels, provided



the animal fulfills the required religious conditions. International Islamic relief organizations also mention goats, sheep, cows, buffaloes, and camels among eligible qurbani animals, with emphasis on humane slaughter and proper distribution of meat. (Islamic Relief Worldwide) Therefore, when a particular animal becomes a source of legal or social dispute, choosing another permissible animal does not weaken faith; rather, it reflects maturity and understanding.

The central issue is not whether Muslims have the right to perform qurbani. The right to religious practice is important and must be respected. The real issue is how this right should be exercised in a diverse society where different communities have different sensitivities. A democratic society must protect religious freedom, but religious communities must also act with public responsibility. Rights and responsibilities must move together. If one is separated from the other, society becomes vulnerable to mistrust, provocation, and conflict.

Muslim scholars, community leaders, and educated citizens have an important role to play here. They should clearly communicate that the purpose of qurbani is not to challenge any community, provoke emotions, or display power. Its purpose is worship, charity, and obedience to Allah. If the same worship can be performed through a goat or sheep in a more peaceful way, then this option deserves serious consideration in sensitive areas. This is not surrender; it is wisdom. It is not fear; it is foresight. It is not compromise with faith; it is protection of faith from being dragged into avoidable controversy.

At the same time, governments and administrations must act with fair-

ness, transparency, and sensitivity. Law enforcement should not become selective or discriminatory. If there are legal restrictions, they should be communicated clearly before Eid, not used suddenly to create fear or confusion. Authorized slaughterhouses, veterinary certification processes, hygiene facilities, and public-order arrangements should be made accessible and practical. Peace cannot be created only by issuing prohibitions; it must be supported through proper planning and equal treatment.

The community also needs to reform certain practices that damage the dignity of qurbani. Public display of slaughter, careless disposal of waste, unhygienic surroundings, loud arguments, and provocative videos on social media all harm the image of Eid-ul-Azha. Islam teaches cleanliness, compassion, and dignity. A qurbani performed in a disorderly or provocative manner may technically fulfill a ritual, but it fails to reflect the higher moral spirit of Islam. The knife should not be sharper than our sense of responsibility.

Social media has made the issue even more sensitive. A single image, video, or careless caption can travel across communities within seconds and create anger, fear, or political exploitation. Therefore, one practical solution is to avoid posting slaughter-related visuals online. Eid should be shared through messages of compassion, charity, family bonding, and service to the poor. Let the world see the spiritual and humanitarian side of qurbani, not only its physical act.

Another important solution is community-level planning. Local mosques, scholars, welfare groups, and responsible citizens should create clear guide-

lines before Eid. These guidelines may include: follow local law, avoid disputed animals in sensitive areas, use authorized places, maintain hygiene, distribute meat respectfully, avoid public display, and prevent provocative online content. Such guidance should be delivered in Friday sermons, community meetings, WhatsApp groups, and local announcements. Prevention is always better than crisis management.

The deeper lesson of Eid-ul-Azha is sacrifice. But today, perhaps the sacrifice needed from us is not only the sacrifice of an animal. We may also need to sacrifice ego, stubbornness, anger, and the desire to prove a point. If choosing a goat instead of a cow can save a neighborhood from tension, protect young people from legal trouble, and preserve the dignity of a religious festival, then that choice itself becomes an act of wisdom.

A mature community is not one that reacts emotionally to every provocation. A mature community is one that knows when to stand firm, when to stay calm, and when to choose a lawful and peaceful alternative. The strength of faith is not measured by confrontation. It is measured by patience, discipline, and moral clarity.

Eid-ul-Azha should not become a season of fear, suspicion, or political exploitation. It should remain what it was meant to be: a festival of sacrifice, compassion, charity, and nearness to Allah. The poor should receive food, families should feel joy, neighbors should feel safe, and society should witness the beauty of responsible faith.

Therefore, the solution lies in a balanced path: protect the religious spirit of qurbani, respect the law of the land, understand the emotions of others, and act with wisdom. Where cow sacrifice is legally restricted or socially explosive, Muslims should choose other permissible animals. Where slaughter is allowed, it should be done lawfully, privately, hygienically, and respectfully.

The real message of Eid-ul-Azha is not to insist on an animal at the cost of peace. The real message is to submit to Allah with humility and to serve humanity with compassion. When qurbani is performed with wisdom, it does not divide society; it purifies hearts and strengthens harmony.

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BEYOND COMMERCIALISATION

Reclaiming Public Health As A Social Justice Imperative



DR. PRIYANKA SAURABH

In a vast and diverse country like India, public health is not just a question of medical care but also a matter of social justice, economic equality, and democratic accountability. A nation's progress is measured by the health status of its citizens. If large segments of society are deprived of treatment, medicines, nutrition, and primary health care, claims of economic development prove hollow. Unfortunately, over the past few decades, the health sector has been rapidly commercialised in many countries around the world, including India. Healthcare, which should have been fundamentally a human right, has gradually transformed into a profit-making industry. Private hospitals, expensive medicines, insurance-based treatments, and corporate medical systems have alienated ordinary citizens, especially the poor and rural communities, from healthcare. At this juncture, the role of the Indian state becomes crucial to strengthen the public health system and ensure its access to the grassroots.

The biggest problem in India's healthcare sector is inequality. While metropolitan cities have state-of-the-art hospitals and super-specialty facilities, even primary health centres in remote rural areas lack adequate doctors, medicines, and equipment. According to the World Health Organization, the availability and accessibility of healthcare is a primary responsibility of any democratic state. However, in India, millions of people are unable to access treatment solely due to financial constraints. The cost of private hospitals is so high that a serious illness can push an

entire family into poverty. National Health Accounts reports indicate that out-of-pocket expenditure on healthcare in India remains very high. This means that people have to pay a significant portion of their treatment costs out of their own pockets. This is the most dangerous consequence of marketisation.

To expand public health services, the state must first strengthen the primary health care system. Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and Community Health Centers (CHCs) are considered the backbone of the health system in India's villages and small towns. However, most centres face problems such as a shortage of doctors, lack of medicines, poor buildings, and inadequate equipment. The government should substantially increase the health budget and equip these institutions with modern facilities. Every primary health center should be mandated to have a regular doctor, trained nurses, lab facilities, and essential medicines. If primary health care becomes easier to diagnose and treat, it will reduce pressure on larger hospitals and prevent poor people from migrating to cities.

Additionally, decentralisation of health services is essential. Relying solely on district hospitals poses significant challenges for people in remote areas. State governments should expand health services down to the Panchayat level. Strengthening ASHA workers, Anganwadi services, and community health volunteers can promote health awareness and primary care in rural areas. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the crucial role of locally trained health workers. If these workers are provided with better training, respectable salaries, and resources, they can play a significant role in delivering health services to every household.

The use of technology in the health sector can also be an effective means of increasing access at the grassroots level. Systems like telemedicine, mobile health units, and digital health records can help



provide specialised services in remote areas. India has many villages where specialist doctors are difficult to reach. Online consultations and digital diagnostic services can play a vital role in such areas. However, technology must be developed as a complementary medium, not a substitute for human contact. Digital health services require the presence of local health workers so that even people with low literacy can benefit from these services.

Affordable and universal drug availability is also an essential aspect of public health expansion. Drug prices in the private market are constantly rising. The state should expand Jan Aushadhi Kendras and effectively implement the price-control policy for essential medicines. Availability of free or very affordable medicines for the poor and lower middle class can play a significant role in reducing health inequalities. Essential diagnostic facilities and medicines should also be made available free of charge in government hospitals so that people do not have to rely on private laboratories and medical stores.

Lack of human resources is also a major challenge for expanding healthcare services in India. Rural areas face a severe shortage of doctors and specialists, as most physicians prefer to work in urban areas. To address this problem, the government should develop policies that encourage rural service. Making rural service mandatory for medical

students, providing better salaries, housing, and security facilities, and providing opportunities for local youth in medical education could be useful steps. Training doctors and health workers from the local community in rural areas would enhance both the sustainability and reliability of healthcare services.

Preventive health care must also be prioritised in the public health sector. India's health system still focuses heavily on post-disease treatment, while investment in areas such as sanitation, nutrition, vaccination, and health education remains relatively low. If states strengthen programmes such as clean drinking water, nutrition programmes, mental health awareness, and regular health checkups, many diseases can be prevented at an early stage. This will not only improve public health but also reduce the financial burden on the health system.

The state must also play an active role in regulating the private health sector. Exorbitant fees, unnecessary testing, and commercial exploitation by private hospitals have become commonplace. Patients' helplessness is often exploited as a means to profit. The government must develop a robust regulatory framework that monitors treatment fees, drug prices, and medical ethics. Leaving healthcare solely to the market would be an abdication of the democratic state's responsibility.

It is also important to increase the effectiveness of health insurance schemes. Schemes like Ayushman Bharat have provided relief to poor families, but a large number of people remain outside their reach. Insurance schemes often limit hospital-based treatment to primary health services, and primary health services are underserved. The state must ensure that health insurance schemes cover not only treatment but also prevention, nutrition, and primary care.

Additionally, public-private partnerships in the health sector must be balanced and transparent. While leveraging private sector expertise and resources can be beneficial, public interest must remain paramount. If profit-making becomes the primary objective, the poor and vulnerable will once again be marginalised. Therefore, the government must formulate policies that focus on social responsibility and equitable access.

Ultimately, public health is a fundamental responsibility of any democratic society. It cannot be allowed to become a commodity of the market. Expanding healthcare services in India is not simply a question of increasing the number of hospitals but rather a matter of social justice, equal opportunity, and protecting human dignity. The state must increase investment in the health sector, strengthen the primary health infrastructure, make balanced use of technology and human resources, and establish effective controls on uncontrolled private sector marketisation.

If India truly wants to become an inclusive and developed nation, it must recognise that healthy citizens are the greatest asset of any strong democracy. Strengthening the public health system is not just a government responsibility but also a national responsibility towards future generations.

(Dr. Priyanka Saurabh, PhD (Political Science), is a poet and social thinker.)

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■ From Charity To Justice

Why We Need A Convention On The Rights Of Older Persons

BOBBY RAMAKANT

We are living in an age of ageing with a fast-growing number of older people. Life expectancy has increased significantly over the past years. Japan has nearly 100,000 people aged 100 or older - the highest in the world, with women comprising roughly 88% of this population. By 2050 the population of persons above 60 years of age is projected to grow to 2.1 billion (nearly one fifth of the total global population).

"The rights of older people have been neglected for long. At best they are treated as recipients of charity, rather than as an asset to society. From my lived experience, I would like to reaffirm that we, the so-called elderly persons, are not asking for mercy. We are asking for our long overdue rights. We need to be recognised - not as burdens, but as rights holders and as vital contributors to families, communities, economies and public life. We do not need shelter homes but the right to live a fulfilling life," said Shobha Shukla, founder leader of Development Justice for Older Persons (DJ4OP) and host of SHE & Rights.

It is heartening to see that finally the UN has woken up to this reality and started the process to draft a legally binding UN treaty to protect human rights of older persons (formally called the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons). Shobha Shukla was one of those with lived experience when drafting of legally binding treaty began earlier this year.

This legally binding treaty would outlaw prejudices - based explicitly on chronological age - in law, employment, and society; guarantee older adults the right to make independent decisions regarding their care and life choices; establish enforceable legal frameworks to protect older individuals from physical, emotional, and financial exploitation; ensure equitable, high-quality, and affordable physical and mental healthcare; and protect access to pensions, financial security, and inclusion in community life.

Meanwhile, the UN Human Rights Council has established an intergovernmental working group (IGWG) to draft this new international treaty.

While opening the intergovernmental working group meet in Geneva earlier this year, Nada Al-Nashif, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, who is a senior citizen herself, had said that "meaningful participation is essential. Older persons themselves - in all their diversity, including older women, older persons with disabilities, those belonging to indigenous peoples, minorities and rural communities - must be actively engaged in this process. Civil society organisations, national human rights institutions and independent experts bring indispensable experience, data and insight. An inclusive and transparent process will strengthen both the legitimacy and the quality of the



outcome."

The first session of this intergovernmental working group is slated to be held from 13 to 17 July 2026 in Geneva.

Decade of healthy ageing

The UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2020-2030), is another global collaboration led by the WHO to improve the lives of older persons. In fact one of the agendas at the ongoing global meet of health ministers (formally called as the 79th World Health Assembly - WHA79 or WHA 2026) was a report on the Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020-2030.

The WHO Global Network for Age Friendly Cities and Communities too demonstrates strong global commitment to improving environments that help support older people be and do what they value.

A special SHE & Rights session at Women Deliver Conference 2026 in Australia focussed on the issues related to achieving the human rights of older persons, with a focus on women, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised and vulnerable communities - with life-cycle approach.

"Ageism is one big elephant in the room. It includes harmful norms, stereotypes, narratives and tropes against older persons. It affects women more than men; less educated more than better educated. To be a gender diverse person or a woman or one with disability and to be elderly is double trouble in many countries including India, more so if you stand up against ageism and do not fit into the norm. Subtle nuances of ageism abound in every nook and corner and lurk where you least expect them - homes, society at large, workplace, industry, health-care facilities, media... the list is endless", said Shobha Shukla, leader of Development Justice for Older Persons (DJ4OP).

In Argentina, social protection for older persons is fragile as often

lacks optimal resources especially for healthcare, said Dr Mabel Bianco, a noted feminist leader and founder, Foundation for Studies and Research on Women (FEIM) and 2024 Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, International Federation of Ageing (IFA). Dr Mabel agrees with Shobha Shukla that harmful stereotypes like ageism blocks access of older persons to sexual health services.

Dr Pam Rajput, Emeritus Professor, Panjab University, India, and former Chairperson of Government of India's High-Level Committee on the Status of Women, shared her personal testimony of duty travels when she, being a senior citizen herself, needs to travel via airplanes. One question she is frequently asked is 'if she is travelling alone,' which stinks of harmful stereotypes. Why is it difficult for people to comprehend that older persons, especially women, may also travel for work? Unless we normalise economic rights along with gender, social and cultural rights of older persons especially women, we would not be able to address ageism and the challenge which population ageing poses.

In Indonesia, around 12% of population is of older persons (~35 million). By 2045, ~20% of Indonesian population is expected to be of older persons. This means that protecting the rights, health and dignity of older persons is not a 'future concern' but a present responsibility. Persons with disabilities are twice as likely to face health problems", said Dr Imran Pambudi, Director of Vulnerable Groups Health Services, Ministry of Health, Indonesia.

According to Rita Widiadana, a senior citizen as well as a senior journalist and editor from Indonesia, "It can be challenging to live as elder persons in Indonesia. For most women over 60, the challenges are even harder. The society and the media as well, often associate older men with

wisdom and rich experience, but elderly women are persistently portrayed as caregiver who are vulnerable and frail rather than independent and empowered individuals (and with wisdom and rich experience too)."

"It is unfortunate that media depiction of elderly women negatively affects societal perceptions that contribute to various discriminations in families, in the workplace and in daily life. It is high time for us to recognise their social and economic contributions that they make to their families, communities and to be included in a large variety of national development programme," added Rita Widiadana, former Editor of The Jakarta Post and Board Member of Asia Pacific Media Alliance for Health, Gender and Development Justice (APCAT Media). Rita is also on advisory board of Development Justice for Older Persons (DJ4OP).

Word 'retired' reeks of ageism

"At the workplace, there is the age-related archaic retirement system - the word 'retired' itself reeks of ageism. One does not retire (except perhaps when she/he/they is perpetually bedridden) as long as one lives. Yes, we do change our path and move in new directions. Instead, there must be support systems in place to ensure that older persons can make a choice with dignity and rights if they want to work or not, and age with rights," said Shobha Shukla.

Development justice needs to be a life course justice

Margaret Young, Founder of Age Knowle, and past Chair, Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP) said that "Development justice is strongest when older persons are recognised, included, and empowered. We speak often of gender justice, youth opportunity, and equity. Every young person is moving through the life course. Every girl may one day become an older woman. That means the rights of older women are not

It is heartening to see that finally the UN has woken up to this reality and started the process to draft a legally binding UN treaty to protect human rights of older persons (formally called the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons). Shobha Shukla was one of those with lived experience when drafting of legally binding treaty began earlier this year.

separate from the rights of younger women. They are part of the same life course story. Advancing the rights of older women, strengthens gender justice across the life course. Development justice also needs to be life course justice. Many inequalities accumulate across life and become sharper in older age. Lower earnings, unpaid care, widowhood, violence, isolation, and barriers to health and participation."

Longevity is one of humanity's greatest achievements. Yet the promise of longer life is too often accompanied by gaps in the protection of human rights. Instead of celebrating older age most people fear it and ageism fuels this fear.

"We, the older people, have to make sure that the lived realities of old age are adequately reflected in the proposed human rights framework. Ageism and gender inequality must end with us," concluded Shobha Shukla.

(Bobby Ramakant is a World Health Organization Director General's WNTD Awardee 2008. He is on the boards of Corporate Accountability, Global AMR Media Alliance (GAMA) and APCAT Media. Follow him on X: @bobbyramakant)

■ Shell Shocked

Why World Turtle Day Is More Than A Date On The Calendar

DR. VINOD DIXIT

To raise awareness about turtles and tortoises, their conservation needs, and the serious threats they face, we observe World Turtle Day every year on May 23rd. The day celebrates the beauty, diversity, and vital ecological roles these reptiles play in ecosystems worldwide. More importantly, it serves as a global call to action, urging individuals, organizations, and governments to step up and support conservation efforts.

World Turtle Day was founded in 2000 by American Tortoise Rescue, a California-based non-profit created by Susan Tellem and Marshall Thompson. The organization works to rescue, rehabilitate, and protect turtles and tortoises from abuse, illegal trade, and habitat loss. The day was launched to highlight how human activity, pollution, and environmental hazards have caused sharp declines in their populations. Each year on May 23rd, schools, wildlife rescue centers, zoos, and nature enthusiasts come together to educate communities, share research, and pledge to protect these remarkable animals.

Turtles and tortoises belong to the order Testudines, one of the oldest reptile groups on Earth. They have roamed the planet for over 200 million years, long before snakes,

Tortoises are land-dwellers with large, domed shells and sturdy, elephant-like legs. They are herbivores and some species are among the longest-living animals on Earth — with verified lifespans of 150–190 years. Claims of 300 years are myths, but their longevity is still extraordinary.

crocodiles, or alligators appeared. They survived the age of dinosaurs and multiple mass extinctions. This ancient lineage makes their conservation not just important, but urgent. If we lose them, we lose a living connection to Earth's deep past.



World Turtle Day also emphasizes the role of scientific research and sustainable habitat management. Many turtle species depend on wetlands, ecosystems that are among the most biodiverse yet most threatened on the planet. Wetlands are disappearing three times faster than forests due to drainage, pollution, and development. Protecting species like the European pond turtle *Emys orbicularis* means protecting the marshes, rivers, and coastal zones that support thousands of other plants and animals too.

Understanding the difference between turtles and tortoises is key to protecting them. While the terms are often used interchangeably, they are distinct animals with different needs.

Turtles generally live in water or split time between land and water. They have flatter, streamlined shells and webbed feet or flippers for swimming. Most species live 40–80 years, though sea turtles can live longer. Tortoises are land-dwellers with large, domed shells and sturdy, elephant-like legs. They are herbivores and some species are among the longest-living animals on Earth — with verified lifespans of 150–190 years. Claims of 300 years are myths, but their longevity is still extraordinary.

The size range is equally remarkable. The speckled padloper tortoise measures just 3–4 inches, while the leatherback sea turtle can exceed 7 feet in length and weigh over 2,000 pounds.

Turtles inhabit oceans, rivers, and lakes across every continent except Antarctica. Tortoises prefer grasslands, deserts, scrub forests, and tropical islands.

Today, over half of all turtle and tortoise species are threatened with extinction. Habitat destruction, climate change, plastic pollution, illegal pet trade, and fishing bycatch are driving their decline. Because they grow slowly and reproduce late, their populations cannot recover quickly from losses.

World Turtle Day is more than a date on the calendar. It's a reminder that these quiet, ancient creatures have watched continents drift and climates shift, but they may not survive us without help. Each of us can act: cut down on single-use plastics, never purchase wild-caught turtles or tortoises, support wetland and beach conservation, volunteer with rescue groups, and teach children to respect wildlife. When we protect turtles and tortoises, we safeguard oceans, rivers, forests, and grasslands, and all the species that share those habitats. Their slow, steady pace carries a powerful message: conservation cannot wait. The choices we make today will decide whether these living fossils remain for our grandchildren to witness and wonder at. Let World Turtle Day be the start of that commitment.

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Millions Across J&K

Lives of our children, thousands of smugglers and narco-terrorists have built their own dark fiefdoms. He said each brick of that sordid realm is being pulled down. The cup of suffering borne by the people at the hands of drug smugglers has overflowed; their collective cry of "no more" has risen into an unstoppable roar. He further stated that every drug sold in our towns and villages is like a bullet pressed against the chest of the people.

"Wherever drug smugglers and drug traffickers take root, their first victims are our youth. I know that many parents across Jammu Kashmir live under this shadow of fear, constantly worried that their family could be the next target. We must banish that fear completely and ensure safety for every household in the Union Territory," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor also highlighted that more than 7,000 women's committees have been formed in Jammu Kashmir and it is now the administration's duty to empower these committees and ensure they can work effectively. In the past 43 days, 797 FIRs have been registered and 894 drug smugglers and peddlers have been sent behind bars. 59 traffickers have been arrested under PIT-NDPS provisions. 81 narcotic palaces built with the traffickers' black money have been demolished. 101 immovable properties have been attached and seized. Other assets worth crores have been attached. 457 driving licenses have been suspended. Recommendations have been made to cancel passports of 22 smugglers and to cancel registrations of 606 vehicles. Large quantities of drugs have been seized. About 5,641 drug stores were inspected; licenses of 268 stores were suspended or cancelled, and FIRs filed against 6 drug stores.

A comprehensive rehabilitation policy is also being prepared. The Lieutenant Governor said that our aim is not only to free addicted youth through de-addiction programs but also to reintegrate them into the mainstream by providing employment and jobs.

Third Fuel Price Hike

for work-from-home arrangements wherever possible to help reduce India's oil import burden and pressure on foreign exchange reserves.

Fuel prices continue to differ across states depending on local taxes and levies imposed by respective governments. The latest increase is likely to renew demands for tax relief on petrol and diesel as consumers face growing financial pressure amid inflationary trends.

Mecca Welcomes Over 1.6

and the expected rush of pilgrims during the annual gathering.(KNS)

36 Crore SVEP

Khur-Paragwal, Pouni-Reasi and Bhadarwah-Bhalla—where over 12,000 enterprises are projected to be established over the next four years.

The meeting was attended by Mission Director, JKRLM, Dr. Shubhra Sharma; Chief Operating Officer, HIMAYAT, Rajneesh Gupta; besides representatives from the Forest, Ecology & Environment Department, Tribal Affairs Department, Social Welfare Department, Handicrafts & Handloom Department, Industries & Commerce Department, MSME, KVIC, NABARD, RSETIs, Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII) and other stakeholder institutions.

Officials informed the committee that Jammu & Kashmir has been implementing SVEP since 2015-16 with technical support from National Resource Organisation (NRO) partners, including EDII. The programme initially commenced in the pilot blocks of Lar in Ganderbal district and Basohli in Kathua district, where nearly 2,500 entrepreneurs were established during the first phase.

With the approval of the six new DPRs, SVEP coverage in Jammu & Kashmir will now expand from eight to 14 districts.

The Secretary stated that the newly approved DPRs focus on promoting innovative rural enterprises aligned with local resources and market demand. He highlighted sectors identified for intervention, including walnut oil and butter extraction, sheep wool processing, trout fish processing, village and border homestay eco-tourism, vermi-compost production, saffron value addition, herbal tea processing, amla-based products, and honey processing with value addition and packaging.

Emphasising the need for scientific identification of viable enterprises, Aijaz Asad stressed that enterprise selection should be guided by local demand patterns, consumption trends and rural spending behaviour.

He directed officials to prioritise economically sustainable enterprises supported by robust market linkages and value-addition opportunities to ensure long-term livelihood generation for rural youth and women.

The Secretary also underscored the importance of strengthening entrepreneurship training, capacity building and monitoring mechanisms for effective implementation of the approved projects. He stated that entrepreneurship development should be decentralised to the village level through community-based training modules and Training of Trainers (ToT) programmes.

Calling for stronger inter-departmental convergence, he directed stakeholders to ensure timely execution and rigorous monitoring so that maximum benefits reach aspiring rural entrepreneurs across Jammu and Kashmir.

Data presented during the meeting revealed that non-farm livelihood initiatives in Jammu & Kashmir have so far supported 26,551 enterprises, including 26,217 individual enterprises and 355 group enterprises under NRLM and SVEP.

SVEP is a sub-scheme under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana—National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, aimed at promoting non-farm entrepreneurship among Self-Help Group (SHG) members and their families in rural areas.

Jammu–Srinagar Vande

figure is not merely a statistic, but a reflection of our commitment to providing world-class rail infrastructure and services to the people of Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

Singhal added that passengers have responded positively to the train's comfort, hospitality, safety standards and travel efficiency, significantly reducing the fatigue traditionally associated with the Jammu–Srinagar journey.

"Our priority remains maintaining the highest standards of punctuality, cleanliness and passenger safety. We sincerely thank the people for making this service a success in such a short period," he added.

Officials said the Vande Bharat Express has not only strengthened year-round connectivity between the Kashmir Valley and the rest of the country, but has also given a major boost to tourism and trade in the region.

Improved rail connectivity is expected to facilitate faster transportation of Kashmir's apple produce and handicrafts to markets across India, benefiting local industries and businesses.

The successful operation of the Jammu–Srinagar Vande Bharat is being hailed as the realization of a long-cherished dream of establishing a reliable all-weather rail link connecting the Valley with the national railway network.

CS Reviews Transport

Annual Action Plans regarding implementation of SCCoRS recommendations in their respective districts. He also called for fixing responsibility in the recent Udhampur accident and directed the concerned authorities to furnish detailed accident reports from each district for proper analysis and corrective interventions.

Reviewing the implementation of the hit-and-run compensation mechanism, the Chief Secretary sought detailed action taken reports in all such cases and stressed upon ensuring timely disposal and assistance to affected families.

While reviewing the functioning of the e-Challan system, the Chief Secretary directed the concerned departments to immediately identify and address all bottlenecks hindering its successful implementation. He emphasized that technology-driven enforcement must be made fully effective to ensure greater transparency, accountability and compliance with traffic regulations.

The Chief Secretary also directed the authorities to explore the feasibility of creating a separate fund head within the Public Works Department (PWD) for rectification of accident-prone blackspots and hotspots across the road network.

He further stressed that executing agencies including BRO, NHAI and NHIDCL should also earmark dedicated resources for roads being maintained by them to undertake corrective measures in a mission-mode. He also emphasized development of passenger zones and designated stopping areas wherever feasible for ensuring safer public transport operations.

Taking serious note of traffic congestion caused by encroachments in urban areas, the Chief Secretary directed the Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) and Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) to intensify anti-encroachment drives in the twin cities for smooth traffic movement and better pedestrian safety.

The meeting also reviewed safety measures concerning school transportation. The Chief Secretary directed for conducting a comprehensive audit of school buses to ensure strict adherence to prescribed safety norms and operational standards.

Reviewing the status of trauma care facilities in the UT, the Chief Secretary directed the Commissioner Secretary, Health Department to examine the upgradation of services in Government Medical Colleges for establishment of robust trauma and critical care systems.

He stressed that specialized services including Orthopaedics, Neurosurgery and Anaesthesia should remain available round the clock in these institutions. He further directed the department to submit a suitable proposal in this regard besides ensuring time-bound completion of all Critical Care Blocks being established across J&K.

With regard to implementation of the e-DAR and e-Court portals, the Chief Secretary directed the Information Technology Department to take up the matter with Director General, NIC and Secretary, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) for making these systems operational in Jammu and Kashmir on the pattern of Delhi and Karnataka, considering the significant number of road accidents reported in the Union Territory.

Emphasizing the importance of scientific road safety management, the Chief Secretary also directed for extensive training of stakeholders under the i-RAD system and called for comprehensive auditing of roads across Jammu and Kashmir to identify deficiencies and undertake timely remedial measures.

The Secretary, Transport Department, Avny Lavasa apprised the meeting that the J&K Road

Safety Policy-2025 had already been notified and a detailed Road Safety Action Plan Matrix formulated with clearly defined timelines and responsibilities for various departments.

She added that the action plan envisages interventions including black spot rectification, strengthening of traffic control systems, road safety audits, bus route restructuring, parking policy implementation, installation of crash barriers and scientific traffic calming measures.

The meeting was further apprised that district-level road safety committees have significantly intensified their functioning, with the number of meetings rising from 18 held till March this year to 35 meetings conducted by mid-May across districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Transport Commissioner, Vishesh Paul highlighted that under the Road Accident Victim Fund, an amount of Rs 1226.10 lakh had been received so far, out of which Rs 1218.10 lakh was released to districts for providing timely assistance to accident victims and their families.

He further informed that under the hit-and-run compensation mechanism, financial assistance is being extended in accordance with Government of India guidelines and cases are being regularly monitored by district administrations.

Reviewing enforcement measures, the department informed that e-Challan systems integrated with Instant Payment Gateway (IPG) had been implemented across the Union Territory, enabling fully digital enforcement by the Motor Vehicles Department and Traffic Police.

The meeting was informed that enforcement activities by the Motor Vehicles Department had witnessed a substantial increase over the past three years, including seizure of vehicles, suspension of driving licences, blacklisting of vehicles, cancellation of registration certificates and cancellation of route permits against violators.

The Chief Secretary also reviewed the operational status of Integrated Traffic Management Systems (ITMS) in Jammu and Srinagar. The meeting was informed that all ITMS equipment in Jammu had become fully operational since June 2024, while Srinagar ITMS was functioning successfully after rectification of initial technical issues. Hundreds of cameras including ANPR, RLVD, PTZ and surveillance cameras have been installed under these systems to strengthen electronic monitoring and automated enforcement.

It was further informed that over 5.34 lakh challans had been issued through ITMS Jammu since June 2024, while more than 60,000 challans had been generated through Srinagar ITMS since December 2024, resulting in substantial fine realization and improved enforcement coverage.

The meeting also discussed capacity-building initiatives undertaken under the i-RAD programme. The department informed that extensive training programmes had been conducted for stakeholders from Police, Health and Public Works departments to ensure timely and accurate data entry on the i-RAD portal for better accident analysis and future planning.

Reiterating the commitment towards safer roads and efficient mobility, the Chief Secretary called for close coordination among all departments and agencies to ensure effective implementation of road safety initiatives and reduction in accident fatalities across the Union Territory.

'Hailstorms Damage

22, Kaka Ji said orchards in Rafiabab and Zaingeer areas including Bohripora, Chitloora, Hib Dangerpora, Lasser, Yarbugh, Watergam, Behrampora, Arampora Sopore, Seloo and Warpora were severely affected. He added that Hadipora and Rohama villages also reported damage.

He said growers have repeatedly appealed to the government for implementation of a crop insurance scheme, but no concrete action has been taken so far.

"If the crop insurance scheme had been implemented in March, the affected growers would have received compensation by now. We have been demanding it time and again," he said.

Fresh spells of intense hailstorms and strong winds have wreaked havoc across major horticulture belts of Kashmir, causing extensive damage to fruit orchards in north and south Kashmir and pushing thousands of orchardists deeper into financial distress.

The latest hailstorm, which struck on Friday evening, lashed several villages of Sopore and Rafiabab in Baramulla district, besides parts of Tral in south Kashmir's Pulwama district and some areas of Shopian, leaving behind scenes of devastation in orchards considered the backbone of the Valley's rural economy.

The growers said that the hailstorm continued for several minutes with such intensity that developing apples began falling from trees instantly, while fruit-bearing branches suffered severe damage at a crucial stage of the fruit season.

The worst-hit areas in Rafiabab included Watergam, Lassar, Dandiwacha, Dandoosa, Hadipora and adjoining villages, where orchards turned white under heavy hail accumulation. Similar damage was reported from several horticulture zones of Sopore, Bandipora and parts of Central Kashmir's Ganderbal district.

This was the third major hailstorm to hit many of these districts in recent weeks and the second consecutive spell to batter Rafiabab, compounding the losses already caused by severe weather on April 18 and May 12 this year.

Fruit growers said the repeated weather disasters have shattered hopes for this season's harvest and created panic among thousands

of families solely dependent on horticulture for survival.

"We had already suffered huge losses earlier this month, and now whatever was left has also been destroyed. Months of hard work and heavy investment vanished within minutes," said an orchardist from Watergam.

Another grower from Sopore said the continuous hailstorms have made survival difficult for marginal orchardists who rely entirely on income generated from apple orchards to manage household expenses, the education of children and repayment of bank loans.

Earlier this week, several other horticulture belts of Baramulla district, including Sangrama, Wagura, Kreeri, Pattan, Kandi and Tangmarg, had also witnessed widespread destruction in orchards following severe hailstorms accompanied by gusty winds.

The repeated damage has triggered growing concern among horticulturists and traders, who warned that the fragile rural economy of Kashmir could face serious consequences if immediate relief measures are not taken.

The Kashmir Valley Fruit Growers Cum Dealers Union, an elected umbrella body representing fruit growers' associations across the Valley, strongly condemned what it termed as the government's "slow response" in assessing the losses suffered by orchardists.

The union said that despite massive destruction caused by hailstorms and storms during April and May, official teams had yet to conduct comprehensive damage assessments in many affected areas across Kashmir.

The growers' body stated that horticulture remains the backbone of Jammu and Kashmir's economy, with lakhs of people directly or indirectly dependent on the sector for livelihood and employment. However, repeated natural calamities coupled with the absence of a Crop Insurance Scheme and Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) are pushing orchardists into mounting debt.

The union emphasised that nearly 90 per cent of fruit growers in Kashmir are marginal orchardists who depend entirely on seasonal earnings from orchards to sustain their families.

"Whenever orchards are damaged due to natural disasters, these poor growers face severe hardships with no financial security mechanism available," the union said in a statement.

The growers reiterated their long-pending demand for inclusion of Kashmir's horticulture sector under a comprehensive Crop Insurance Scheme so that growers receive financial assistance during natural calamities. It also sought immediate restoration of the Market Intervention Scheme to safeguard growers from economic collapse during crises.

The union appealed to Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to announce a substantial compensation package for orchardists affected by the devastating hailstorms of April and May 2026.

Growers warned that if timely intervention is not made, repeated weather-related disasters may severely impact Kashmir's horticulture industry, which contributes significantly to the region's economy and employment sector—(KNO)

Encounter Underway

along with Jammu and Kashmir Police and CRPF. Troops responded swiftly with calibrated action. Firefight ensued and a cordon has been effectively established. Operations remain underway."

Security forces have intensified multi-agency search operations in the dense and mountainous terrain of Rajouri and neighbouring Poonch districts, which have witnessed a surge in counter-terror activities in recent years.

Earlier this month, a massive search operation was launched across more than 15 locations in Rajouri and Poonch following a foiled infiltration bid along the Line of Control in the Mankote and Krishna Ghati sectors, where an infiltrator was killed.

In March this year, joint forces carried out multiple combing operations in Rajouri's Khandli and Palma areas as well as parts of Poonch following reports of suspicious movement.

The twin districts have also seen several encounters in recent years, including operations in 2025 in the Bananhab and Piranhal areas, and a successful anti-terror operation in the Bajmaal forest that neutralised highly trained terrorists.

Security forces continue to maintain a high state of alert in the region as operations remain in progress—(KNO)

Short-Term Power

thermal energy and 2673.1 MWs were from renewable energy.

It also said that out of the total allocated energy, the regions were utilizing 95.13 MWs of nuclear and 1115.88 MWs of hydel energy.

The figures also reveal that Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh in the month of January-2026 were relying on nearly 66 per cent of imported power.

Pertinently, as already reported by this news agency Jammu and Kashmir was importing more than 95 per cent of its electricity in the month of December.

The officials earlier in the month had informed that Jammu and Kashmir is importing electricity ranging from 2900 MWs to 3100 MWs during the peak hours—(KNO)

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PSA Delegation Meets DSEK; Seeks Time-Bound Resolution Of Long-Pending Issues

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: The Private Schools Association (PSA) high-level delegation Saturday held a detailed meeting with Director School Education Kashmir (DSEK) Naseer Ahmad Wani in Srinagar to discuss several pressing issues concerning private educational institutions across Jammu & Kashmir.

The PSA delegation was led by Senior Vice President Manzoor Ahmad Rather included General Secretary (Organization) M. Syed Wani, Director Media & Communications Dr. Owais Mattoo, Treasurer Hilal Ahmad Khan and Joint Secretary Dr. Yasir Ahmad.

During the meeting, the delegation raised a wide range of issues affecting the smooth functioning of private schools and emphasized the urgent need for timely administrative intervention and institutional support.

The delegation highlighted and submitted a charter of demands before the DSEK, including long-pending State Land Issues

and urged the authorities to frame proper and final guidelines to remove the uncertainty faced by schools. The members also demanded time-bound disposal of pending files, stating that unnecessary delays were creating operational difficulties for institutions and adversely affecting academic planning.

The PSA delegation further raised concerns regarding lease deed complications, particularly in cases where land owners were unwilling to renew long-term lease agreements, causing legal and administrative hurdles for schools, renewals, affiliation and compliance matters also came up for discussion, including NOC validity upto 10-year registration and renewal process and the need for establishing a proper Help Desk mechanism to facilitate schools in addressing official matters smoothly and efficiently.

The delegation also discussed difficulties being faced by schools in obtaining picnic permissions, stating that the present process was time-con-

suming and often created avoidable complications for institutions.

The members stressed the importance of promoting sports, debates, arts, cultural and co-curricular activities in schools and suggested that the education system should encourage holistic learning and student development beyond textbooks and academic evaluation alone.

The delegation also highlighted several operational and administrative challenges being faced by private educational institutions and recommended regular stakeholder interaction meetings between the School Education Department and private school representatives to strengthen coordination and institutional cooperation.

Director School Education Kashmir Naseer Ahmad Wani patiently listened to the issues and concerns raised by the PSA delegation and assured the members that all genuine matters would be examined strictly in accordance with the established rules and procedures.

He informed the del-

egation that there was no unnecessary pendency from the School Education Department regarding registration renewals and that cases were being disposed of promptly. He further stated that land-related files concerning middle schools and above had already been taken up by JKBOSE in accordance with the existing Government orders and prescribed guidelines.

Speaking on the occasion, PSA Senior Vice President Manzoor Ahmad Rather said, "Private schools are playing a vital role in strengthening the education sector across Jammu & Kashmir. Timely clearance of affiliation, renewal and land-related matters is extremely important to ensure smooth academic functioning and institutional stability. We urged the authorities to adopt a transparent and time-bound mechanism so that students and schools do not suffer due to administrative delays."

PSA General Secretary (Organisation) M. Syed Wani said, "The Association remains committed

towards constructive coordination with the concerned departments for the resolution of all genuine issues faced by private schools. Effective communication, institutional support and timely administrative response can significantly help in addressing long-pending matters and improving the overall educational environment."

Director Media & Communications Dr. Owais Mattoo stated, "Private schools are important stakeholders in the educational landscape of Jammu & Kashmir. Issues related to registration renewals, affiliations, NOCs and land documentation require practical and timely attention so that institutions can continue to function efficiently without unnecessary procedural hurdles."

The PSA delegation thanked the Director School Education Kashmir Naseer Ahmad Wani for giving a patient hearing to the issues raised by the Association and expressed gratitude for his positive response and assurance regarding the redressal of genuine concerns.

Sunil Sharma himself was missing during budget session: Dy CM hits back at LoP

'CM Omar gone for work, nothing unusual; making issue out of it not healthy politics'

REHAN QAYOOM

SRINAGAR: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary on Saturday hit back at Leader of Opposition (LoP) Sunil Sharma over his "missing complaint" remark targeting Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, saying the BJP leader himself remained absent during the crucial budget session.

Speaking to reporters here, Choudhary, said the LoP has a major responsibility during the budget session as legislators are expected to raise issues concerning people from their respective constituencies.

"The Leader of Opposition said he would lodge a missing complaint against Omar Abdullah for not being seen for the past 10 days. But Sunil Sharma was also not seen during the budget session, and we too were looking for him," he said.

The Deputy CM said the budget session is an important platform where public issues are discussed in the Assembly and questioned Sharma's absence from the proceedings. "Where was the LoP during such an important session? We can understand he may have had some work, but



the people of Jammu and Kashmir also wanted to know where he was at that time," he said.

Choudhary said if Sunil Sharma is personally attacking CM Omar today, then he should first answer where he was during the budget session. "Why should we not have filed a missing report or even an FIR against you then?" he asked.

He further alleged that LoP had left behind the people of hilly and backward areas during that

period. "Those poor, backward and mountainous people, where did you go, leaving them behind?" he asked.

Defending the Chief Minister, Choudhary said Omar Abdullah had gone out for work, and there was nothing unusual about it. "Omar sahib has gone for work. Just as I or anyone else can travel somewhere for personal work, he too can go. Making an issue out of it is not healthy politics," he added—(KNO)

Elderly devotees lead spiritual fervour at Khanqah-e-Moula Urs

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

SRINAGAR: At the revered Khanqah-e-Moula on Saturday, age appeared to be just a number as 80-year-old Mohammed Salam sat in the front row among devotees, immersed in prayers and devotion to Hazrat Ameer Kabir Mir Syed Ali Hamdani (RA).

The historic shrine witnessed thousands of devotees offering prayers and seeking blessings in an atmosphere filled with spirituality, emotion and unity.

Devotees from different parts of Kashmir reached the shrine from early morning hours, participating in special prayers and religious gatherings while remembering the teachings of Shah-e-Hamdan (RA).

Amid the rush of worshippers, Mohammed Salam emerged as a symbol of unwavering faith and devotion. Despite being in his 80s, he sat quietly inside the shrine premises with prayer beads in his hands, deeply lost in devotion and remembrance of Shah-e-Hamdan (RA).

"I have been coming here every year for more than 40 years now. No matter how



difficult the situation was, I never stayed away from this sacred place," Salam told KNO in a soft voice, his eyes fixed on the prayer beads in his hands.

He said the Urs is not merely a ritual for him, but a lifelong spiritual connection. "Whenever I come here, I feel peace in my heart. I pray for my family, for Kashmir and for humanity. This place gives strength to the soul," he said.

Meanwhile, the shrine reverberated with recitations, supplications and spiritual chants as devotees prayed for peace, prosperity and well-being. Religious scholars highlighted the teachings, spirituality

and contributions of Mir Syed Ali Hamdani (RA), whose influence continues to shape Kashmir's religious and cultural identity.

People from all walks of life were seen sitting together in devotion, reflecting the spirit of brotherhood, unity and communal harmony associated with the annual Urs.

Notably, popularly known as Shah-e-Hamdan, Hazrat Ameer Kabir Mir Syed Ali Hamdani (RA) was a renowned 14th-century Sufi saint, scholar and preacher who played a pivotal role in spreading Islam and introducing art, culture and craftsmanship in Kashmir—(KNO)

Delhi Gymkhana Club responds to govt notice seeking re-entry of premises for defence, security purposes

SIANS

NEW DELHI: The Delhi Gymkhana Club, one of the national capital's most prestigious and historic private clubs, has sprung into urgent action following a communication from the Land and Development Office (L&DO) under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, officials said on Saturday.

The government body has sought re-entry and resumption of the club's premises citing the need for "strengthening and securing of the defence infrastructure and other vital public security purposes".

In response to this sudden development, the Governing Council (GC) of the Delhi Gymkhana Club held an emergency meeting on Saturday and decided to send an immediate reply to the L&DO.

The club has requested detailed clarity on several issues concerning the interests of its members and employees.

The communication also seeks an urgent appointment for GC members to meet with senior officials of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to discuss the matter.

According to an official communication issued



from the Secretary's Office and signed by Officiating Secretary Rajesh Bhatnagar, the club's immediate priority is to ensure that its operations continue without any dislocation.

The letter emphasises protecting the interests of thousands of members and staff who depend on the smooth functioning of this 113-year-old institution, established in 1913.

The Delhi Gymkhana Club, located on Saffdarjung Road, has long been a hub for senior bureaucrats, diplomats, politicians, and prominent citizens. The sudden notice from the L&DO has created considerable concern among its members.

he club has assured its members that further developments will be communicated promptly once a response is received from the Ministry.

The development comes

as a surprise to many, given the club's prominent location in the heart of Lutyens' Delhi and its historical significance.

Sources indicate that the government's move may be linked to broader security considerations in the national capital, though specific details have not yet been made public.

The Governing Council is understood to be working diligently to safeguard the club's legacy while cooperating with the authorities.

Members are closely watching the outcome of the club's formal response and the requested meeting with the Ministry officials.

The situation remains fluid, and any decision regarding the future of the premises is likely to have significant implications for the club's continued operations and its vibrant community life.

One Lakh Jobs Promise Was Nothing But a Lie: Sajad Lone

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Conference President and MLA Handwara Sajad Lone on Saturday denounced the NC-led government over the Finance Department's latest austerity order, accusing the administration of betraying the youth it had promised employment during elections.

Reacting to the order barring creation of new posts and directing surrender of positions vacant for over two years, Lone said the move exposed the "dishonesty" of the elected dispensation.

"The government promised one lakh jobs in their manifesto. Now, rubbing salt into the wounds of those who voted for them, it has banned the creation



of new posts," he said.

Lone further warned that surrendering long-vacant posts would deepen the unemployment crisis across Jammu and Kashmir.

"Even posts vacant for two years will be surrendered. This government will go down in history as one of the most dishonest ever elected," he added.

Accusing the administration of systematic public deception, the JKPC chief said, "Lies, lies and lies — nothing else. They have been lying through their teeth." (KNS)

Saddened by the loss of lives in China's mining accident: PM Modi

SIANS

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday conveyed his condolences to Chinese President Xi Jinping over the loss of lives in a mining accident in Shanxi Province.

"Saddened by the loss of lives in a mining accident in Shanxi Province, China. On behalf of the people of India, my condolences to President Xi Jinping and the people of China. May the bereaved families find strength in this tragic hour. Praying for the early and safe recovery of all remaining missing persons," PM Modi wrote on X.

The coal mine accident in north China's Shanxi Province has left 82 dead, with nine others still trapped.

A gas explosion hit the Liushenyu coal mine in Qin Yuan County at 7:29 pm on Friday, when more than 200 people were down the shaft, according to the county's emergency management bureau, Xinhua news agency reported.

A total of 123 people are receiving treatment at hospitals, including two in critical condition and two in serious condition, while 119 others sustained minor injuries. Multiple rescue teams are taking turns going down the mining shaft.

Future wars won't be won by soldier counts alone but with high-tech indigenous weapons system: Rajnath Singh

SIANS

SHIRDI: Amid shifting global security theatres, including the Russia-Ukraine war and the West Asia conflict, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday remarked that modern conflicts have shattered traditional assumptions about warfare.

"The biggest difference in future wars will not depend on how many soldiers you have, but on how advanced and capable your country is from the perspective of munition volumes and automated systems," he said.

Singh asserted that "the country that manufactures its own weapons is the one that writes its own destiny."

He was speaking on the occasion of the inaugura-

tion of defence and aerospace manufacturing grid, marking India's transition into a high-tech global powerhouse.

The centrepiece of the rollout is a Rs 1,000-crore mega-facility in the Savali Vihar industrial estate near Shirdi. Spread over 200 acres and developed by a defence firm, it stands as India's largest private-sector artillery plant.

The Defence Minister recalled that India previously demonstrated its tactical sharpness and lethal localised responses during Operation Sindoor to permanent-proof India against complex geopolitical vectors, the state is treating private defence firms as core strategic partners.

"Moving forward, the



administration intends to aggressively extend the 'Make in India' mandate across all critical technologies. With the Shirdi manufacturing hub fully active, alongside a massive parallel ordnance development at Belwandi in Shrigonda taluka targeting 20,000 tonnes of annual explosive output, India is accelerating into a self-reliant powerhouse,"

Defence Minister Singh said.

The Defence Minister added, "Our government is continuously emphasising that 'Make in India' should be promoted in Critical Technologies and Advanced Systems so that India emerges as a frontrunner in munitions and automated systems, for which the government is ready to take every necessary step."

He also said, "Self-reliant India means a secure India, a capable India, and a powerful India." He called for a unified industrial resolve to fully insulate the country's sovereign skies.

The Defence Minister spoke candidly about historical gaps, highlighting an era after Independence where state monopolies and rigid public units failed to match modern technological requirements.

"For a long time, our defence industry remained largely confined to public sector units and ordnance factories," Singh noted.

"Today, that barrier has fallen. The private sector is no longer just a supplier of nuts and bolts -- it is designing, innovating, and producing state-of-the-art weapon

systems."

"Our goal is to take it up to 50 per cent in the coming years. This factory making artillery shells today, this missile complex, and this space complex are living proofs of this very transformation. This is the new India, where the Private Sector is no longer just a supplier of nuts and bolts, but is becoming the innovator and producer of entire advanced and state-of-the-art weapon systems," Singh said.

The Defence Minister noted: "Today, I am immensely proud to say that the efforts we have made are bearing fruit. Earlier, where the role of the Private Sector in defence production was negligible, today it has reached almost 25 to 30 per cent."

NOTICE

It is notified for the information of the general public that my correct banking name is Amina Bano instead of Ameena begum in the records of J&K Bank Main Branch Kupwara. Any person having any objection or query may contact the concerned branch within 02 days from the date of publication of this notice.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Meeran Dijoo, am transferring my electricity connection with consumer ID 0204040019240 and installation number 13744. This connection is currently under my deceased father's name, Late Mr. Mushtaq Ahmad Dijoo, and I am now transferring it to my name. If anyone has any objection regarding this, please contact me at 6005807424.

'Made it easier since I wasn't playing': Rachin Ravindra says IPL stint offered more than just T20 lessons

IAN S

NEW DELHI: As New Zealand prepare for a landmark first-ever men's Test against Ireland later this month, Rachin Ravindra believes a brief return home after leaving the IPL early has helped him mentally and physically reset ahead of a demanding red-ball tour.



New Zealand departed for Ireland on Saturday for the one-off four-day Test from May 27-30 before beginning a three-match Test series against England.

Ravindra left the Kolkata Knight Riders camp before the conclusion of IPL 2026 after finding limited opportunities in the playing XI. However, the left-hander said KKR were supportive of his decision to head back early and prepare for national duty.

"I mean KKR were very welcoming and understanding of the situation. Obviously, the way it was going, I wasn't playing. The decision was spoken to the CEO and the coach about potentially coming home for a refresh and obviously not knowing I'd be home until... Well, I wouldn't be home until late August because of what's to come," Ravindra was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

"So, really awesome from them to be able to say, go home, refresh, do a bit of training and what you need before joining the boys in Ireland. Because there was always going to be a little bit of an overlap. It made it easier since I wasn't playing. It's a great little refresh. We spend so much time away from home and even four or five days at home, which I've had, is fantastic," he added.

Despite spending most of the IPL season on the sidelines, Ravindra insisted he does not feel short of match preparation ahead

of the UK tour.

"I haven't played a game in a little while, and sort of obviously running the drinks in the IPL and getting opportunities to train and talk to guys has been great. But to be honest, I don't really feel too out of match practice. I think it was a very, very hectic schedule beforehand," he said.

The left-handed all-rounder used the short break at home to work on his red-ball preparation before linking up with the New Zealand squad.

"But yeah, I think part of the reason being able to come home for five days or so and do a little bit of training and prepare for what's to come because we know Test cricket is super important, especially a series in Ireland and England. So I just wanted to give myself the best chance. I was down in Christchurch for a day and had a couple of training sessions down there. I had some nice grass facilities," he added.

Ravindra also highlighted how his IPL experience provided valuable learning opportunities beyond

the T20 format itself, particularly through conversations with experienced international cricketers and coaches.

"There's benefits to playing cricket and training. There's also massive benefits being in the IPL too. I mean, you get to talk to someone like Ajinkya Rahane, who's a lovely man who's played so much cricket overseas, scored a hundred at Lord's and played so much cricket against England and Australia away," the Kiwi batter stated.

"The coach (Abhishek Nayar) used to be the assistant batting coach for India. You got Shane Watson, who is our batting coach, who has played England a lot, coached a lot of guys who have played England. So it's sort of, it's more than just the T20 as well. Being able to sit down and talk to Virat (Kohli) about batting or talking to KL Rahul - all these guys who've done well and had success over periods of time," he noted.

New Zealand head into the tour with a pace-heavy squad featuring the returning Kyle Jamieson,

Matt Henry and Ben Sears alongside the towering Will O'Rourke. Ravindra expressed excitement over the depth in New Zealand's fast-bowling resources.

"I think we had a few injuries last summer and super excited to have those boys back. Obviously, Matt Henry, who missed the last couple of Tests, Blair Tuckner, who is bowling so well, and the big man Will O'Rourke. Nathan Smith coming back, Ben Sears is fit, we've got a serious pace battery, which I'm excited to face at the nets," Ravindra said.

He reserved special praise for O'Rourke's recent performances, saying, "I remember Will O'Rourke the way he was bowling in his last Test series in Zimbabwe actually and the way he was bowling against England at home was fantastic. So, looking forward to see him on the park again. Truly exciting times for New Zealand cricket and we've got so much depth."

With no specialist spinner named in the squad, Ravindra also indicated he is ready to contribute with his left-arm spin if required.

"Always interested with my bowling. Sometimes, it tends to take a back seat, but definitely trying to do a little more of that. Had some opportunities at the T20 World Cup, which was cool. On some occasional sporting wickets, it was nice to get some overs in, but Test cricket is a different beast. With the different ball, have to be a bit more consistent. I'll work on that with GP when I can," he said.

While the Ireland Test will not count towards the World Test Championship standings, Ravindra stressed that New Zealand will not underestimate the hosts despite injury concerns in the Irish camp.

AIFF General Body approves adoption of National Sports Governance Act

IAN S

KOLKATA: The All India Football Federation (AIFF) on Saturday adopted the National Sports Governance Act 2025 (NSGA) during its Special General Body Meeting (SGBM) held in Kolkata on Saturday.

The SGBM, held at a hotel in the city, saw the presence of 19 members of the Executive Committee, 32 members of the Member State Associations along with representatives of FIFA and Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

An official release stated: "The General Body unanimously approved the adoption of the NSGA by the AIFF".

The National Sports Governance Act would play an important role for Indian football administration under the national



sports framework as it focuses on improving the governance structure and increasing transparency and accountability for all sports federations.

The constitutional reforms for the Member Associations of AIFF were also discussed during the meet. The AIFF, according to the body, would circulate the draft constitution for its Member Associations to

take feedback from them.

"The General Body discussed that the draft Constitution for the Member Associations be shared with the MAs, who are to be allowed 15 days to respond with their final suggestions," the release stated.

Besides the governance reforms, discussion also took place on the commercial aspects for the federa-

tion's Master Rights Agreement (MRA). The MRA is one of the most significant commercial decisions for Indian football, which defines and regulates its media rights, sponsorships and marketing agreements.

It was declared during the meeting that two firms submitted their bids for the agreement and the General Body approved that the Executive Committee be given the power to further negotiate on the issue.

"The Federation further discussed the Master Rights Agreement (MRA), for which, it has received bids from two entities. To that extent, the General Body unanimously approved that the Executive Committee be given the power to discuss and deliberate upon the MRA negotiations," the release added.

U23 Asian Wrestling C'ships: Sagar, Suraj through to finals on first day

IAN S

NEW DELHI: India started its participation at the United World Wrestling (UWW) U23 Asian Championships in Da Nang, Vietnam, on a positive note, as Greco-Roman wrestlers Sagar Singh and Suraj moved on to their respective gold medal matches on the first day at the Tien Son Sport Centre.

Leading India's efforts were outstanding performances in the 67kg and 60kg Greco-Roman categories, where both wrestlers demonstrated attacking spirit and calmness under pressure to earn their spots in the evening finals.

Sagar Singh delivered a strong performance in the 67kg category, demonstrating tactical discipline and consistency throughout the preliminary rounds to reach the gold medal



match. He is joined in the finals by Suraj in the 60kg division, who also secured his spot in the title match after a confident campaign during the day, ensuring India at least a silver medal.

In the 77kg category, Kumar Sachin fought hard but narrowly lost in a close semifinal match against

Alikhan Dursonov. Meanwhile, Indian wrestlers in the 72kg and 82kg categories couldn't advance past the early rounds due to tough continental competitors.

Praising the performances of the wrestlers on the opening day, Wrestling Federation of India President Sanjay Singh

said, "I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the wrestlers advancing to the finals. The level of competition here in Vietnam is extremely high, and our athletes are showing great determination and fighting spirit on the mat. We are proud of the hard work they have put in leading up to this championship and wish our finalists, along with the entire contingent competing in the upcoming days, the very best."

India's Greco-Roman campaign resumes tomorrow with qualification bouts across various weight classes. Neeraj starts the challenge in the 55kg category, followed by Sumit in the 63kg division and Rohit Bura in the 87kg category. All three wrestlers aim to reach the quarterfinals and keep India's momentum going at the continental championship.

J&K Sports Council to Hold 'Cyclothon 2026' in Srinagar on World Bicycle Day

GMK SPORT DESK

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council will organise "Cyclothon 2026" in Srinagar on June 3 to mark World Bicycle Day, aiming to promote fitness, healthy living and the benefits of cycling among people, especially the youth.

The event will be held under the nationwide FIT India movement with the theme "Ride for the Next Generation." Officials said the initiative is intended to encourage citizens to

adopt cycling as a part of their daily lifestyle and create greater awareness about physical fitness and wellness.

According to the Sports Council, the cyclothon will focus on spreading awareness about the health benefits of cycling, including improved heart health, better immunity, increased fitness levels and combating obesity.

The council has invited cyclists, sports enthusiasts and fitness lovers from across the Valley to participate in large numbers and

make the event a public movement for health and active living.

Registrations for the event have already been opened. Interested participants can register through the QR code available on the official promotional poster shared on the J&K Sports Council's Facebook handle.

Officials said the event is expected to witness enthusiastic participation from youth, professional cyclists, amateur riders and fitness groups from different parts of Kashmir.

650+ overseas players register for LPL 2026 as draft preparations gather pace

IAN S

COLOMBO: The sixth edition of the Lanka Premier League has generated massive international interest, with more than 650 overseas cricketers registering for the tournament ahead of the player draft scheduled for June 1.

"More than 650 overseas players have registered for the sixth edition of the Lanka Premier League (LPL) 2026. Players from all ICC Full Member nations, as well as several Associate Member countries, are among those registered for the tournament," Sri Lanka cricket said in a statement on Saturday.

Among the Full Member nations, Pakistan recorded the highest number of registrations with 102 players, followed by the West Indies with 75 and South Africa with



66. Bangladesh contributed 48 registrations, while New Zealand had 41 players sign up for the draft pool. There were also 24 registrations from Australia, 15 from England and 12 players from India.

Among Associate nations, the highest number of registrations came from the United States, the United Arab Emirates and Ireland. Overall, players from 21 cricketing nations have entered the registration process.

Tournament officials, however, confirmed that

only 310 players will be shortlisted for the final draft following the screening process. The player draft for LPL 2026 will take place on June 1, with the tournament scheduled to run from July 17 to August 8.

Meanwhile, SLC already announced the opening fixture of the tournament, with defending champions Jaffna Kings set to face runners-up Galle Marvels in the season opener at the Sinhalese Sports Club Ground in Colombo on July 17.

Movies Watchlist

SUNDAY, 24TH MAY

	BHOOTH BANGLA (U/A16+) HINDI - 03:45 PM
	PATI PATNI AUR WOHO DO (UA16+) HINDI ATMOS - 04:45 PM, 07:15 PM
	STAR WARS: MANDALORIAN AND GROGU (U/A16+) ENGLISH - 07:00 PM 3D ENGLISH ATMOS - 11:00 AM
	CHAND MERA DIL (U/A16+) HINDI ATMOS - 02:00 PM, 04:45 PM, 07:30 PM HINDI - 10:45 AM
	DRISHYAM-3 (U/A16+) MALAYALAM WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES - 01:30 PM
	DHURANDHAR THE REVENGE (UA16+) HINDI - 11:20 AM

INOX SRINAGAR

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