



UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR'S 21ST CONVOCATION



Change is the only constant: Vice President reminds young graduates

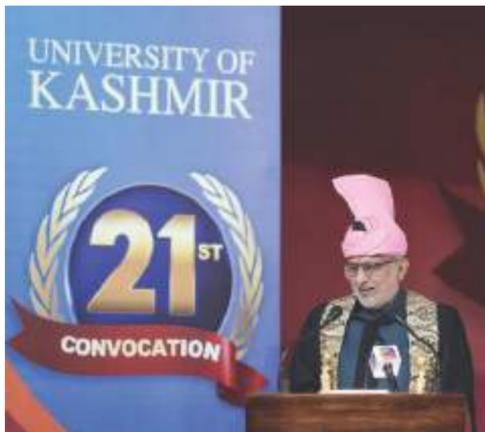
- Asks youth to contribute to Viksit Bharat@2047 vision
- Says women empowerment reflection of J&K's progress

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Feb 26: Reminding young graduates that "change is the only constant, Vice-President, C P Radhakrishnan, on Thursday said that success in life depends on character and discipline.

The Vice-President while addressing the 21st Convocation of the University of Kashmir here as chief guest—marking his first-ever visit to J&K after assuming office said, "World is changing rapidly and youngsters need to adapt, equip themselves with new skills, and embrace innovation."

Emphasising that India is emerging as an innovator of technology, the Vice-President, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) encouraged the youth to pursue Swadeshi innovations aligned with national priorities and contribute to the



vision of Viksit Bharat@2047.

He asked students to stay away from drugs and use social media in moderation. "We need to respect the sentiments

of others. Success in life depends on character and discipline," the Vice-President said, adding, "Young graduates must adapt to challenges

beyond academics and remain firm in their values."

The Vice-President expressed special happiness over three significant aspects of the convocation: that the Minister for Higher Education is a woman, the Vice-Chancellor of the University is a woman, and that a majority of gold medal recipients were women. He described this as a powerful reflection of women's empowerment and progress in Jammu & Kashmir.

He lauded the University of Kashmir, established in 1948, for its proud legacy and expanding academic footprint. He commended the University's NAAC A++ Grade, 34th rank in the NIRF University category, over 7,700 research publications since 2019 and pioneering initiatives such as the National Himalayan Ice-Core Laboratory, which underline its growing global

presence.

Addressing the students, he said, "Until now you answered questions set by your professors. From today onwards, life will set you the questions. Patience, courage and character will determine how you will respond to setbacks."

Vice-President Radhakrishnan said parents expect their children to succeed and find fulfilment in their achievements.

He urged students to work towards becoming responsible professionals and citizens.

Asking the youth to stay away from drugs and to encourage their friends and family members to do the same, he said, "There is no religion in this world which encourages narcotic and drugs."

The Vice-President also advised students to be mindful of their social media usage and avoid

New India providing equal ground, opportunities to daughters: LG Sinha

186 of 239 gold medals, 108 of 164 PhDs by girls

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Feb 26: Stating that in 'New India' daughters are getting equal ground and opportunities, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, on Thursday lauded the girls for their dominant performance in every field.

Addressing the 21st convocation of the University of Kashmir, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Of 239 gold medals, a staggering 186 are won by our daughters and of the 164 PhDs awarded, 108 bear our daughters' names."

He said, "No statement could more powerfully define the New India. This tells our people: Give daughters



opportunity, encouragement, and equal ground, and they don't just join—they lead, excel, and set new standards. To today's medalists and graduates: You are not just forging your futures—you are rewriting possibilities for every young woman next at Kashmir University."

He urged | More on P6

J&K border villages now 'symbols of connection', not conflict: CM Omar



Describes graduating students as 'spring of J&K in full bloom'

Riyaz Bhat

Srinagar, Feb 26: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday said border villages are no longer symbols of conflict but have emerged as "symbols of connection".

Addressing the 21st convocation of the University of Kashmir, CM Omar, as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said his government is working to transform Jammu and Kashmir

into a hub of innovation and knowledge-based industries, while ensuring inclusive and sustainable development.

Hailing the graduating students as the "spring of J&K in full bloom," the Chief Minister underlined key challenges facing the region, including climate change, agricultural transformation and youth mental health.

"We are meeting at a pivotal moment," CM Omar said, referring to the recently presented 2026-27 budget. Describing it as a "fiscal compass," he said the budget reflects the government's intent to build | More on P6

Khelo India Winter Games 2026 Gulmarg leg concludes

Army tops medal tally; J&K bags four

National athletes hail arrangements

Waris Fayaz

Gulmarg, Feb 26: The Gulmarg leg of Khelo India Winter Games 2026 concluded on Thursday with a grand closing ceremony.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) the valedictory ceremony was attended by the Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, Jammu and Kashmir Sports



Minister Satish Sharma, MLA Gulmarg, Farooq Ahmed Shah and senior officials from the civil and security administration.

The successful conduct of the games was described as a major boost to winter sports and tourism in | More on P6

Earlier stone-pelters used to make headlines, now it's sports: Mandaviya

'Future editions will be 15-day event, Gulmarg to become global hub'

Waris Fayaz

Gulmarg, Feb 26: Asserting that earlier stone-pelters used to make headlines, now it's sports Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Mansukh Mandaviya on Thursday said Jammu and Kashmir is witnessing a shift in public narrative.

While addressing the valedictory ceremony of the Gulmarg leg of the Khelo India Winter Games-2026, Mandaviya, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "The region (J&K), once associated with unrest, is now



gaining recognition for sporting events and youth participation. Newspapers that earlier focused on security challenges are now highlighting sports

and development."

The Minister linked the change to developments after the revocation of Article 370, saying new opportunities and

public confidence have emerged in Jammu and Kashmir. "After the abrogation of Article 370, there is newfound belief in J&K. Earlier stone-pelters used to make headlines now it is sports. Times are changing in J&K and will have a massive role to meet PM Modi's dream of a Viksit Bharat by 2027," he added.

He said the region is contributing to a developed India through sports, tourism and youth engagement.

Calling Gulmarg one of the world's finest winter destinations, Mandaviya said its geographical | More on P6

India, Israel condemn terrorism, elevate ties to 'special strategic partnership'

PTI

Jerusalem, Feb 26: India and Israel on Thursday unequivocally and strongly condemned terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, including cross-border terrorism, and reaffirmed their collective resolve to combat this menace.

A joint statement issued after talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu said the two leaders called for "decisive and concerted international efforts" to combat terrorism in a comprehensive



and sustained manner.

"The leaders unequivocally and strongly condemned

terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, including cross-border terrorism,"

it said.

Expressing the grave concern over this common challenge, the two leaders reaffirmed their collective resolve to combat this menace as the leaders of two vibrant and resilient democracies.

"They strongly condemned the heinous October 7, 2023, terror attack on Israel, the savage terror attack on Indian tourists at Pahalgam in Jammu & Kashmir in India on April 22, 2025 and the terror incident near Red Fort, New Delhi on November 10, 2025," the statement said.

It said that | More on P6

Terror graph declining in J&K, launch pads under watch: Lt Gen Katiyar

'Pak Army still supporting infiltration; Op Sindoor taught them harsh lesson'

Yogesh

Pathankot, Feb 26: Noting a sustained decline in terrorism indicators in Jammu and Kashmir, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Command, Lt Gen Manoj Kumar Katiyar, on Thursday said the security situation in the Union Territory has "become very normal," even as the Army remains vigilant against cross-border attempts to disturb peace.

Addressing a press conference on the sidelines of the Investiture Ceremony at Mamun Military Station here, Lt Gen Katiyar, according to the



news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "All terrorism parameters in Jammu and Kashmir have consistently declined. The situation in Jammu

and Kashmir has become very normal."

"However, Pakistan keeps on hatching conspiracies to send a few terrorists to disturb the atmosphere. Our Army and all departments of the civil administration are fully prepared to deal with it," he said.

Responding to queries about encounters in the Kathua-Kishtwar belt, he said the Army acts promptly on intelligence inputs. "Wherever we receive information, we take immediate and prompt action. This year, in several successful operations, we neutralised terrorists who had come to | More on P6

Govt committed to empowering farmers through technology, training: Javid Dar

Inaugurates fruit, vegetable processing training centre in Jammu

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 26: Strengthening efforts to boost value addition and self-employment in the agriculture sector, Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar, Thursday inaugurated a Modern Processing-cum-Training Centre for fruits and vegetables at Udheywala in Jammu.

The centre, as per an official statement, established at a cost of ₹90 lakh, aims to promote skill development, entrepreneurship and income generation among the farmers, rural youth and women, particularly members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

While addressing the gathering, the Minister said the government is committed towards empowering the farmers through modern technology, scientific training and value addition initiatives. He stressed the need for departments to identify high-potential sectors and expand skill-based training programmes to enhance productivity and ensure sustainable livelihoods. "The focus



must be on equipping the farmers and women with modern processing techniques and encouraging cultivation of improved and hybrid varieties of fruits and vegetables to increase returns," he said.

The newly inaugurated facility will offer six-month and one-month certificate courses in fruit and vegetable preservation and processing. It will also organise mobile demonstrations and promote community-level processing units to extend technical

knowledge to the farmers at the grassroots level.

On the occasion, Soil Health Cards were distributed among the beneficiaries to encourage balanced fertiliser use and scientific soil management practices.

Director Horticulture Jammu, Gul Syed, Director Agriculture Jammu Anil Gupta, Director Rural Development Department Jammu, Shehnaz Akhter and other senior officers were present at the event.

JKECC delegation calls on Education Minister Sakeena Itoo

Thanks for keeping TET order in abeyance

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 26: A delegation of the Jammu Kashmir Employees Coordination Committee (JKECC) Thursday called on Minister for Education, Social Welfare, Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo and expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Government led by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and Education Minister for timely and considerate intervention in keeping in abeyance the order concerning the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) requirement for in-service teachers across the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

The delegation, as per an official statement, led by senior representatives of JKECC, apprised the Minister of widespread concerns and anxiety among thousands of serving teachers following the issuance of the order. They highlighted that many experienced educators, who have been rendering dedicated services in far-flung and challenging areas for years, were apprehensive about the implications of the directive on their professional stability and morale.

In her interaction with the delegation, the Education Minister reiterated the Government's commitment to welfare of teaching community. She assured the



representatives that the department remains open to consultations with stakeholders to ensure that reforms in the education sector are implemented in a manner that is fair, transparent, and in the larger interest of both students and teachers. "Teachers in Jammu and Kashmir have consistently contributed to society and have strengthened the education system despite infrastructural constraints, climatic challenges and difficult terrain", Minister Sakeena said.

The Minister asked the delegation to extend cooperation to the Department in its ongoing efforts to enhance quality education and implement progressive reforms. She added that such

collaborative engagement between the government and employee representatives would continue in the future for the overall development of the education sector across Jammu and Kashmir.

During the meeting, the delegation apprised the Minister that the decision to revoke the order has brought immense relief to the teaching fraternity and has reaffirmed their faith in the government's commitment to safeguarding the interests of employees. They described the Minister's action as empathetic, pragmatic and pro-education, noting that it reflects a balanced approach between maintaining academic standards and recognizing the ground realities faced by teachers.

TRAI holds consumer outreach programme on telecom services in Srinagar

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, February 26: The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), Regional Office Delhi, conducted a Consumer Outreach Programme on Quality of Service (QoS) in the Telecom and Broadcasting sector Thursday at Government College for Women, M.A. Road, Srinagar.

As per PIB statement, around 200 attendees, including students, faculty members, representatives of TRAI-registered Consumer Organisations, Telecom Service Providers and representatives of the Jammu & Kashmir Government participated in the programme. Officers of TRAI, Shri Rajesh Tripathi, Joint Advisor, and Shri Sushil Kumar Bansal, Senior Research Officer, along with representatives from Airtel, BSNL, Jio and Vodafone Idea, delivered sessions on improving telecom and broadcasting services. Sessions on cyber fraud and the steps to prevent such frauds were also conducted.

TRAI DND Application was highlighted during the programme, and many participants downloaded the app and other TRAI applications to adopt proactive measures against Unsolicited Commercial Communications.

Issues relating to regulations on Quality of Service in the Telecom and Broadcasting sector, drive tests, in-building solutions, building rating and Right of Way (RoW) rules were also discussed.

Commissioner SMC inspects municipal assets

Reviews infrastructure, civic services

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 26: Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Faz Lul Haaseeb, conducted an extensive inspection of municipal assets at Tibetan Colony, Eidgah, and Devi Angan, Badam Wari, to review the status of civic infrastructure and assess the management, maintenance, and utilization of public facilities.

During his visit to Tibetan Colony, Eidgah, the Commissioner, as per an official statement, undertook a comprehensive review of municipal infrastructure, including sanitation arrangements, drainage networks, and waste management operations. He evaluated the performance of field-level services and directed concerned officials to ensure sustained cleanliness, improved operational efficiency, and prompt resolution of civic grievances raised by residents.

At Devi Angan, Badam Wari, the Commissioner inspected the municipal asset and reviewed its maintenance standards, operational functionality, and potential for enhanced public utilization.



Emphasizing the importance of safeguarding public infrastructure, he instructed officials to maintain the facility strictly in accordance with municipal norms and to maximize its effective use for community benefit.

Highlighting the importance of regular on-ground monitoring, the Commissioner reiterated SMC's commitment to strengthening urban governance through improved infrastructure management, enhanced accountability, and responsive civic administration.

Senior officers and officials of Srinagar Municipal Corporation accompanied the Commissioner during the inspection.

DC Shopian calls for intensified action against drugs menace at NCORD meeting

KT NEWS DESK

SHOPIAN, FEBRUARY 26: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta Thursday presided over a meeting of the District Level NCORD (Narco Coordination) to review and strengthen measures aimed at curbing drug abuse and illegal narcotics activities in the district.

During the meeting, the DC, as per an official statement, directed all concerned departments to intensify efforts to speed up preventive and enforcement actions.

Drug Control authorities were directed to conduct regular inspections of pharmacies and ensure strict compliance with prescribed norms regarding sale of medicines. He emphasized maintaining proper sale registers, verification of prescriptions and preventing misuse of scheduled drugs.

Agriculture and horticulture departments were asked

to rope in farmers in hotspot areas for alternative cropping ventures.

The DC directed the education department to ensure installation of prominent signboards outside all schools across the district declaring the areas as "No Smoking Zones." Authorities were further instructed to strictly enforce the prohibition of smoking and sale of tobacco products around educational institutions as per established norms.

Review of constitution of anti drug committees in schools and engagement of youth in sports activities was also focused upon for action.

Directions for sustained awareness campaigns and collective responsibility to safeguard the youth from the menace of drugs was emphasized on the occasion.

SSP, Shopian, Mushtaq Ahmed Choudhary; ADC, Dr. Zakir Hussain Faaiz; ACR, Shakoor Ahmed Dar, district officers, Tehsildars and other concerned attended the meeting.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir (UT) OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER R&B DIVISION PULWAMA.

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TENDER NOTICE

E-NIT No: 160/EEP/RNB/of 2025-26/ 11681-91

Dated: 26/02/2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K UT term e-tenders (In Single Cover system) are invited on %age Basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K State Govt. CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Government for the following work :-

S. No	Name of Work	Adv. Cost (Rs. Lacs.)	Cost of T/D (Rs.)	Earnest Money (In %age.)	Time of Completion in working Days	Class of Contract	Major Head of Accounts	Administrative Accord Approval No:	Call No:
1	Hr. secondary school Drabgam ACR (sno.1644)	33.61	1100/-	2% of DV.cost	265 working days	BEE/AAY	Samagra Shiksha	314 -Chirag of 2025 dt.01.12.2025	1st call

The Bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.iktenders.gov.in as per schedule of date given below:-

1.	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	26 - 02-2026
2.	Bid downloading Start Date	26 - 02-2026 from 10:00 A.M
3.	Bid submission Start Date	24 - 02-2026 from 10:00 A.M
4.	Bid Submission End Date	09 - 03-2026 upto 0 4:00 P.M
5.	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	10 - 03-2026 at 11.00 A.M in the Office of the Executive Engineer R&B Div.Pulwama
6.	Submission of Performance Security(PS)	Within three (03) days of receipt of LOA. (The First lowest successful bidder has to provide 5% of allotted cost as Performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG and EMD of 2% shall be released after receipt of 5% Performance security.

Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in the shape of Treasury Challan /Receipt as per Annexure -C (Debited to M.H.0059 PWD) and EMD in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to the Executive Engineer R&B Div. Pulwama (The Date of Treasury Challan and EMD should be between the date of start of bid and Bid Submission End date.

- The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web site www.iktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the office of Executive Engineer R&B Div. Pulwama
- The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of bids.
- EMD in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG in favour of the Executive Engineer R&B Div. Pulwama
- The Contractors are advised to visit the site and to be aware of the conditions for launching at site of work before quoting the rates.
- The contractor shall also be responsible for any theft/ damage to any of the component at site and the cost of damage/ theft if any shall be deducted from the work done or CDR of the Contractor till completion of work and handing over.
- The 1st lowest bidder has to produce an amount equal to 5% of contract as Performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Pulwama within three (03) days after the date of receipt of letter of acceptance and shall be released after successful completion of DLP. The Bank Guarantee should be valid for 45 days beyond DLP

Head Draftsman

DIPK-11387/25
DATED: 26-02-2026

Technical Officer

Executive Engineer
R&B Division
Pulwama

GOVERNMENT OF (U.T) JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER JAL SHAKTI (PHE) DEPTT. GROUND WATER DIVISION SRINAGAR

Baghi-Ali-Mardan, Nowshara Srinagar.

E-mail:- suresh05.gupta@jk.gov.in

Tel./FaxNo:-0194-2411285

Re-Tender Corrigendum Extension Notice 1st

Subject: 1. Installation of Bore Well & Tube Well at various locations in Chattrahama location Chattrahama (W73) constituency Hazratbal in District Srinagar. (SI.no.2)
2. Installation of Bore wells at different Spots of Chuntwaliwar District Ganderbal. (SI.no.3)
3. Installation of Bore wells at different Spots of Block Gund District Ganderbal.(SI. No.4)
4. Construction of Machine Drilled Hand Pump Operated Bore Well at Ajas Bandipora Near House Of Zahoor Ahmad and Tariq habib and Others in District Bandipora.(SI. No.5)

Reference: This office e-NIT No. 80/JS-PHE/GWDS/Mech. of 2025-26, issued vide endorsement No: JS-PHE/GWDS/25-26/Camp/18440-58, dated: 05-02-2026. Bearing Tender ID No. 2026_PHE_302391_2, 3, 4 & 5.
Due to "NO Response" for the above mentioned works advertised vide e-NIT No. and Tender ID No's under reference. Which was scheduled to be downloaded till 16-02-2026 Up-to 01:00 PM are rescheduled as per the details given below: -

S.No.	Item	Fresh Date
1.	Start date & Time of submission of bids	25-02-2026 Up-to 02:00 PM
2.	Last date & Time of submission of bids	03-03-2026 Up-to 11.00 AM
3.	Date & Time of opening of tenders	04-03-2026 Up-to 10.00 AM

NOTE:

All other terms and conditions shall remain same as laid down in the aforesaid e-NIT issued vide above referred endstt: nos.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Jal Shakti (PHE) Deptt.
Ground Water Division Srinagar.

DIPK-11375/25
DATED: 26-02-2026

Ranji trophy Final

J&K dominate Karnataka on Day-3

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Feb 26: Jammu and Kashmir continued to dominate the Ranji Trophy final against Karnataka, tightening their grip on the contest despite a resilient century from Mayank Agarwal on Day 3 at the KSCA Hubli ground.

Resuming the day in a commanding position, J&K's lower order added valuable runs to their overnight total, eventually getting bowled out for a mammoth 584, putting Karnataka under immense pressure in their first innings.

In reply, Karnataka had a shaky start as J&K bowlers made early inroads. Auqib Nabi struck with the new ball, troubling the top order with both inswing and outswing before removing KL Rahul, a key batter early. The pressure mounted further when Sunil Kumar delivered a crucial breakthrough by dismissing Devdutt Padikkal, caught in the slips.

Auqib Nabi then turned the game decisively



in J&K's favour with a fiery spell, claiming back-to-back wickets of Karun Nair and Smaran Ravichandran, leaving Karnataka reeling at 57/4 and staring at a collapse.

Amid the crisis, Mayank Agarwal stood tall with a determined and composed innings. Showing grit and patience, he anchored the innings brilliantly and punished loose deliveries to keep Karnataka in the hunt. He found solid support from Shreyas Gopal, and the duo stitched together a crucial 105-run partnership that helped stabilise the innings.

However, J&K struck back as Yudhvir Singh broke the stand, trapping Gopal leg-before-wicket for 27, ending a key resistance.

Agarwal, undeterred, went on to convert his half-century into a well-crafted century, finishing unbeaten on 130 off 207 balls, studded with 17 boundaries. He was ably supported towards the end of the day by Kruthik Krishna, who remained unbeaten on 27.

At stumps, Karnataka were 220/5 in 69 overs, still trailing by a massive 364 runs, with

a daunting task ahead to avoid the follow-on.

J&K spinner Abid Mushtaq bowled a disciplined spell, maintaining control in the middle overs, though he remained wicketless. Abdul Samad also kept things tight in the final overs as J&K ensured there were no late breakthroughs for Karnataka.

A crucial moment late in the day saw J&K miss an opportunity to tighten their grip even further, as Kanhaiya Wadhawan dropped Agarwal on 124, a miss that could prove costly if Karnataka stage a comeback.

Despite Agarwal's heroics, the day clearly belonged to Jammu and Kashmir, who now stand on the brink of history in their maiden Ranji Trophy final appearance.

Heading into Day 4, Karnataka face an uphill battle, needing a massive effort with the bat to first avoid the follow-on and then attempt to claw their way back into the match, while J&K will look to wrap up the innings early and push for a historic title triumph—(KNO)

SED keeps TET order in abeyance



RIYAZ BHAT

Srinagar, Feb 26: School Education Department on Thursday kept its order of Teachers Eligibility Test (TET) in abeyance till further orders. SED Secretary in an order said, "The Government order regarding the designation of JKBOSE/State School Standards Authority (SSSA) as nodal agency for conducting TET is hereby kept in abeyance, till further orders."

Earlier, in the previous order the department has said that in exercise of the powers vested in the Government and in compliance with the directions of the Supreme Court of India, JKBOSE, State School Standards Authority (SSSA) is designated as Nodal Agency for conducting TET for the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, with immediate effect.

"The JKBOSE, SSSA shall take immediate necessary steps for operationalization of the TET examination framework in accordance with the Action Plan formulated in the meeting held in October-2025," reads the previous order. SED had

also said that JKBOSE shall develop and notify a detailed schedule for conduct of TET.

"The board shall coordinate with NIC, School Education Department, Higher Education Department, Home Department, and other concerned authorities for logistical, technical and security arrangements," it reads.

It had also said that the board shall ensure alignment of syllabus and examination standards with the guidelines of the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) with suitable contextual modifications.

In the previous order, SED while referring to the returned and the findings with advice that was sought from the Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, UT of J&K said that if any of such teachers fail to qualify the TET within the time that we have allowed, they shall have to quit service. They may be compulsorily retired; and paid whatever terminal benefits they are entitled to—(KNO)

Early bloom in Kashmir as February heats up



SAJID RAINA

Srinagar, Feb 26: Day temperatures continued to hover above normal across Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday, with several places in Kashmir recording

departures of 6 to 9 degrees Celsius above the seasonal average.

According to the official data, Srinagar recorded a maximum of 20.2 degrees Celsius, 8.2 degrees above normal,

while Qazigund settled at 20.4 degrees, 9.4 notches above normal. Kupwara registered 20.3 degrees (8.9 above normal) and Kokernag 18.9 degrees (9.1 above normal). Pahalgam recorded 14.6 degrees, 6.1 above normal, and Gulmarg 10.6 degrees, 8.2 above normal.

In the Jammu region, Jammu city recorded a maximum of 27.0 degrees Celsius, 3.9 degrees above normal. Katra settled at 25.2 degrees (4.3 above normal), while Banihal and Batote recorded over 20 degrees each, nearly 7 degrees above normal.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

Fire damages over 20 shops in Bandipora

SAJID RAINA

Srinagar, Feb 26: At least 20 shops were damaged in a fire that broke out in the main market of north Kashmir's Bandipora district in the early hours of Thursday, officials said.

The blaze erupted around dawn and spread rapidly to adjacent shops due to the congested layout of the marketplace. Thick smoke engulfed the area as flames leapt from one structure to another, triggering panic among residents and traders, they said.

Fire and Emergency Services personnel rushed to the spot soon after receiving information and launched a firefighting operation. Teams of Jammu and Kashmir Police and local volunteers assisted in dousing the flames.

After several hours of efforts, the fire was



brought under control, preventing it from spreading to nearby residential houses, officials said, adding that no casualties or injuries were reported.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

Mughal Road to reopen today

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Shopian, Feb 26: Authorities have ordered reopening of historic Mughal Road for vehicular movement from Friday (February 27), following the successful clearance of heavy snow accumulation along the high-altitude stretch.

The decision has sparked widespread relief and happiness among residents of Shopian and the Pir Panchal region, who remain cut off from each other for months during the harsh winter season.

According to official orders issued by the district administrations of Shopian and Poonch, Light Motor Vehicles (LMVs) will be permitted to ply on the road between Buzliya and Peer Ki Gali from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM, subject to favourable weather conditions and absence of any unforeseen disruptions.

The reopening follows recommendations from the Officer Commanding, 79 RCC (GREF), after snow clearance operations were completed on the crucial Buzliya-Peer Ki Gali stretch, one of the most avalanche-prone segments of the route. Officials said the movement will initially remain regulated and restricted to daytime hours to ensure commuter safety. Authorities said that traffic will only be allowed under suitable weather conditions, and travellers must strictly adhere to advisories issued by the Traffic Police.

To ensure smooth and safe passage, the 79 RCC (GREF) has been directed to maintain adequate manpower and machinery at vulnerable

locations, particularly in avalanche-prone zones. Continuous monitoring of these stretches will be carried out to mitigate risks such as landslides, shooting stones, and sudden snow slides.

The Senior Superintendents of Police of Poonch and Traffic Rural Jammu, along with officials in Shopian, have been instructed to deploy sufficient personnel at key checkpoints, including Behramgalla, Buzliya, and Poshana. These measures aim to regulate traffic flow, enforce timing restrictions, and prevent congestion on the narrow mountain road.

Residents from both sides of the Pir Panchal range have welcomed the move, calling it a "lifeline" that reconnects families, facilitates trade, and reduces travel time between the Kashmir Valley and the Jammu region. Many expressed hope that the road will remain operational for the whole year very soon.

The Mughal Road, officially designated as NH-701A, serves as an alternate route connecting Shopian in south Kashmir with Poonch and Rajouri districts in Jammu.

Apart from its strategic importance, the road also holds historical significance, tracing the route once used by Mughal emperors.

Commuters have been advised to plan their journeys carefully, stay updated with official traffic advisories, and avoid unnecessary travel during inclement weather conditions to ensure safety along the mountainous terrain—(KNO)

Sadaqat ul Fitr fixed at Rs 80: Grand Mufti



REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Feb 26: The Grand Mufti of Jammu and Kashmir, Mufti Nasir ul Islam, on Thursday announced that Sadaqat ul Fitr for 2026 has been fixed at Rs 80 per person, urging Muslims to fulfil the obligation before Eid ul Fitr prayers.

He said Zakat ul Fitr is compulsory for

The Mufti explained that the amount is based on the value of half a Sa' of wheat, calculated at Rs 77 and rounded off to Rs 80 as a precaution.

every Muslim, including men, women and infants. Parents must pay on behalf of minor children, while adult children are responsible for themselves. A husband, he clarified, cannot pay on behalf of his wife without her consent.

The Mufti explained that the amount is based on the value of half a Sa' of wheat, calculated at Rs 77 and rounded off to Rs 80 as a precaution.

Wealthier individuals may give Sadaqat ul Fitr in wheat, cash, dates, raisins or other approved food items instead of the fixed amount.

He said the charity should be distributed among the poor, destitute, needy relatives, orphans and travellers within local communities, and must not be given to mosques, khanqahs or political and religious organisations—(KNO)

SDA enforces strict SWM rules to protect environment

RAJA SYED RATHER

Sonamarg, Feb 26: The Sonamarg Development Authority (SDA) has intensified enforcement of the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules in strict compliance with the directives of the National Green Tribunal (NGT), warning of strict action against violators.

Under the directions of Chief Executive Officer Bilal Mukhtar, the Authority has ordered mandatory four-stream segregation of waste at source, including wet waste, dry waste, domestic hazardous waste and sanitary waste. All waste generators have been directed to install separate covered and labelled bins within their premises, strictly as per the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016. Mixing of waste has been strictly prohibited.

As per the circular, dumping of garbage on roadsides, drains, open land, forest areas, riverbanks and water bodies has been banned. Open burning of solid or plastic waste has also been strictly prohibited and will invite penal action.

All establishments, including hotels, guest houses, restaurants, shopkeepers, pony operators, tent operators and tour operators, have been directed to hand over only segregated waste to the authorised agency, as per the order.

It says that the collected waste must be

transported strictly to the Solid Waste Management Plant at Sarbal as notified by the SDA. "Disposal at any unauthorised site has been declared illegal, while daily lifting and transportation of waste to the designated plant has been made mandatory," it adds.

The order further prohibits the use, stocking and distribution of banned single-use plastic items. Stakeholders have been directed to ensure proper channelisation of plastic waste to authorised recyclers in accordance with Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016.

Line departments have been asked to ensure safe transportation and scientific processing of waste at the Sarbal plant as per approved standards, with continuous monitoring and enforcement drives to be carried out.

As per the circular, any negligence, violation or deviation will attract strict action under the Solid Waste Management Rules and the Environment Protection Act, including environmental compensation, spot penalties, sealing of premises, cancellation of registration and initiation of legal proceedings without prior notice.

The SDA has appealed to all stakeholders and visitors to cooperate in maintaining cleanliness and protecting the fragile ecosystem of Sonamarg, reiterating that the directions have come into force with immediate effect—(KNO)

EDITORIAL

Friday Brief: Inculcating Patience And Piety In Ramadan

The holy month of Ramadan is not merely a period of abstaining from dawn till dusk; it is a profound spiritual training ground where patience and piety are cultivated as the highest virtues, transforming the believer from within. The Qur'an establishes the ultimate purpose of fasting with crystalline clarity: "O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous"

(2:183). The Arabic word for righteousness used here is taqwa—a comprehensive term encompassing God-consciousness, fear of Allah, and pious devotion. Fasting is thus the divine apparatus for manufacturing taqwa in the human soul. This cultivation of piety is intrinsically linked to the cultivation of patience. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) explicitly named Ramadan as the "month of patience", declaring that patience is

half of faith and that the reward for patience is boundless. When hunger gnaws, when thirst intensifies, when irritability beckons—each moment is an opportunity to exercise sabr, the beautiful patience that restrains the tongue from complaint and the limbs from transgression. Abu Huraira reported the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Fasting is a shield. When one of you is fasting, he should neither indulge in obscene language nor raise his voice in anger.

If someone insults him or fights with him, let him say: I am fasting, I am fasting" (Sahih al-Bukhari). This profound teaching transforms fasting from physical abstinence into active moral discipline. The fasting person does not merely avoid food; they avoid conflict, retaliation, and harsh speech. This is patience embodied. The month multiplies opportunities for pious devotion beyond the obligatory. Charity flows abundantly, for the Prophet was

"most generous in Ramadan". Each virtuous act is magnified seventyfold or more, making this the season of maximum spiritual return. In this blessed month, let us remember that hunger is our teacher, thirst our guide, and restraint our path to divine proximity. Let us weave patience into the fabric of our character, so that when Ramadan departs, taqwa remains—a permanent companion guiding us through every season of life.

Export Promotion Mission: Building An Integrated Pathway For MSMEs In Global Trade

Press Information Bureau

India's export ecosystem is being strengthened through a mission-mode approach under the Export Promotion Mission (EPM), aimed at expanding global market access and enhancing the competitiveness of Indian exporters, particularly Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

Building on the interventions that were already supporting exporters, the Government has now launched 7 additional interventions under EPM, significantly expanding the scope of support across trade finance, compliance enablement, logistics and overseas market access. With this expansion, 10 interventions under the Mission are now operational, marking a major milestone in the rollout of EPM and reinforcing India's commitment to inclusive and export-led growth.

What is the Export Promotion Mission? The Export Promotion Mission (EPM) is a flagship initiative designed to provide coordinated support across key elements of the export ecosystem, including trade finance, standards compliance, logistics, overseas warehousing and market development.

Approved by the Government in November 2025, the Mission brings together multiple export-support measures under a single, unified and digitally driven framework. With a total outlay of 25,060 crore for the period FY 2025-26 to FY 2030-31, EPM seeks to enhance export competitiveness and expand India's global presence.

The Mission is implemented through two integrated sub-schemes: Niryat Protsahan, which focuses on financial enablers and trade-finance support, and Niryat Disha, which addresses non-financial, market-access and ecosystem enablers.

Through this framework, the Export Promotion Mission aims to:

Improve access to affordable and diversified trade finance, particularly for MSMEs and first-time exporters

Support compliance with international quality, technical and sustainability standards

Strengthen export branding, logistics and overseas warehousing capabilities

Expand market access and trade intelligence support

Enable broader participation of MSMEs, including growth of cross-border e-commerce exports

Overall, EPM adopts a whole-of-government approach by converging policy support, trade-finance enablement, market readiness and market linkages within a single institutional framework. By reducing fragmentation in exporter support and strengthening delivery across finance, standards, logistics and buyer connectivity, EPM enables integrated export growth for MSMEs.

Through this convergence-driven, mission-mode design, the Mission is envisaged as a game changer in enabling MSMEs to scale up and sustain their participation in global trade.

End-to-End Support Across the Exporter Journey

The Export Promotion Mission delivers stage-wise support aligned to the key phases of the export process, enabling exporters to access appropriate assistance from early-stage market exploration to post-shipment activities and overseas market presence.

Through its integrated interventions, the Mission provides coordinated support for:

Market and product analysis

Access to pre- and post-shipment export finance

Trade Compliance

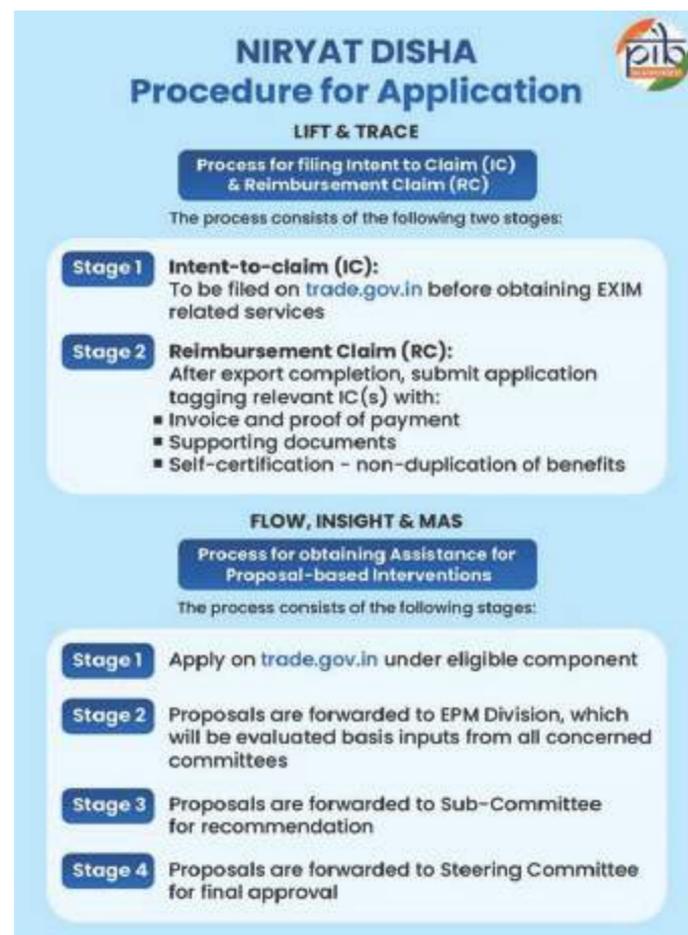
Logistics, freight and transportation

Overseas warehousing, fulfilment and buyer connectivity

Progress Under the Mission: Expansion of Interventions

Prior to the latest launch, three key interventions under the Export Promotion Mission were already operational, providing support in areas such as interest subvention, collateral-free export credit and market access.

The launch of seven additional interventions marks a significant expansion of the Mission, extending support to new areas such as alternative trade-finance instruments, e-commerce exports, compliance enablement, logistics cost mitigation, trade



intelligence and overseas fulfilment. With this expansion, the Mission now offers comprehensive and integrated support architecture covering both financial and ecosystem-level needs of exporters.

Niryat Protsahan – Financial Enablers
Niryat Protsahan addresses access-to-finance constraints faced by exporters, particularly MSMEs, by providing timely, affordable and diversified trade-finance instruments.

Newly Launched Interventions

1) Support for Alternative Trade Instruments (Export Factoring): This intervention promotes export factoring as an affordable and accessible trade finance instrument for MSMEs, with the objective of unlocking working capital and ensuring smoother business cycles.

Support under this component is available to MSME exporters undertaking merchandise exports under the notified list of six-digit tariff lines. Export factoring services are provided through registered export factoring firms (NBFCs).

Under this intervention, interest subvention of 2.75% is provided on the factoring cost, subject to a maximum limit of 50 lakh per IEC. Both recourse and non-recourse factoring are supported, and factoring can be undertaken in Indian Rupees as well as freely convertible foreign currencies.

Export Factoring
Export factoring is a financial tool that allows exporters to receive immediate cash by selling their export receivables to a financial institution. It provides working capital support, helps manage payment risk and forms part of Government-backed export finance support for MSMEs.

2) Credit Assistance for E-Commerce Exporters: This intervention provides credit facilities to MSME exporters to meet working-capital requirements for exports through postal, courier and overseas inventory-based fulfilment channels.

The support is available to MSME e-commerce exporters with a valid IEC and Udyam Registration, as well as new MSME exporters with prior domestic e-commerce turnover of at least one year. The intervention is implemented through the Export-Import Bank of India (EXIM Bank).

Under this component, the Direct E-Commerce Credit Facility provides up to 90% guarantee coverage, capped at 50 lakh, while the Overseas Inventory E-Commerce Credit Facility provides up to 75% guarantee coverage, capped at 5 crore. Interest subvention of 2.75% on eligible financing is provided, subject to an annual ceiling of 15 lakh per applicant.

3) Support for Emerging Export Opportunities: This intervention enables MSME exporters to expand into new or higher-risk export markets through access to shared-risk and credit instruments.

Risk-sharing support ranging from 10% to 90% of the transaction value is provided based on a defined risk model. Maximum Liability Permissible (MLP) limits include a 15% country-wise exposure cap, 5% exporter-wise exposure cap, 1% transaction-wise exposure cap, and 10% issuing bank-wise exposure cap.

Interventions Already Operational
4) Interest Subvention for Pre- and Post-Shipment Export Credit: This intervention provides interest subvention support on pre- and post-shipment export credit availed by MSME exporters, with the objective of reducing the cost of export finance and improving working-capital liquidity.

Under this component, interest subvention of 2.75% on the interest cost is provided, subject to a maximum limit of 50 lakh per exporter.

Under the current implementation status, arrears amounting to 850 crore under the erstwhile Interest Equalisation Scheme have been cleared. Since January 2026, around 3,000 exporters have registered for interest subvention support.

5) Collateral Support for Export Credit: This intervention facilitates collateral-free access to formal export credit for MSME exporters by providing credit guarantee support to lending institutions.

Under this component, credit guarantee coverage of 85% is available for micro and small enterprises, while 65% coverage is available for medium enterprises. The maximum eligible credit limit is 10 crore per exporter. Around 60 exporters have registered for support under this intervention since January 2026.

Niryat Disha – Non-Financial and Market Access Enablers

Niryat Disha is the non-financial enablers sub-scheme under the Export Promotion Mission. The sub-scheme focuses on addressing non-financial trade barriers faced by exporters and strengthening the global presence of Indian goods and services. It facilitates compliance with global standards and international quality norms, while expanding strategic market access through buyer-seller meets, trade fairs and exhibitions, and promoting access to overseas warehousing and fulfilment facilities.

Through its interventions, Niryat Disha supports exporters in improving market readiness, enhancing trade visibility, mitigating logistics-related disadvantages and strengthening institutional and information support systems across the export ecosystem.

Newly Launched Interventions

1) Trade Regulations, Accreditation and Compliance Enablement (TRACE): This intervention provides financial support to exporters to meet international testing, inspection, certification and other conformity requirements necessary for accessing global markets.

Support under TRACE is available to MSME exporters with a valid Importer Exporter Code (IEC) and valid MSME Udyam Registration Number. Assistance is provided for certifications included in the notified positive list, with higher levels of support extended for certifications under the notified priority positive list.

For certifications under the Positive List, financial assistance of 60% of the actual cost net of taxes, or 25 lakh, whichever is lower, is provided. For certifications under the Priority Positive List, assistance of 75% of the actual cost net of taxes, or 25 lakh, whichever is lower, is provided. The annual cap for support under TRACE is 25 lakh per exporter.

Notified Positive List & Priority Positive List

Under TRACE, the Positive List covers commonly required international certifications such as CE Marking, FDA certification, ISO standards and SABER/SASO. The Priority Positive List covers strategically important, higher-cost certifications critical for priority markets, including food safety (BRCGS, FSSC 22000, HACCP), marine certifications (MSC, ASC) and ethical supply chains (SMETA).

2) Logistics Interventions for Freight and Transport (LIFT): This intervention mitigates geographical disadvantages and inland connectivity gaps faced by exporters located in hinterland regions by providing support to reduce transportation and logistics costs.

Support under LIFT is available to all MSME exporters of notified eligible products from notified districts. Eligible shipments include export movement from MSME premises to Inland Container Depots (ICDs), Container Freight Stations (CFSs), Sea Ports and Air Cargo Complexes (ACCs). Shipments through rail and road are eligible, and shipments through air are permitted for certain regions.

Financial support of up to 30% of the actual cost incurred for availing eligible transport services is provided, subject to a maximum cap of 20 lakh per exporter per financial year.

3) Integrated Support for Trade Intelligence and Facilitation (INSIGHT): INSIGHT aims to strengthen exporter preparedness and develop institutional support systems by addressing information asymmetries and capacity gaps within the export ecosystem.

The intervention covers all exporters, transport and logistics service providers, and other stakeholders engaged in export-related activities. Both private and government entities are eligible for support.

Financial assistance is provided for multiple activities, including development of modules and toolkits, training and capacity building, district and cluster-level facilitation, research, innovation and pilot initiatives, and trade intelligence and analytics. Support of up to 50% of the approved project cost is provided for eligible activities, subject to prescribed ceilings for each category. Government entities may receive up to 100% of the approved project cost.

4) Facilitating Logistics, Overseas

Warehousing and Fulfilment (FLOW): This intervention addresses logistics and warehousing constraints faced by exporters by enabling access to overseas storage, distribution and fulfilment infrastructure, thereby supporting faster, more reliable and cost-effective exports.

Support under FLOW is available to Export Promotion Councils, Commodity Boards, logistics, warehousing and fulfilment service providers, industry associations, and organisations recommended by the Central or State Government.

Financial assistance under this component is provided for a maximum period of three years. Support is available for the following categories:

Overseas Warehousing Facility: Assistance limited to the lower of 10 crore or 30% of the approved project cost.

Overseas Fulfilment Arrangements: Assistance limited to the lower of 5 lakh per month or 30% of the approved project cost.

Display and Market Access Facilities: Assistance limited to the lower of 5 crore or 30% of the approved project cost.

E-Commerce Export Hubs (ECEH): Assistance limited to the lower of 10 crore or 30% of the approved project cost.

Intervention Already Operational
5) Market Access Support (MAS): Market Access Support facilitates the conduct of market access activities aimed at developing, expanding and sustaining international markets, thereby enabling market diversification and enhancing international visibility of Indian products and services.

Under this intervention, financial assistance is provided for Buyer Seller Meets, Trade Fairs, Trade Delegations and Reverse Buyer Seller Meets. Support of up to 5 crore per event is available for Buyer Seller Meets, Trade Fairs and Trade Delegations, while support of up to 10 crore per event is provided for Reverse Buyer Seller Meets. Airfare support is extended to MSMEs for participation in eligible market access activities, and preferential support is provided for priority sectors.

Under the current implementation status, arrears amounting to 118.65 crore under the erstwhile Market Access Initiative (MAI) Scheme have been approved. A total of 34 events, comprising 24 Trade Fairs and 10 Reverse Buyer Seller Meets, have been approved with cumulative financial support of 45.5 crore.

Procedure For Application
Niryat Protsahan

For Niryat Protsahan interventions, exporters file an Intent-to-Claim (IC) on dgft.gov.in prior to obtaining support, upon which a Unique Identification Number (UIN) is generated. The exporter shares the UIN with the lending institution or factoring entity. Lending institutions extend the credit or trade finance instruments to exporters and submit the Claim Submission (CS) to the implementing agency as per notified guidelines.

Niryat Disha
For LIFT and TRACE, exporters file an Intent-to-Claim (IC) on trade.gov.in before obtaining EXIM-related services and submit a Reimbursement Claim (RC) after export completion with supporting documents and self-certification.

For FLOW, INSIGHT and MAS, assistance is provided through a proposal-based approval mechanism, with applications submitted on trade.gov.in, followed by evaluation by the EPM Division, recommendation by the Sub-Committee and final approval by the Steering Committee.

Conclusion
The Export Promotion Mission represents a coordinated export support ecosystem combining financial enablers, market access support and ecosystem-level interventions. By addressing both credit-related and non-financial barriers faced by exporters, particularly MSMEs, the Mission aims to reduce the cost of exporting, improve compliance readiness and enhance global market integration.

Through coordinated implementation by Central Ministries, State and District authorities, financial institutions, Export Promotion Councils and Indian Missions abroad, EPM is envisaged to promote inclusive, decentralised and sustainable export growth.

The views expressed by contributors on this page are their own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of the newspaper

Bandipora hosts Viksit Bharat Youth Parliament-2026

Students debate democratic values

KT News Desk

BANDIPORA, FEBRUARY 26: HKM Government Degree College (GDC) Bandipora, designated as the District Nodal College, Thursday successfully hosted the District-Level Viksit Bharat Youth Parliament-2026, providing a vibrant platform for students to deliberate on democratic values and contemporary issues concerning the nation.

The programme, as per an official statement, witnessed enthusiastic participation of students from various colleges of the district, including GDC Hajin, GDC Sumbal, GDC Ajas and the host institution. The deliberations were held on the theme "50 Years of Emergency: Lessons for Indian Democracy," encouraging young participants to reflect upon the historical significance of the emergency period and its relevance in strengthening democratic institutions.

Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Bandipora,



Nizam Uddin Bhat, who was the Chief Guest on the occasion, appreciated the college for organizing the event and emphasized the importance of youth participation in democratic processes. He highlighted that such platforms help nurture informed, responsible and vigilant citizens capable of contributing positively towards nation-building.

Earlier, Principal HKM GDC

Bandipora, Prof. Suresh Kumar Dogra, in his welcome address, underscored the significance of Youth Parliament in fostering leadership qualities, critical thinking and awareness among students, while encouraging them to actively engage in democratic discourse.

During the event, over 30 students delivered insightful and thought-provoking speeches, showcasing their oratory skills

and understanding of democratic principles. The performances were evaluated by a distinguished jury.

Following detailed evaluation, the jury selected the top ten performers who will represent district Bandipora at the State-Level Youth Parliament. The winners were felicitated with certificates of merit by the dignitaries in recognition of their outstanding performance.

DC Kulgam reviews progress of PM Surya Ghar-Muft Bijli Yojana

KT News Desk

KULGAM, FEBRUARY 26: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, Thursday chaired a meeting of concerned officers to review the implementation and progress of the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana in the district.

The scheme, as per an official statement, aims to enhance rooftop solar capacity across residential households, enabling them to generate their own electricity, significantly reduce monthly power bills, and benefit from substantial government financial assistance.

During the meeting, Executive Engineer, KPDC, Kulgam, presented a detailed overview of the progress achieved so far. He informed that around 4,012 applications have been received for registration under the scheme in the district. Against a target of 625 installations set by the Managing Director KPDC for Kulgam, the department has already surpassed the target with 659 Solar Rooftop (SRT) systems installed as on date. Additionally, material has been



delivered at 62 more sites for further installations.

The DC emphasized on the sub-division wise mass outreach campaign to sensitize public about the scheme. He also directed the KPDC officials to ensure timely installation of the roof top solar plants and release of subsidies to beneficiaries.

The DC also emphasized

to accelerate the conversion of applications submitted to SRT installations. He also directed the SDO's for immediate commissioning of SRT's where material is delivered or installed.

The meeting was attended by SE KPDC, XEN KPDC, Lead District Manager (LDM), representatives from JKEDA, and all AEEs, AEs, and JEs of KPDC.

KVK Budgam holds programme on clean, safe spice production



KT News Desk

BUDGAM, FEBRUARY 26: Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Budgam organized a collaborative programme in association with the Spices Board Regional Office, Srinagar, to mark the 39th Foundation Day of the Spices Board and to observe the National Campaign on "Clean and Safe Spices."

The event, as per an official statement, focused on quality improvement in spice production and post-harvest management.

During the event, Ashutosh Gautam, Scientist from the Spices Board in Srinagar, conducted an extensive discussion on the national and international standards applicable to spices, including the quality regulations of USFDA, ASTA, and EU, along with Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), and Good Hygiene Practices (GHP). He also brought attention to the FSSAI standards relevant to the domestic market and elaborated on the 8th edition of the National Program for Organic Production (NPOP)

concerning organic spices.

The technical session included scientific discussions from KVK scientists, covering a broad spectrum of topics such as scientific production techniques, pest and disease management, post-harvest processes.

Prof. & Head, KVK Budgam, Dr. Bilal A. Lone emphasized that ensuring clean and safe spice production is essential not only for consumer health but also for enhancing the market competitiveness of farmers. He highlighted that quality improvement must begin at the farm level through the adoption of good agricultural practices, scientific post-harvest handling and proper storage.

He appreciated the collaborative efforts of the Spices Board Regional Office, Srinagar, and stated that such joint programmes strengthen the extension network and build the capacity of farmers to meet national and export standards. He further assured that KVK Budgam will continue to organize need-based training programmes to promote quality, value addition and sustainable spice production in the district.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao SWD Srinagar holds sensitisation programme for teachers

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 26: Social Welfare Department, SANKALP-Hub for Empowerment of Women (Mission Shakti), Srinagar organized a sensitisation programme on Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) at Government Degree College, Nawa Kadal Thursday.

The programme, as per an official statement, witnessed active participation of teachers from various government and private educational institutions.

The session commenced with opening remarks by Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad, District Social Welfare Officer, Srinagar, who highlighted the significance of collective responsibility in addressing gender disparities and reaffirmed the department's commitment towards strengthening initiatives that promote the rights and dignity of the girl child.

Dr. Tawheeda Rasool, Assistant Professor, deliberated on teachers role in preventing school dropouts among girls and emphasized the transformative role educators play in shaping mindsets, ensuring retention of girls in schools, and fostering an inclusive academic environment



that nurtures equality and empowerment.

The legal dimensions of the initiative were comprehensively discussed by Advocate Mir Naveed Gul, Panel Lawyer, who spoke on the legal aspects related to Beti Bachao Beti Padhao. He elaborated on the constitutional safeguards, laws protecting the girl child, and the legal responsibilities of institutions in upholding gender justice and preventing discrimination.

District Mission Coordinator, SANKALP-HEW while speaking during the programme

reiterated the department's continued dedication towards empowering women and girls through sustained community-based interventions.

The sensitisation programme aimed to engage educators as key stakeholders in advancing the objectives of BBBP. By strengthening awareness and institutional responsibility, the initiative seeks to foster long-term behavioral change and reinforce the educational ecosystem as a powerful platform for promoting gender equity and social inclusion.

Samba gears up for National HPV vaccination campaign

KT News Desk

SAMBA, FEBRUARY 26: A meeting of the District Task Force on Immunization (DTFI) was convened Thursday under the chairpersonship of Deputy Commissioner Samba, Ayushi Sudan to review inter-sectoral preparedness for the launch of the National HPV Vaccination Campaign aimed at prevention of cervical cancer.

At the outset, the Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Vidhi Bhatia, as per an official statement, delivered the welcome address and highlighted the significance of coordinated efforts among various departments to ensure the successful implementation of the campaign. The District Immunization Officer, Dr. Kamlesh Kumari presented a detailed overview of the campaign, including its objectives, operational strategy and target population.

The National HPV Vaccination Campaign aims to vaccinate girls who have attained the age of 14 years but have not yet reached 15 years of age. The initiative seeks to provide timely protection against cervical cancer through administration of the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine.

During the meeting, emphasis was laid on effective interdepartmental coordination, awareness generation, micro-planning, logistics management and monitoring mechanisms to ensure smooth rollout of the campaign across the district. The Deputy Commissioner underscored the importance of collective responsibility and directed all concerned departments to extend full cooperation for the successful and timely execution of the vaccination drive.

The meeting was attended by senior officers from the Health Department and other line departments.

Awareness programme on labour codes, welfare schemes held in Bandipora

KT News Desk

BANDIPORA, FEBRUARY 26: A Mega awareness programme on the newly introduced Labour Codes and social security schemes was organised on Thursday by the Office of the Assistant Labour Commissioner (ALC), Bandipora, in collaboration with District Information Centre Bandipora, at Town Hall Bandipora.

The programme witnessed active participation from members of Traders' Federations of Bandipora, Sumbal and Naidkhai, along with a large number of shopkeepers, contractors, HR representatives, management representatives of private educational institutions, construction workers and workers from the unorganised sector.

During the programme, as per an official statement, officers imparted detailed awareness about the four new Labour Codes, highlighting key reforms, simplified compliance procedures, enhanced social security



coverage, mandatory issuance of appointment letters, timely payment of wages, improved safety standards, and provisions for inclusion and protection of women workers. Participants were also sensitised about the rights and responsibilities of employers and workers under the new legal framework.

Special emphasis was laid on the registration of unorganised and construction workers and the benefits available under labour welfare schemes. The participants were informed about various social security measures,

including medical assistance, educational assistance for wards, disability assistance, and other welfare benefits available to registered workers.

On the occasion, labour cards were distributed among eligible workers on the spot. Additionally, sanction letters for educational assistance and disability assistance were also provided to registered construction workers, extending immediate support to the beneficiaries.

The programme was interactive, with participants actively engaging in discussions and seeking

clarifications regarding labour laws, compliance requirements, and welfare entitlements.

On the occasion, stakeholders appreciated the efforts of the Labour Department and District Information Centre Bandipora for organising the awareness programme and facilitating access to welfare services at the grassroots level.

Among others, Labour Officer Mushtaq Ahmad Kambay, Labour Inspector, Abid Rashid Naik, and officials of the Information Department were also present on the occasion.

CHC Rajpora performs first knee replacement under Ayushman Bharat

KT News Desk

PULWAMA, FEBRUARY 26: In a landmark achievement for rural healthcare, the first-ever Total Knee Replacement (TKR) surgery under combined spinal epidural anaesthesia (CSE) at Community Health Centre (CHC) Rajpora was successfully performed under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) scheme, marking a major step forward in providing advanced medical care at the grassroots level.

The surgery, as per an official statement, was successfully performed by Orthopedic Surgeon, Dr. Ajaz Rafeeq and his dedicated surgical team, with the anaesthesia team led by Dr. Mohsin Farooq. The coordinated expertise, meticulous planning, and teamwork of both surgical and anaesthesia teams ensured that the procedure was carried out smoothly, safely, and successfully, restoring hope and mobility to the patient.

This historic achievement was made possible due to the recent upgradation of the operation theatre at CHC Rajpora into a fully modular facility, equipped with modern surgical instruments and advanced technology. The upgradation was accomplished through the dedicated efforts of the hospital administration and the proactive support of the Deputy Commissioner Pulwama and the Health Administration, including the Director of Health

Services, Kashmir. Their combined commitment has significantly strengthened the capacity of CHC Rajpora to perform such high-end surgical procedures locally, bringing advanced medical care closer to the community.

The patient received completely cashless treatment under the Ayushman Bharat scheme, eliminating the financial burden that often accompanies such advanced orthopedic procedures. The successful surgery not only brings relief to the patient but also sets a precedent for providing specialized surgical care in rural healthcare centers.

This milestone reflects the Health Department's ongoing commitment to strengthening secondary-level healthcare infrastructure and expanding access to specialized, affordable, and high-quality medical services for rural populations. The hospital administration lauded the dedication, professionalism, and teamwork of all healthcare personnel involved in achieving this feat and expressed sincere gratitude to higher authorities for their continued support in upgrading healthcare facilities in the district.

With this achievement, CHC Rajpora has firmly established itself as a capable center for advanced orthopedic care, demonstrating that high-quality medical interventions can now reach patients closer to their communities without the need to travel to urban centers.

NMJ&K Abhiyan: Cultural programme organised in Anantnag



KT News Desk

ANANTNAG, FEBRUARY 26: As part of the Nasha Mukta J&K Abhiyan, the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), Cultural Unit Kashmir, and District Information Centre Anantnag on Thursday organized a colorful cultural programme at Higher Secondary School Mattan.

The program aimed to create awareness about the drug abuse and sensitize the participants especially the younger generation about its drastic consequences.

On the occasion, the artists presented thematic skit and songs on NMBJK highlighting the negative effects of drugs and other contraband substances on individual lives, families, and society. Through their vibrant artistic performances and, they also talked about the remedies to combat the drug menace.

The event received appreciation from the students and staff of the institute who also shared their ideas to curb the substance abuse.

The program was also attended by officials of DIC Anantnag and local youth.

Change is the only

addiction of any kind. Time management, he said, was essential for long-term success.

Referring to his tenure as Governor of Jharkhand, the Vice-Prez recalled an interaction with students from Jammu and Kashmir who had visited the state under an exchange programme. "I had instructed officials to serve them food according to their preferences as a mark of respect," he recalled.

"As democrats, we must respect the sentiments of all," he said, adding that pride in one's own traditions should not lead to disregard for others.

He said special scholarship schemes for students from Jammu and Kashmir have provided them with opportunities to study in different parts of the country. "It has integrated them with the other states," he said, adding, "Such initiatives have built connections across regions, cultures and languages and ensured that talent is not limited by geography."

The Vice-President said, "The graduates must view their degrees as the beginning of new responsibilities and contribute to society with knowledge and commitment."

Highlighting development initiatives under leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the region, including the expansion of Srinagar International Airport and landmark infrastructure projects such as the Chenab Rail Bridge, the Vice-President said these initiatives create new opportunities and strengthen social harmony.

He expressed hope that under the leadership of the Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and the Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Srinagar would emerge as the cleanest city in the country under the Swachhta Survekshan.

He said he was impressed by the changes taking place in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly in infrastructure development and connectivity.

He appreciated the administration's efforts to promote eco-tourism, preserve natural heritage and create livelihood opportunities for local communities, saying the initiatives have boosted tourism and contributed to peace and development in the Union Territory.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah were also present at the convocation ceremony. (KNO)

New India providing

young graduates to view education as a "powerful instrument of change" and contribute meaningfully to nation-building.

The LG congratulated Vice-Chancellor Prof Nilofar Khan, faculty members and students, describing the ceremony as a symbol of generational transformation and the people's enduring faith in modern education.

The Lieutenant Governor extended his best wishes to all graduating students for a prosperous future. He exhorted them to set a clear path for their future - 'One purpose. One priority. Country first'.

"Always remember when you build the country, the country builds you back. Nations don't rise only from resources. They rise from educated people and when the nation rises, so do you," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor said that the convocation at the University of Kashmir is a vivid proof of generational metamorphosis, fulfilled aspirations, and youth's unwavering faith embodied in modern education.

"The knowledge earned in University of Kashmir isn't merely skills but it is holistic personality growth. Education builds self-confidence, equips for meaningful lives and it molds responsible citizens, linking personal success to collective good.

Education is the most powerful instrument of change ever placed in human hands. It redirects the course of a life. It reshapes the destiny of families. And when the youth embrace it fully, it rewrites the future of a nation from the ground up," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasised that the ideas in the classroom must impact the world. He called upon the Universities to aspire to move beyond their traditional role as custodians of knowledge- evolving into vibrant centers of innovation, human development, and social transformation.

"My Mantra is that Industry and Intellect should grow together. Our Universities should collaborate with Industry, innovators, research and development organisations to build Viksit Bharat and to ensure that the higher education campuses and companies co-create the Future," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor stated that the technology evolves at breakneck speed. He said that the digital revolution, artificial intelligence, global realignments, and demands for new skills are redefining higher education. "Possibilities for collaboration and innovation stretch endlessly. Careers being prepared for today may morph tomorrow. Industries are reshaping. The real question isn't whether change will come, but whether we can sync with it. I believe those youth will surge ahead who possess critical thinking, core knowledge, and a resolve to lifelong learning.

Artificial Intelligence now permeates every field-healthcare, agriculture, finance, urban planning, governance. So, the question arises: Will technology serve human welfare or just profit? I see universities' campuses crafting that answer, where knowledge fuses with life's values," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor outlined three key priorities for the faculty members- "First, adaptability as every curriculum's core skill. Second, seamless integration of AI and emerging tech with human intelligence. Third, global and interdisciplinary collaboration. Modern challenges interconnect so universities must shatter subject silos and mandate cross-disciplinary teamwork."

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted that our goal is to become a fully developed nation by 2047.

"Viksit Bharat isn't a dream, but a resolve fuelled by hard work. It demands diligence, innovation, moral strength, and ceaseless

invention-and this mission falls to our young generation," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor also congratulated all the medal winners and lauded the girl students for their dominant performance.

The dignitaries also released the Kashmir University's Profile on the occasion.

Omar Abdullah, Chief Minister; Sakina Itoo, Minister for Higher Education; Prof. Nilofar Khan, Vice Chancellor of Kashmir; Vice-Chancellors of various Universities; HoDs of different educational institutions, senior officials of Civil and Police administration, faculty members, students and their parents attended the convocation ceremony. (KNO)

J&K border villages

a modern, progressive and economically vibrant Jammu and Kashmir.

"For decades, we were defined by tourism alone or agriculture alone. The J&K of 2026 is evolving into a centre of innovation and participatory governance," he said, acknowledging that the region has faced economic setbacks following the trauma of 2025.

"Our resilience has defined us," Omar added. The Chief Minister said his government's vision rests on three pillars—meritocracy, sustainability and digital sovereignty.

On tourism, Omar said the government is moving beyond traditional destinations like Gulmarg and Pahalgam by promoting border tourism. "Villages like Keran, Gurez and Teetwal, once synonymous with conflict, are now symbols of connection," he said.

He added that the government, in collaboration with the Union Government, is developing nine new tourist destinations to ensure the benefits of tourism reach the last mile.

Stressing the need for balance, Omar said climate concerns remain central to policy planning. "Our glaciers are receding and our winters are changing. We must protect what we promote, which is why we are investing in sustainable infrastructure," he said.

Calling the KU convocation a day of succession, the Chief Minister told the graduating students that they were succeeding the generations who kept the flame of knowledge alive through difficult times and were now the torch-bearers of the future.

He urged the students to embark on the journey of self-realisation even as their formal education concluded.

The Chief Minister further asked students to acknowledge the sacrifices of their parents and expressed gratitude to faculty members for their contribution in shaping the lives of students.

Highlighting a key milestone, the Chief Minister said that nearly 60 percent of the degrees and medals at this year's convocation were earned by women.

Termining it a powerful instrument against poverty and instability, he said J&K had moved from 'Women's Welfare to Women-led Development'.

He said under the UMEED scheme, 7 lakh women had been organised into 80,000 Self-Help Groups, leading to the rise of 'Lakhpati Didi's' as financial anchors in their communities.

He added that interest-free soft loans were being provided for women-led startups in manufacturing and IT sectors. He encouraged women graduates to aspire for leadership roles in civil services, biotechnology and be part of global platoons.

Turning to agriculture, he described it as the cultural soul of the people but stressed the need for transformation through a High-Density Revolution.

The Chief Minister said that the technology and quality saplings were being provided to enable fruit exports to international markets.

He urged Science and IT graduates to develop solutions such as real-time pest detection apps and blockchain-based traceability systems to authenticate products like Pampore saffron in global markets.

Articulating a 'Saffron & Silicon' vision, Omar said J&K was being positioned as a data-friendly zone and an ideal destination for Green Data Centers, with a focus on creating job providers rather than job seekers.

The Chief Minister also underscored the importance of mental health, stating that society had endured immense pressure and trauma.

CM Omar said that the government was expanding district-level counselling through Mission Youth and urged Psychology and Social Work graduates to help de-stigmatise conversations around mental well-being. (KNO)

Khelo India Winter

Jammu and Kashmir. Athletes from across the country praised the facilities, organisation and competitive atmosphere of the event.

MEDAL TALLY

The Indian Army dominated the competition, securing the top position with a total of 23 medals, including 9 gold, 6 silver and 8 bronze medals. Himachal Pradesh finished second with 14 medals, while Ladakh and Maharashtra also recorded strong performances across multiple disciplines.

Host Jammu and Kashmir concluded the games with four medals, including one gold, one silver and two bronze medals, reflecting gradual improvement in performance at the national winter sporting event.

Anchal Thakur, representing Himachal Pradesh, who won gold and silver medals in the Slalom event, described the experience as a proud and happy moment, saying competing in Gulmarg alongside athletes from different parts of the country strengthened sportsmanship and exposure.

She expressed hope that more disciplines would be added in future editions, noting that athletes train throughout the year and require consistent opportunities for recognition and performance.

Indian Army gold medalist Mayank Pawar said he was satisfied with the facilities and arrangements provided during the games. He added that he is preparing for the 2027 World Championship and continuing focused

training to compete at higher international levels.

Officials said the successful conclusion of the games highlighted Gulmarg's emergence as a premier winter sports destination and demonstrated the expanding winter sports ecosystem in India. (KNO)

Earlier stone-pelters

advantage and sporting potential make it ideal for winter sports.

He expressed confidence that Gulmarg will develop into a world-class winter sports centre with improved infrastructure and regular events.

He said sports promote unity, discipline and constructive engagement for youth, adding that interactions with local athletes reflected growing enthusiasm and professionalism.

Mandaviya said the Khelo India Winter Games are helping build a winter sports ecosystem while strengthening Jammu and Kashmir's tourism profile nationally and internationally.

NEXT KIWG IN GULMARG WILL BE 15 DAY FESTIVAL

He announced that future editions of the Winter Games will be extended from four days to nearly 15 days, with the addition of a Fit India carnival and related activities.

While reaffirming the Government's commitment to transforming the region into a premier global winter sports hub, the Union Minister said, "Next Khelo India Winter Games in Gulmarg will be a 15-day festival."

He said, "The land of Kashmir has immense potential, Gulmarg will be the global hub for Winter Sports in the coming times,"

Mandaviya emphasized that sports have the power to unite society, foster sportsmanship, create harmony and drive development.

Reflecting on his interaction with athletes and coaches at Khelo India Centres in Jammu & Kashmir, he noted the remarkable sporting spirit emerging from the region.

In a bid to promote sports, culture and tourism and to make Gulmarg a "world-class tourism destination", Mandaviya said the region's potential needed to be fully explored. "I have travelled to 55 countries and also travelled to Switzerland in Europe. Today when I was on the highest slopes of Pir Panjal and watched with awe the white beauty all around, it was simply breath-taking," he said.

"I am all for a 15-day festival in Gulmarg. It will not only have all the components of winter sports competition like skiing and snow mountaineering, it will also include a FIT India carnival and cultural programmes to give it a festive atmosphere. To explore the amazing potential of the region, we need to do more to make a global tourism destination," he added.

MANDAVIYA FELICITATES INDIAN ARMY TEAM FOR DEFENDING KIWG CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE

Mandaviya felicitated the Indian Army team for defending the Khelo India Winter Games championship title. Army won medals, including nine golds, six silvers and eight bronze. Runners-up Himachal Pradesh (14 medals including six golds, seven silvers and one bronze) and No. 3 Haryana were also handed their trophies by the Union minister.

He reiterated that the Khelo Bharat Niti has been transforming the face of Indian sports. "Khelo Bharat Niti will fulfil the aspirations of the youth of India. Times have changed and there can be no politics in sports. Our policies are athlete centric and not built in favour of national federations," said Dr Mandaviya.

PRaises J&K ADMIN FOR SUCCESSFULLY CONDUCTING GULMARG LEG OF KIWG 2026

Praising the Jammu and Kashmir administration for successfully conducting the Gulmarg leg of KIWG 2026, Dr Mandaviya congratulated all stakeholders, especially the security forces, for enabling a seamless Games.

The first phase of KIWG 2026 were held in Ladakh from January 20-26. More than 900 athletes from 25 states and Union Territories took part in six different sports between Gulmarg and Leh.

The Union minister also said a National Centre of Excellence for winter sports will also be established in Jammu & Kashmir. (KNO)

India, Israel condemn

the two leaders also reiterated their unwavering commitment to advancing global peace and security and welcomed US President Donald Trump's "Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict."

They discussed the regional developments, including the peace process, and underlined the need for the establishment of a just and durable peace, security and freedom of navigation and trade in the region through dialogue and mutual understanding.

Modi arrived in Israel on Wednesday on a two-day visit to the country at the invitation of Netanyahu. It is his second visit to Israel in nine years.

The India-Israel relationship was elevated to the level of strategic partnership during his first visit to that country in July 2017.

Prime Minister Netanyahu and Prime Minister Modi agreed and decided to elevate the Strategic Partnership to a new level - 'A Special Strategic Partnership for Peace, Innovation & Prosperity', the statement added.

Terror graph declining

create disturbances in our country."

TERRORIST LAUNCH PADS ACROSS BORDER UNDER WATCH

On the reported revival of terror launch pads and camps across the border following Operation Sindoor, the Army Commander said the developments are under constant surveillance.

"We have kept them under watch. We are fully aware of what actions are taking place there. If they are trying to regenerate or re-assemble their terrorist bases, we have that information. We will formulate our plans accordingly," he said, adding that operational details could not be shared due to security considerations.

Lt Gen Katiyar alleged that infiltration attempts continue to receive backing from across the border. "We believe the Pakistan Army is supporting infiltration. The terrorists are coming after training, and there is a possibility that the Pakistan Army may be helping in their training," he said.

He further accused Pakistan's military leadership of perpetuating confrontation to retain domestic relevance. "Their relevance comes through a state of confrontation with India. Despite repeated peace efforts from our side, they keep doing something to keep this confrontation alive," he said.

WILL NOT BE DETERRED BY NUCLEAR THREATS

Dismissing nuclear threats as a pressure tactic, Lt Gen Katiyar asserted that the Indian Army would not be deterred in safeguarding national security.

"We see it as a bogey meant to prevent us from taking strong action. We will not get deterred by nuclear threats," he said.

Referring to Operation Sindoor, he said Pakistan had issued nuclear warnings while simultaneously seeking a ceasefire. "During Operation Sindoor, they desperately sought a ceasefire while issuing nuclear threats. We ignored those threats. This time, we are better prepared, with a clear future plan," he stated.

On the possibility of another retaliatory action, he said Pakistan had been taught a "very strong lesson" and any renewed provocation would invite a stronger response. "Our preparations are ongoing. If they do not understand this lesson and create conflict conditions again due to their internal reasons, we will respond in an even better and stronger manner," he said.

Asked about the scale of a potential future response, the Army Commander said, "The response will be stronger than what we have done earlier. How far we go and at what level depends on the situation at that time, but we are very clear that it will be harsher than last time."

Clarifying claims about foreign mediation during Operation Sindoor, Lt Gen Katiyar outlined the sequence of events. "After the attack on May 7, 2025, our DGMO conveyed that we had completed our action and wanted to talk. They refused. Fighting continued for 88 hours. After extensive damage to their military bases, their DGMO approached ours, and it was during that conversation that the ceasefire draft was prepared. After deliberations, our government accepted the request," he said.

Rejecting suggestions that civilian areas were targeted, he said the operation was precise and objective-driven. "We did not target any civilian areas. We initially targeted only terrorist bases. When Pakistan attacked our military stations, we responded by attacking their military stations and air bases."

Reiterating the Army's preparedness, Lt Gen Katiyar said operational readiness must serve as a deterrent. "Our preparation must be such that the enemy thinks ten times before undertaking any untoward act," he said.

ARMY TO RAISE DEDICATED DRONE PLATOONS

Lt General Katiyar said the Indian Army is set to induct dedicated drone platoons across infantry, artillery and armoured regiments while expanding specialised 'Bhairav' units to strengthen deep-strike and special operations capabilities.

He said the Army has restructured its formations in recognition of the growing importance of drones and autonomous systems in modern warfare.

Lt General Katiyar said dedicated 'Ashni' drone platoons— small sub-units within infantry battalions — have already been created, and similar specialised platoons will now be raised in every regiment, including artillery and armoured units.

The Army Commander noted that these platoons have developed expertise in drone operations, adding that every regiment will have a component specialising in drone warfare. Drone integration, he said, has been carried out down to the smallest sub-units, reflecting a shift toward networked and technology-driven combat.

Highlighting operational readiness, Lt Gen Katiyar said future conflicts are likely to demand swift, precise action both to protect troops and to conduct accurate strikes against hostile targets. The expansion of drone capabilities is aimed at enhancing surveillance, reconnaissance and precision engagement capacity across formations.

He added that most of the drones recently showcased during a military demonstration were manufactured in Western Command workshops. The Army has begun fabricating drones in-house at scale, tailoring them to specific operational requirements. According to him, in-house production allows the Army to align technology development with field realities and evolving battlefield needs.

'BHAIRAV' UNITS

Alongside drone expansion, the Army is strengthening its specialised 'Bhairav' battalions, which are being structured as agile, light commando forces capable of operating independently in hostile territory.

Lt Gen Katiyar said these battalions are intended to enhance strike and special operations capability, particularly in scenarios requiring deep penetration and rapid execution. Future battlefields, he indicated, would rely increasingly on small, mobile teams capable of precision tasks beyond conventional frontlines.

The 'Bhairav' units are expected to be employed for deep operations inside adversary territory as part of an integrated operational framework.

WESTERN COMMAND SHOWCASES DECISIVE COMBAT READINESS

People of Pathankot wakeup with unusual sounds of blasts and hovering of fighter aircrafts in the skies on Thursday morning as Western Command turned its annual investiture ceremony into a full-scale battlefield simulation at Dhyana Chand Stadium, Mamun Military Station, sending a strong message on combat readiness and future warfighting capabilities.

The ceremony was presided over by Western Command, Army Commander Manoj Kumar Katiyar, it combined military honours with an elaborate Operational and Combat Capability Demonstration, transforming the stadium into a live war zone for over an hour. The event was attended by senior military officials, civil administration representatives, police and paramilitary officers, veterans, families and local civilians.

Breaking away from the traditional hall-based format, Lt Gen Katiyar said the decision to hold the ceremony in a field environment reflected the Army's combat-focused mindset.

"Instead of a ceremonial display, we showcased modern equipment and operational capabilities. This is our way of thanking the units that performed exceptionally well during Operation Sindoor," he said. Units were honoured for exemplary service during Operation Sindoor and Operation Rahat, reinforcing what the Army Commander described as a culture of "courage, professionalism and selfless service."

The highlight of the demonstration was the debut performance of the elite Bhairav Battalion, a newly raised light commando force designed to bridge the gap between conventional infantry and Para Special Forces. The battalion executed coordinated heliborne assaults, anti-terror strikes and simulated deep-penetration missions. Robotic mules, sniffer dogs and small assault teams demolished a mock terror hideout amid controlled blasts and live-fire manoeuvres.

"These specialised battalions will enhance our strike and special operations capability. In coming times, small, agile teams capable of penetrating deep into hostile territory will be decisive," Lt Gen Katiyar said.

A swarm of indigenous drones dominated the skyline, including long-range UAVs with ranges exceeding 100 km. Missile-armed unmanned systems, surveillance drones and loitering munitions showcased precision strike capabilities.

The Army Commander announced the raising of dedicated 'Ashni' drone platoons across infantry, artillery and armoured regiments.

"We realised the use of drones is extremely important. Therefore, we have integrated drone usage across all units, right down to the smallest sub-units," he said.

The demonstration also featured battlefield digitisation and network-centric warfare systems, integrated multi-domain operations combining land, air and electronic warfare, BrahMos and Akash missile batteries in simulated precision engagements, Ajeya tank formations and latest field artillery guns, Apache attack helicopters providing aerial fire support, Multi-sector drone swarms operated in sync with ground formations, reflecting Western Command's ability to conduct deep precision engagements and shape the tactical battlefield.

Referring to past conflicts including 1971 and Kargil, Lt Gen Katiyar said the western neighbour had failed to learn lessons. "Operation Sindoor was another lesson. While we are committed to peace, any future provocation will be met with far more decisive action," he warned. He stressed that the danger has not receded. "Our preparation must be greater than before, and the response stronger than in the past." (KNO)

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Mohammad Yousuf Bhat, F/o Muhammad Safli Bhat, R/o Nowgam Shangus, District Anantnag, hereby inform the general public that I belong to the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) category, and my total family income from all sources does not exceed Rs. 65,000/- (Rupees Sixty-Five Thousand only) per annum. I have applied for issuance of an EWS Certificate in favour of my son, Muhammad Safli Bhat, from the concerned department. It is further stated that neither I nor my son have availed any benefit under the said scheme from any Government department till date. I belong to a very poor family background. The documents submitted by me to the concerned authorities are genuine and true to the best of my knowledge. If any person has any objection regarding the above-mentioned facts, they may file their objection before the concerned authority within the stipulated period from the date of publication of this notice.

Mohammad Yousuf Bhat
R/o Nowgam Shangus
District Anantnag

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Mohammad Yousuf Bhat, F/o Muhammad Muafiz Bhat, R/o Nowgam Shangus, District Anantnag, Jammu & Kashmir, hereby inform the general public that I belong to the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) category, and my total family income from all sources does not exceed Rs. 65,000/- (Rupees Sixty-Five Thousand only) per annum. I have applied for issuance of an EWS Certificate in favour of my son, Mohammad Muafiz Bhat, from the concerned department. It is further stated that neither I nor my son have availed any benefit under the said scheme from any Government department till date. I belong to a very poor family background. The documents submitted by me to the concerned authorities are genuine and true to the best of my knowledge. If any person has any objection regarding the above-mentioned facts, they may submit their objection before the concerned authority within the stipulated period from the date of publication of this notice.

Mohammad Yousuf Bhat
R/o Nowgam Shangus
District Anantnag

SC bans NCERT Class 8 book over chapter on corruption in judiciary

■ Orders seizure of all copies

PTI

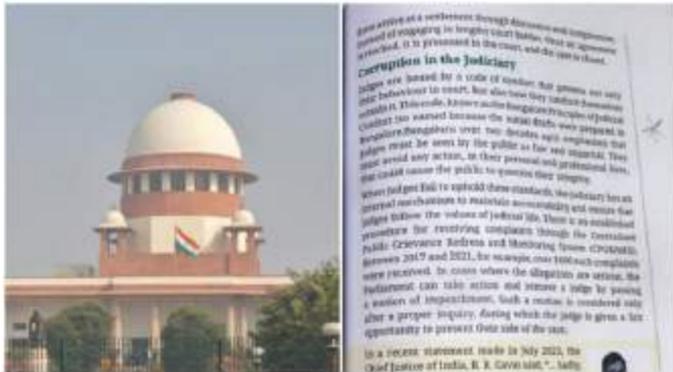
New Delhi, Feb 26: Observing that there appeared to be a "well orchestrated conspiracy" to defame the judiciary, the Supreme Court on Thursday imposed a "complete blanket ban" on the Class 8 NCERT book with a chapter on corruption in the judiciary and ordered that all copies, physical and digital, be seized.

"They have fired the gunshot. The judiciary is bleeding," a bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant said, a day after the National Council of Educational Research & Training apologised for "inappropriate content" in the social science textbook and said it would be rewritten in consultation with appropriate authorities.

The bench, also comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi, issued show cause notices to the NCERT director and the secretary of the department of school education and asked them to explain why contempt proceedings should not be initiated against those responsible.

Referring to the NCERT's communication on Wednesday, the CJ said, "That itself shows deep-rooted conspiracy... a well-orchestrated conspiracy."

In its stern comments, the bench added that there seemed to be a "calculated



move" to undermine the institution and demean the dignity of judiciary. It warned of serious action if its directions are defied in any manner.

Referring to the contents of the book, the bench observed that such misconduct, having everlasting impact on the judiciary, would fall within the definition of criminal contempt. This would erode people's faith in the judiciary if allowed to go unchecked, the apex court said.

"It is my duty as the head of the institution to find out who is responsible; heads must roll," the CJ said, adding, "We would like to have a deeper probe."

The bench then directed that the NCERT, in

coordination with the education departments of the Centre and states, ensure that all copies of the book, either hard or soft copy, are removed from public access.

"As an abundant precaution, a complete blanket ban is imposed on any further publication, reprinting or digital dissemination of the book," the bench said.

It said any attempt to distribute the book, either physically or digitally, shall be taken as a willful defiance of the court's order.

A section titled "Corruption in the Judiciary" in the new textbook says corruption, a massive backlog of cases, and the lack of an adequate number of judges are among the challenges faced by the judicial system.

It also states that judges are bound by a code of conduct that governs not only their behaviour in court, but also how they conduct themselves outside it.

The Supreme Court had taken suo motu cognisance of the matter on Wednesday.

On Thursday, it made clear that the proceedings were not meant to stifle any legitimate criticism or the exercise of right to scrutinise the judiciary.

At the outset, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta tendered an unconditional and unqualified apology on behalf of the Ministry of Education.

The CJ, however, was unconvicted. He said there was not a single word of apology in the NCERT's

communication and it instead tried to justify the chapter.

The bench observed it seemed that the choice of words and expressions in the book cannot be said to be an inadvertent or bonafide error. The top court observed it was fundamentally improper to expose students to "biased narrative" at this age which might lead to fundamental misconceptions.

The bench posted the matter for further hearing on March 11.

The CJ on Wednesday said nobody on earth would be allowed to defame the judiciary and taint its integrity.

"At any cost, I will not permit it. However high it may be, the law will take its course. I know how to deal with it," a visibly irked CJ had said after senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Abhishek Singhvi mentioned the matter.

The council, responsible for school education curriculum, put on hold the circulation of the textbook hours after it took the book off its website on Wednesday. It said it "holds the judiciary in highest esteem and considers it to be the upholder of the Indian Constitution and protector of fundamental rights" and termed the error purely unintentional.

BJP will win West Bengal polls, drive out every single infiltrator: Amit Shah

PTI

Araria, Feb 26: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday exuded confidence that the BJP will win the upcoming assembly polls in West Bengal, and "drive out every single infiltrator" from the state, which was among the ones "worst affected by demographic change".

Shah made the remark in Araria district of Bihar, where he launched projects worth Rs 175 crore of the Sashstra Seema Bal (SSB) and dedicated to the nation a couple of new border outposts.

"It is the top priority of the BJP government to drive out every single infiltrator from the country, who are not just a threat to national security, but also feed on welfare benefits meant for people, thereby diluting the impact schemes run by the government could make," he said.

"Infiltration on a large scale also results in encroachments in bordering areas. We are committed to demolishing these. Infiltration also poses the threat of demographic change, which can wreak havoc with the culture, and even geography, of a region," Shah said.

The Narendra Modi government at the Centre has decided to set up



a high-powered committee to study and "undo demographic change", by identifying the most vulnerable areas, the home minister said.

"Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal are the states worst affected by demographic change. West Bengal goes to polls soon. We are confident that the BJP would win the elections. And, it is the top priority of every BJP government to drive out infiltrators," he asserted.

The BJP, which had been a marginal power in West Bengal until a decade ago, has over the years expanded its footprint and

emerged as the principal challenger to the Trinamool Congress headed by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who seeks a fourth consecutive term in office.

"The beginning of crack-down on infiltrators, though, will be made in this Seemanchal region of Bihar, where I had the chance to stay for four days during the assembly elections held a few months ago. I thank people of the state for their resounding mandate to the NDA. The BJP had contested the polls on the issue of infiltration, notwithstanding the criticism from our opponents.

Digital platforms must take responsibility for online content, safety of children: Vaishnav

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 26: Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Thursday asserted that digital platforms must take responsibility for the content they host, stressing that ensuring the online safety of children and citizens is their obligation.

Addressing the Digital News Publishers Association (DNPA) Conclave here, Vaishnav said platforms need to "wake up" and understand the importance of reinforcing trust in the institutions that human society has built over thousands of years.

"Platforms must take responsibility for the content that is hosted by them. The online safety of children, the online safety

of all citizens is the responsibility of the platforms," he said.

The minister cautioned that non-adherence to these principles would make these platforms accountable, noting that the nature of the internet has changed now.

He also underlined the need to regulate the use of AI-generated content, saying such material should not be generated without the consent of the person whose face, voice or personality is used.

"The time has come to make that big inflectional change. I request the platforms to cooperate with this human society's basic needs. The society which is today asking for this change has to be respected," he said.

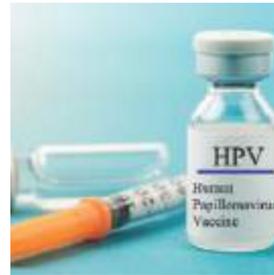
PM to launch nationwide HPV vaccination campaign on Feb 28 from Ajmer

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 26: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the nationwide Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination campaign for girls aged 14 years on February 28 from Rajasthan's Ajmer, leading to the formal start of India's battle to eliminate preventable cancers among women.

Single-shot Gardasil 4, a quadrivalent HPV vaccine that provides protection against HPV types 16 and 18 which cause cervical cancer as well as types 6 and 11, will be administered during the campaign.

In an official letter sent to all states



on February 25, the Union health ministry said that the launch of HPV vaccination campaign for all girls

aged 14 years has been planned tentatively at 11.30 am on February 28.

"The Prime Minister has kindly consented to launch the campaign from Ajmer, Rajasthan," the letter by Aradhana Patnaik, Additional Secretary and Mission Director (NHM) in the Health Ministry, said.

During the launch, all states and Union territories will connect the event virtually through a link in coordination with their local NIC with the presence of chief ministers, administrators and state health ministers along with health officials from their respective state and Union territories headquarters.

The letter stated that cervical

cancer is a significant public health concern in the country as well as globally. It is caused by Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and it is the only cancer which can be prevented by a vaccine.

"We are committed to encourage vaccination for girls for the prevention of cervical cancer," it said.

"All the girls aged 14 years across the country will be vaccinated with a single dose of Gardasil 4 vaccine at the Government Health facilities (Ayushman Arogya Mandir-Primary Health Centers, Community Health Centers, sub-district/ district hospitals and government medical colleges and hospitals)," the letter said.

Goyal meets US Comm Secy, discusses trade, economic partnership

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 26: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday said he has held a meeting with US Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick and US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor and discussed ways to expand trade relationship between the two countries.

"Hosted US Secretary of Commerce @HowardLutnick & @USAmbIndia Sergio Gor. Engaged in very fruitful discussions to expand our trade and economic partnership," Goyal said in a social media post.

The meeting holds immense importance as both countries are looking to finalise the legal text for the first phase of a bilateral trade agreement.

Chief negotiators of both sides were scheduled to meet this week in Washington to finalise the legal text for the pact but it was postponed following the US Supreme Court order striking down President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs.

After the court order, the US imposed 10 per cent tariffs on all the countries for 150 days with effect from February 24. Trump has announced to increase it to 15 per cent, but there is no official order on that yet.

Goyal on Tuesday had said "as soon as" there is more clarity on the tariffs front in the US, India will resume trade talks with America.

In a major setback to Trump's pivotal economic agenda in his second term, the US Supreme



Court ruled that the tariffs imposed by Trump on nations around the world were illegal and that the president had exceeded his authority when he imposed the sweeping levies by using the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) of 1977.

The US had imposed a 25 per cent reciprocal tariff on India in August 2025. Later, an additional 25 per cent duty was imposed for buying Russian crude oil, taking the total tariffs on India to 50 per cent. India and the US, earlier this month, agreed on a framework

to finalise an interim trade deal, under which Washington will cut down the tariffs to 18 per cent. To sign and implement the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement, the framework has to be converted into a legal document.

During 2021-25, the US was India's largest trading partner in goods. The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total exports, 6.22 per cent of its imports, and 10.73 per cent of its bilateral trade.

In 2024-25, bilateral trade were USD 86.5 billion in exports and USD 45.3 billion in imports.

INOX CINEMA
SHIVPORA SRINAGAR

Movies Schedule

Friday, 27th February

O' Romeo
SAJID NADDEEPWALA PRESENTS
VISHAL BHARDWAJ FILM

O' ROMEO (A)
HINDI WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES - 06:00PM

Viyaah Kartaare Da

VIIAAH KARTAARE DA (U/A 13+)
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Modi holds wide-ranging talks with Netanyahu to boost India-Israel ties



PTI
Jerusalem, Feb 26: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday held wide-ranging talks with his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu, focusing on boosting bilateral ties in areas of defence and security, trade, technology and agriculture.
The two sides are also expected to deliberate on the prevailing situation in the Middle East.
India and Israel are also likely to discuss the implementation of the India-Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and cooperation under the framework of I2U2 (India-Israel-UAE-USA).
Ahead of his talks with Netanyahu, PM Modi met Israeli President Isaac Herzog.
Both leaders explored avenues to further enhance cooperation in education, start-ups, innovation, technology and

connectivity, External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on the Modi-Herzog meeting.
PM Modi landed in Israel on Wednesday on a two-day visit with an aim to impart a new momentum to the bilateral ties.
It is Modi's second visit to Israel in nine years. The India-Israel relationship was elevated to the level of strategic partnership during Modi's first visit to that country in July 2017.
India and Israel share a robust strategic partnership with strong cooperation across science and technology, innovation, defence and security, trade and investment, agriculture, water, and people-to-people relations.
There has been an upswing in India-Israel ties in the last few years, including in the areas of defence, scientific research, cybersecurity and innovation.

PM Modi visits Yad Vashem memorial, pays tributes to victims of Holocaust



PTI
Jerusalem, Feb 26: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday visited Yad Vashem memorial here and paid tributes to the victims of the Holocaust.
PM Modi was accompanied by his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu.
"Honouring the memory of victims of the Holocaust

and renewing our shared commitment to uphold peace and human dignity, PM @narendramodi visited Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre," Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a post on X.
Modi laid a wreath and paid homage to the victims of the Holocaust. He also visited the poignant Book of Names Hall, a powerful tribute preserving the memory of millions who perished during the Holocaust.
"The memorial stands as a solemn reminder of the brutality of the past and our collective resolve to stand against injustice and create a better world," Jaiswal said.
This was the second visit of Prime Minister Modi to Yad Vashem.

US top general walks a tightrope on Iran: Report



IANIS
Washington, Feb 26: The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has been quietly drafting military options for a possible strike on Iran, even as he seeks to avoid direct confrontation with President Donald Trump, according to accounts published in US media.
As chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Gen Dan Caine has been "drafting military options for potentially striking Iran," with a steady stream of top officials from the Army, Navy, and Air Force summoned to his office, CNN reported. In internal discussions at the Pentagon, Caine has raised concerns about the "scale, complexity and potential for US casualties" if a major operation were launched against Iran, according to the report.
At the same time, he has overseen the "assembling of the largest collection of US military hardware assembled in the Middle East since the invasion of Iraq," CNN said.
The balancing act comes as the United States and Iran prepare to resume nuclear negotiations in Geneva. Tehran is expected to present a new proposal on enrichment, even as Washington amasses forces in the region, The Washington Post reported.
"I don't think a final decision has been made yet," Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska) said after being briefed on the situation.
Trump has repeatedly insisted that earlier US strikes had "obliterated" Iran's nuclear programme, though international officials have questioned the extent of the damage, according to the Post.
On the military front, the Wall Street Journal reported that the US has sent F-22 fighter jets to Israel for the first time for a potential war-time mission. The move marks a deeper level of US-Israeli military coordination amid tensions with Tehran.
The F-22 deployment will allow the US to defend Israeli territory and American forces in the Middle East from possible Iranian retaliation, the journal said.

Hillary Clinton to testify in US House panel's Jeffrey Epstein probe



AFP
New York, Feb 26: Former US secretary of state Hillary Clinton is to testify behind closed doors Thursday before a congressional committee investigating the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein and his accomplice Ghislaine Maxwell.
Former president Bill Clinton is scheduled to answer questions the following day from the Republican-led House Oversight Committee about his relations with Epstein, who died in a New York jail cell in 2019 while awaiting trial.
The Clintons had initially rejected subpoenas ordering them to testify in the panel's

probe, but the Democratic power couple eventually agreed to do so after House Republicans threatened to hold them in contempt of Congress.
Democrats say the investigation is being weaponized to attack political opponents of Republican President Donald Trump — himself a former Epstein associate who has not been called to testify — rather than to conduct legitimate oversight.
Trump and Bill Clinton, both 79, feature prominently in the recently released trove of government documents related to Epstein, but have each said they broke ties with the financier before his 2008 conviction in Florida as a sex offender. Mere mention in the files is not proof of having committed a crime.
The Clintons called for their depositions to be public but the committee insisted on questioning them behind closed doors, a move Bill Clinton denounced as "pure politics" and akin to a "kangaroo court."
"If they want answers, let's stop the games & do this the right way: in a public hearing, where the American people can see for themselves what this is really about," the former Democratic president said on X.
Hillary Clinton, 78, who lost the 2016 presidential election to Trump, said in an interview with the BBC last week that she and her husband "have nothing to hide."
She met Maxwell "on a few occasions," she said, but never had any meaningful interactions with Epstein.
Republicans are trying to deflect attention away from Trump by having them testify, she said.
"Look at this shiny object. We're going to have the Clintons, even Hillary Clinton, who never met the guy," she said. The depositions are being held in Chappaqua, New York, where the Clintons reside.

Sri Lanka skipper Dasun Shanaka wants govt to stop 'negativity' against players

PTI
Colombo, Feb 26: Fitness and form were not the only areas in which Sri Lanka failed, said captain Dasun Shanaka as he also blamed the "negative environment created outside" for his team's ouster from the T20 World Cup and oddly urged the government to protect the players from criticism.
Shanaka apologised to his country for the disappointing ouster from the Super Eight stage after a 61-run loss to New Zealand following a 51-run defeat at the hands of England. However, he was not too happy with the criticism that his players were facing due to underwhelming performances.
"As players, it's very hard for us to control the outside noise. So, most of the time, we mainly hear negative stuff, so no matter how positive we are as players, there is a negative environment created from the outside," he said after the loss to New Zealand here on Wednesday.
"So that's a disadvantage for cricket in Sri Lanka, we only have this game and I don't think this could be saved. So, why the negativity is being spread like this? Okay we lost a World Cup; we know the reasons. We all have concerns."
"So, I think, we'll play and go, but at least for the players coming up next, if the government



could interfere and stop those, I believe that will be a great help for the better mental health," he added in an unprecedented request.
In his apology to the country Shanaka said his team just could not deliver in the Super Eights after a fairly good group campaign in which the co-hosts ousted Australia.
"We feel very sorry about this. England match was also a match that we could have won...if we were more sensible, we could have won that. This match was a one-sided game. For the spectators, I don't have anything to tell, we have not given them any win that they can be happy about," Shanaka said.
Elaborating on the reasons for the team's downward spiral after the group stage, he said the wickets here didn't behave the way he expected.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

رَمَضَانَ الْمُبَارَكِ

1447 H / 2026 CE

وقت افطار	اعتقاص سحری	رمضان المبارک	تاریخ
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06:31 PM	05:37 AM	12	02
06:32 PM	05:36 AM	13	03
06:33 PM	05:34 AM	14	04
06:33 PM	05:33 AM	15	05

DUA FOR SEHRI
وَبَصُومٍ غَدَ نَوَيْتُ مِنْ شَهْرِ رَمَضَانَ
I intend to keep the fast for tomorrow in the month of Ramadan

DUA FOR IFTAAR
اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي لَكَ صُمْتُ وَبِكَ آمَنْتُ [وَعَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْتُ] وَعَلَى رِزْقِكَ أَفْطَرْتُ
O Allah! I fasted for You and I believe in You and I put my trust in You and I break my fast with Your sustenance

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