



Express grief, sorrow without disturbing peace: CM Omar to people

Chairs civil society meet at SKICC; says will take up Iran students' issue with Gol, restrictions to be eased gradually

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Mar 04: Urging people to express grief, sorrow and anger without disturbing peace, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday called for maintaining calm and harmony in Jammu and Kashmir.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) the Chief Minister chaired a meeting of civil society members and senior religious leaders at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre here this afternoon.

Talking to reporters on the sidelines of the meeting, CM Omar said, "The government had invited them to deliberate on the prevailing situation and collectively appeal for calm



across the Union Territory."

He said that an earnest appeal has been made to J&K people to maintain peace and communal harmony, especially in Kashmir.

"We should express our grief, sorrow and anger in a peaceful manner. We express whatever



we have to express our anger, our condolences, our feelings. But wherever we express them, whether in our mosques, in our shrines or in our imambaras, we must express them peacefully," he said.

He thanked civil society members and religious leaders

for their cooperation, expressing hope that the joint appeal would resonate with the masses.

IRAN STUDENTS ISSUE

The Chief Minister also spoke about concerns raised by parents of students studying in Iran, saying several parents had met him both at the meeting venue and earlier at his residence.

He said many students have already been shifted to safer places, but difficulties persist in some cases, particularly involving final-year medical students doing internships in hospitals.

"Some students told the embassy they are safe in hospitals and do not want to leave. However, there are others, especially between the fourth and fifth year, | More on P6

Civil society meet discusses easing tensions

Urges peaceful expression of grief under religious guidance

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Mar 04: Political leaders and representatives of civil society on Wednesday called for peaceful expression of grief in Jammu and Kashmir following the assassination of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei.

As per the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) Chief Minister Omar Abdullah convened a meeting with civil society members, traders and senior religious figures at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre here to deliberate on the prevailing situation and measures to ease tensions.

Speaking after the meeting, PDP MLA Budgam Aga Syed Muntazir Mehdi said Jammu and Kashmir is in deep grief following the killing of Ayatollah Khamenei. "The whole of Jammu and Kashmir is in shock and there

is a lot of sorrow," Aga Mehdi said.

"The main thing was that the children should be left alone unconditionally," he said, adding that the Chief Minister assured the participants that he would take up the matter with higher authorities.

He also appealed to the public to follow the programme issued by religious leadership while protesting.

"My request to the public is that the way our religious leadership has given us the programme—whether to protest locally or to remain limited to imambaras—people should follow that direction and not be influenced by sensationalism on Facebook or Twitter," he said.

Meanwhile, Kashmir Economic Alliance (KEA) Chairman, Muhammad Yasin Khan said the Chief Minister stressed the need to allow space for people to express their grief | More on P6

PM Modi wishes people 'spring of happiness' on Holi



PTI

New Delhi, Mar 04: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday extended Holi greetings to the people and wished them a spring of happiness.

Modi said Holi infuses atmosphere with new energy and this is its greatest speciality.

"Heartiest greetings to all fellow citizens on the occasion of Holi. May this festival, filled with colours and zeal, bring a spring of happiness for everyone," he said in a message in Hindi.

"The festival of Holi infuses the entire atmosphere with new energy. This is the greatest speciality of this celebration. The way the colours of happiness are seen scattered everywhere, it leaves | More on P6

Infiltration bid foiled along LoC in Bhimber Gali Sector: Army



KNO Desk

Srinagar, Mar 04: An infiltration attempt by terrorists was foiled along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Bhimber Gali area during the early hours of Tuesday, March 4, 2026, following credible intelligence inputs and sustained surveillance, the Army said.

In a statement issued to news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), a spokesperson said that alert troops of the Army's White Knight Corps detected suspicious movement in the area and responded swiftly, engaging the infiltrators and

successfully preventing any breach of the LoC.

"The coordinated ground action ensured that the enemy's attempt to cross over was thwarted. Own troops have since been reoriented to maintain firm control and domination of the area. Integrated ground and aerial surveillance has been intensified, and a heightened state of alert continues across the sector to counter any further attempts," it said.

It added that security forces remain vigilant, with a robust operational posture in place to safeguard the LoC and surrounding areas. (KNO)

J&K parents demand full evacuation of students as Iran crisis deepens

'Every passing hour increases our fear'

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Mar 04: Families across Jammu and Kashmir are gripped by fear and distress as hundreds of students from the Valley, enrolled in medical and other professional courses in Iran, continue to face a volatile and uncertain security situation with no clear evacuation plan in sight. The parents of these students are appealing to the Government of India for their immediate evacuation.

As per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), students enrolled in medical and other professional courses in cities such as Tehran, Qom, and Urmia are reported to be living under constant fear as tensions escalate across multiple regions of the country.

Parents said that although some students were recently relocated from Tehran to Qom as a precautionary step by Indian Embassy in Tehran, the overall security environment remains deeply alarming as the whole country is under attack.

"There is a widespread sense of fear and helplessness. Even after relocation, no place



appears safe at the moment," said a parent from Srinagar.

Fresh reports of loud explosions, including one near a student dormitory in Urmia, have intensified anxiety among students. They said that areas around universities have been affected, with some buildings struck, leaving students shaken and traumatised.

Students relocated to Qom have also reported hearing explosions shortly after their arrival, raising serious concerns about the effectiveness of internal relocation as a safety measure.

"Our children are extremely scared. Explosions near their hostels have left them mentally disturbed. They are unable to sleep or focus on their studies. We fear for their lives every moment," another

distressed parent said.

Parents and student bodies say the crisis has now evolved beyond a security emergency into a mental health one, with students experiencing severe stress, anxiety, panic attacks, and depression amid continuous uncertainty. Families back home are equally affected, with many enduring sleepless nights and constant worry.

"This is not just a security issue anymore—it is a psychological crisis affecting both students and their families," a group of parents said.

While acknowledging the steps taken earlier by authorities, including precautionary relocations, parents and student bodies have now demanded a full-scale evacuation of all Indian students from Iran. The All | More on P6

Precautionary restrictions to continue today

Decision on upgrading mobile internet speed after review

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Mar 04: Precautionary restrictions imposed in several parts of the Kashmir on Monday will continue to remain in force on Thursday.

The precautionary restrictions were put in place earlier this week following US and Israeli attacks on Iran which led to the killing of Iran Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the situation was being reviewed on a regular basis but restrictions would continue to ensure maintenance of law and order. "Security arrangements have been beefed up in sensitive areas, including parts of downtown Srinagar and Lal Chowk, to prevent any untoward incident," he said, adding, "The situation is under review. Restrictions will continue on Thursday as a precautionary measure."

Another official said that mobile internet services across the Valley have been restricted to 2G speed and the

arrangement will remain in place till Thursday evening.

It's in place to mention here that security personnel have been deployed in strength at several locations, with barricades erected in vulnerable pockets. Additional forces have also been stationed in areas that witnessed processions and rallies over the past few days.

While authorities maintained that the overall law and order situation is under control, peaceful rallies and processions were reported from parts of Sopore in Baramulla district, as well as Budgam and Bandipora districts.

In Srinagar, security forces maintained a visible presence in downtown localities and commercial hubs to deter gatherings. Movement of vehicles was largely normal in most areas, though some localities witnessed restrictions on assembly.

Officials said district administrations were closely monitoring developments and were in touch with community leaders to prevent any untoward incident.

"No major incident has been reported so | More on P6

PM Modi welcomes Finland President, says bilateral relations will reach new heights



PTI

New Delhi, Mar 04: With the arrival of Finland President Alexander Stubb here Wednesday morning, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the relations between the two countries will reach new heights.

President Stubb was accorded a ceremonial welcome and a Guard of Honour, and was received by Minister of State for External Affairs K V Singh at the airport.

"Welcome to India, President Alexander Stubb. I fully agree with you, your visit will take India-Finland relations to new heights. I eagerly look forward to our meeting tomorrow and to your keynote address at the Raisina Dialogue 2026," Modi wrote on X.

The prime minister made the comments in response to a post of President Stubb who said he was travelling to India on a state visit.

"I will meet | More on P6

Holi 2026: How India celebrates festival of colours across states

ANI

New Delhi, Mar 04: The nation immersed itself in joy and happiness with cheerful celebrations of Holi. From temple towns to metropolitan cities, people enjoyed the festivities by exchanging sweets, applying colour (gulal), offering prayers, and celebrating the victory of good over evil.

Holi, also known as the Spring Festival, marks the arrival of spring and the harvest season. The celebration is deeply rooted in Hindu mythology, symbolising the triumph of good over evil.

Children celebrated Holi in Raipur. In a post on X, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai wishes everyone a very Happy Holi. He said Holi is a sacred festival filled with a unique spectrum of colours, the sweet rhythm of enthusiasm, and boundless joy.

In Telangana, a large number of people celebrated Holi at People's Plaza in Hyderabad. Congress MLA Danam Nagendra says, "Holi is a festival where Hindus, Muslims and everyone come together to celebrate; c



everyone should do away with their differences."

In Madhya Pradesh, People celebrated holi with great enthusiasm and joy. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Wednesday celebrated Holi in Bhopal. He extended the Holi greetings to all the people in the state and country and highlighted government efforts, such as the Kisan Cabinet and an increase in

the dearness allowance, which he believed have made the celebration more significant.

In Assam, people danced and celebrated the Holi festival. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma joined the sacred Dou Utsav at Barpeta Satra on the auspicious occasion of Holi.

In the Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, the occasion took on a unique cultural

form with the historic Behro Dev Janki procession. Holi was celebrated with great enthusiasm, and in Rajouri, the celebration took a unique cultural form. Along with traditional Holi festivities, the historic Behro Dev janki procession was taken out, continuing a centuries-old custom that runs from February 26 to March 4 each year.

Extending Holi greetings

to the people, Prime Minister Narendra Modi wished for happiness, prosperity and success to everyone.

In a post on X, PM Modi said, "Heartfelt Holi greetings to all my fellow citizens. May this festival, brimming with colours and exuberance, bring a shower of joy to everyone. May every life be sprinkled with the hues of happiness, prosperity, and success—this is my heartfelt wish."

President Droupadi Murmu also conveyed her heartfelt greetings, expressing hope for the happiness and prosperity of all citizens.

In a post on X, she said that the festival of colours spreads love and optimism, while strengthening unity and brotherhood among people. She wished that Holi brings joy to every life and inspires collective efforts toward building a developed India.

"Heartfelt Holi greetings to all my fellow citizens from my side. This festival of colours infuses love and hope into people's lives and strengthens mutual unity and brotherhood. My wish is that this | More on P6

Deputy CM reviews Dhallian, Rata Galla bridge projects



KT NEWS DESK

RAJOURI, MARCH 04: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary on Wednesday inspected the progress on the 90-meter span Dhallian Bridge

being constructed over the Tawi River at Nowshera and the Rata Galla Bridge at Kalsian.

He called for expediting the pace of work to ensure timely completion and operationalisation of these vital

projects.

During the visit, the Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, reviewed the status of construction works and interacted with the concerned officers and engineers executing the project under the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development funded scheme. He stressed that the bridge is a vital connectivity project for the area and directed the executing agency to maintain the quality standards while accelerating the pace of work.

Later, on the auspicious occasion of Hola Mohalla, the Deputy Chief Minister paid obeisance at Gurudwara Shri Guru Singh Sabha. He offered prayers and sought blessings for peace, harmony and prosperity of the people.

On the occasion, Deputy Chief Minister said that the festival of Hola Mohalla symbolizes courage, devotion and the spirit of selfless service. He prayed that the values and teachings associated with the festival continue to inspire the society towards unity, harmony and collective progress.

Executive Engineer PWD Nowshera Sarwar Mehmood, Executive Engineer PMGSY Shahid Choudhary, District Mineral Officer Rajouri Mohammad Shafiq besides other district and sectoral officers accompanied the Deputy Chief Minister during the visit.

ADDC Shopian provides Ice Boxes to fishermen

KT NEWS DESK

SHOPIAN, MARCH 04: In a significant step towards strengthening the fisheries sector and enhancing the income of local fishermen, Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Shopian, Dr. Nasir Ahmed Lone Wednesday distributed 37 ice boxes among beneficiaries of the Fisheries Department under the Jammu & Kashmir Competitiveness Improvement Project (JKCIP) here at Mini Secretariat, Shopian.

The distribution, as per an official statement, aims to support local fishermen and fish farmers by ensuring proper preservation and transportation of fish, thereby enhancing quality, reducing post-harvest losses and improving market returns.

Speaking on the occasion, the ADDC emphasized the importance of modern facilities and government support in strengthening the fisheries sector and boosting the income of farmers associated with the trade.

The initiative marks another step towards promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities and empowering the fishing community in the district.

DC Kulgam reviews functioning of EMRS Tangmarg

KT NEWS DESK

KULGAM, MARCH 04: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, Wednesday visited Sub-division, D.H. Pora, where he inspected the functioning of the Sub-District Hospital (SDH) and the Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) at Tangmarg, taking stock of the facilities available at both institutions. At the Eklavya Model Residential School, the DC reviewed the progress of ongoing projects, including the construction of the hostel, Principal's residential quarters, and other infrastructure works. He directed the concerned Executive Engineer to set clear targets for timely completion of these projects and ensure adherence to the stipulated timelines. He also instructed that proper landscaping of lawns and surrounding areas be undertaken to enhance the overall campus environment.

During his visit to the school, the DC, as per an official statement,

interacted with students and emphasized the importance of providing quality education. He urged the faculty to maintain high academic standards and ensure holistic development of students.

At Sub-District Hospital D.H. Pora, the DC assessed the range and quality of healthcare services being provided to the public. He inspected various wards and sections of the hospital and reviewed the availability of essential facilities.

The doctors apprised him of the additional equipment required to further strengthen healthcare services at the hospital.

Subsequently, the DC visited the Aharbal tourist spot and took stock of the facilities available for visitors, directing concerned officials to ensure proper upkeep and improved amenities. The visit was attended by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) D.H. Pora, Bashir Ul Hassan, Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Executive Engineer R&B, Tehsildar D.H. Pora and other officers.

Chairman DLSA Srinagar reviews functioning of LADCs

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, MARCH 04: A review meeting of the Legal Aid Defence Counsels (LADCs) was convened Wednesday at the District Court Complex Srinagar under the chairmanship of Haq Nawaz Zargar, Chairman District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) (Principal District & Sessions Judge), Srinagar in presence of Tabassum Qadir Parray, Secretary, DLSA Srinagar.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was held to evaluate the functioning, efficiency, and overall performance of the LADCs in delivering free and effective legal services to undertrial prisoners and other eligible beneficiaries, in line with the mandate of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 and the constitutional directive under Article 39A ensuring equal access to justice.

During the proceedings, Chairman DLSA emphasized the importance of timely legal intervention, particularly in cases involving undertrial prisoners and aged persons, and directed that priority be given to the recording of evidence in cases already assigned. The counsels were reminded of their responsibility to maintain proper records and to ensure that no eligible person is deprived of effective representation before the courts. The Chairman stressed

that access to justice is a constitutional right and urged the Legal Aid Defence Counsels to discharge their duties with dedication, professionalism, and sensitivity towards marginalized sections of society. He clarified that conviction should not be perceived as a failure of legal aid, but rather as part of the judicial process, and encouraged counsels to continue working diligently to secure fair trials and uphold the rights of the accused.

He further directed that, on a month-to-month basis, the progress of cases at both the Sessions and Magisterial levels, particularly those at the final stages where evidence has been completed and files are posted for arguments must be specifically reviewed.

Special attention was also drawn to bail matters, with instructions to ensure prompt follow-up in cases where bail has been granted but release has not yet taken place. The Chairman reiterated that the Legal Aid Defence Counsel System must serve as a robust mechanism to guarantee that no undertrial prisoner or indigent person is left without effective representation. By strengthening this framework, the District Legal Services Authority Srinagar seeks to reinforce the principle that justice must not only be done but must be accessible to all, especially the most vulnerable.

Mission YUVA: DC Reasi approves 311 cases under

KT NEWS DESK

REASI, MARCH 4: Deputy Commissioner Reasi, Kumar Abhishek chaired a meeting of the District Level Implementation Committee (DLIC) to review Mission YUVA proposals, submitted through the Skill and Business Development Unit.

After detailed scrutiny and evaluation, 311 cases were approved for financial assistance and institutional support.

The DC directed banks to ensure expeditious processing and timely disbursement of the approved cases. Banks were also instructed to provide clear reasons for any case rejections to maintain transparency and accountability in scheme implementation.

Later, the DC reviewed the progress of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban). The Executive Officer -Municipal Council briefed the chair on eligibility criteria, payment disbursement, recovery status and the physical and financial progress under the housing scheme. The DC directed concerned authorities to initiate recovery from beneficiaries who have not commenced construction even after receiving assistance. He instructed officials to personally engage with beneficiaries to motivate early initiation of construction.

The meeting was attended by ADDC Sukhdev Singh Samyal, CPO Narinder Kumar, ALC and other concerned officers.

DC Kupwara inaugurates solar-powered public Library in Trehgam

KT NEWS DESK

KUPWARA, MARCH 4: In a landmark step towards youth empowerment, Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, Wednesday inaugurated the solar-powered public Library and Reading Room at Trehgam.

The inauguration, as per an official statement, ceremony was attended by ACR, CPO, BDO Trehgam and Tehsildar Trehgam.

Developed in record time by the Block Development Office Trehgam, the facility is envisioned as a hub of learning, career guidance for students and competitive exam aspirants of Trehgam. The library, powered entirely by solar energy, ensures year-round facility with modern heating and cooling



system, furniture as well as CCTVs.

The facility will offer high-speed Wi-Fi, All-in-One PCs and premium digital learning platforms and also has offline collection of more than 300 books. Block Library will also serve as a career guidance and counselling hub, helping youth for higher education, skill development, and employment. Locals

have hailed the initiative as a transformative step in youth empowerment.

DC Kupwara congratulated youths on the occasion and appreciated efforts undertaken by RDD as well as civil society members of Trehgam. He also directed concerned officers to fulfil further requirements projected by students.

Form No. Sessions Judge IN THE COURT OF Mr. Manjeet Rai Additional Sessions Judge TADA/POTA

Cr. Misc. Applications/52/2026
UT of JK through PS R M BAGH Srinagar
FIR No. 71/2020

Vs
MUBEEN AHMAD SHAH S/O ALI MOHD SHAH
R.M. Bagh/71/2020

TO
Officer Incharge of Police Station R M Bagh
Investigating Officer Concerned

WHEREAS complaint has been made before me that MUBEEN AHMAD SHAH S/O ALI MOHD SHAH R/o BUCHWARA DALGATE has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence of punishable under section 153, 153A, 505, 506 IPC, 66 I.T. Act, 13UAP Act and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said MUBEEN AHMAD SHAH S/O ALI MOHD SHAH cannot be found, and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said MUBEEN AHMAD SHAH S/O ALI MOHD SHAH is evading arrest and has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant); Proclamation under section 82 CrPC is hereby made that the said MUBEEN AHMAD SHAH S/O ALI MOHD SHAH required to appear before this Court within thirty days from the date of publication of the proclamation.

The proclamation shall be published by affixing a copy thereof at some conspicuous place at the last known place of residence of the accused and also at some conspicuous place in the Court house. The proclamation shall also be published in the manner prescribed under the rules. The Investigating Officer is directed to take necessary steps for publication of the proclamation in accordance with law and to file compliance report within fifteen days.

Dated, this day of 28-02-2026

Additional Session Judge TADA/POTA

IN THE COURT OF ADDITIONAL SESSIONS JUDGE, TADA/POTA SPECIAL JUDGE DESIGNATED UNDER NIA ACT SRINAGAR.

CNR No. JKSG01-000495-2026

Filing No. 495/2026

Case No./R. No. 52/2026

Date of Institution:- 27.02.2026

Date of Order:- 28.02.2026

In the Case of:

UT of J&K through Police Station RM Bagh Srinagar

.....Applicant

Through: Mr. Mohammad Saleem Wani, I.d. PP

Versus

Mubeen Ahmad Shah S/O Ali Mohammad Shah R/O Buchwara Dalgate.

.....Accused

In the matter of: Investigation of case FIR No. 71/2020 U/S 153, 153-A, 505, 506 IPC, 66 I.T Act, 13 of UAP Act of Police Station RM Bagh Srinagar.

CORAM: Manjeet Rai

UID No. JK00128.

ORDER

1. Through the instant application, the applicant, SDPO Nehru Park, has prayed for issuance of proclamation under Section 82 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 against the accused Mubeen Ahmad Shah S/O Ali Mohammad Shah R/O Buchwara Dalgate in connection with FIR No. 71/2020 registered at Police Station RM Bagh Srinagar 153 153 A, 505 506 IPC, 66 I.T Act and 13 UAP Act.

2. The brief facts of the case are that on 28.06.2020, Police Station RM Bagh reliably learnt that one facebook user with profile URL <http://www.facebook.com/shahmubeen> reportedly belonging to Mubeen Ahmad Shah had posted threatening Facebook posts instigating general public against non-locals living in Kashmir and administrators issuing domicile certificates. The said posts were allegedly intended to instigate one community against the other, thereby disturbing the prevailing peace and prima facie attracted cognizable offences under Sections 153, 153-A, 505, 506 IPC. Consequently, FIR No. 71/2020 was registered and investigation commenced.

3. During the course of investigation, statements of witnesses were recorded, Facebook posts and Twitter tweets were extracted by cyber expert before Executive Magistrate, certificate under Section 65-B of Indian Evidence Act was obtained, correspondence with Cyber Police Station for preservation of social media accounts was undertaken, and correspondence with Executive Magistrate to ascertain movable and immovable property of the accused was made.

4. It has been stated that during investigation, tireless efforts were made to arrest the accused person but the accused has absconded from his actual residence to avoid prosecution in the instant case. A warrant under Section 25 of the Police Act was issued from the Court of City Judge Srinagar and was executed by the then SDPO Nehru Park and the concerned beat officer, but the accused could not be arrested as he was found to be absconding.

5. Further, it has been brought to the notice of this Court that extensive investigation has been conducted including correspondence with different bank branches, correspondence through BharatPOL for MLAT and extradition of the accused from Turkey, communication with DPO Srinagar for taking up the matter with Turkish authorities, communication with Labaika Tour and Travels regarding transactions, and communications with Divisional Commissioners and RTO offices for ascertaining the assets of the accused.

6. The material on record and the DDR entries dated 12.02.2026 and 11.02.2026 of Police Post Nehru Park, beat/patrol book reports, and other documents placed on record reveal that the accused Mubeen Ahmad Shah is presently outside the country and is willfully avoiding arrest and prosecution in the instant case.

7. Perusal of the application and the material placed on record reveals that the investigating agency has made sincere efforts to arrest the accused person but the accused has absconded and is evading arrest. The material on record prima facie indicates that there are sufficient grounds to believe that the accused has absconded and is concealing himself to avoid service of summons or warrant.

8. Section 82 of the Code of Criminal Procedure empowers the Court to issue a written proclamation requiring the accused to appear at a specified place and at a specified time not less than thirty days from the date of publishing such proclamation if such Court has reason to believe that such person has absconded or is concealing himself so that such summons or warrant cannot be served.

9. In the present case, the investigating officer has placed sufficient material on record to establish that the accused has absconded and is evading arrest. The warrant issued under Section 25 of the Police Act could not be executed as the accused is not available at his known address. The accused is stated to be outside the country and is willfully avoiding the process of law.

10. Considering the facts and circumstances of the case, the material placed on record, the nature of the allegations involving serious offences under IPC, IT Act and UAPA, and the fact that the accused is evading arrest and has absconded, this Court is satisfied that there exist sufficient grounds to invoke the provisions of Section 82 CrPC.

11. Accordingly, the instant application is allowed. Let proclamation under Section 82 CrPC be issued requiring the accused Mubeen Ahmad Shah S/O Ali Mohammad Shah R/O Buchwara Dalgate to appear before this Court within thirty days from the date of publication of the proclamation.

12. The proclamation shall be published by affixing a copy thereof at some conspicuous place at the last known place of residence of the accused and also at some conspicuous place in the Court house. The proclamation shall also be published in the manner prescribed under the rules.

13. The Investigating Officer is directed to take necessary steps for publication of the proclamation in accordance with law and to file compliance report within fifteen days.

14. The application is disposed of and be consigned to record room.

Announced 28.02.2026

DIPK-11560/25

DATED: 04-03-2026

(Manjeet Rai)
Additional Sessions Judge, TADA/POTA
Special Judge Designated Under NIA Act Srinagar.

Sweets, colours brighten Holi in Jammu

YOGESH

Jammu, Mar 04: Colours, greetings and sweets distribution marked the Holi celebrations in Jammu on Wednesday.

From early morning, people thronged streets and neighbourhoods, smearing each other with colours, exchanging greetings and distributing sweets.

Children were seen splashing colour balloons while youth danced to popular tunes, adding vibrancy to the celebrations. People from all walks of life participated in the festivities.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah extended their warm greetings to the people on the occasion. Leaders conveyed their best wishes for happiness, prosperity and communal harmony.

Moreover, celebrations were also organized at unit headquarters of security forces including Army, CRPF, ITPB, BSF, and J&K Police stationed in Jammu division. Officers and jawans exchanged greetings and marked the festival in a traditional manner within the camp premises and celebrated Holi with zeal.

In Rajouri, Rajya Sabha MP Ghulam Ali Khatana celebrated Holi with BJP party workers and local residents. He visited villages



including Pangrian, Manjakote and Barote, interacting with villagers and extending festive greetings. For the first time, the annual Bhairav Yatra was organised here with vibrant cultural performances, adding a new cultural dimension to the traditional festivities. The celebrations featured a colourful tableaux (Jhanki) depicting Ashta Bhairav, coupled with an engaging street play (Nukkad Natak),

highlighting the significance and heritage of the yatra. The atmosphere was further enlivened by traditional folk performances featuring Dhol and Shehnai, which resonated with the festive spirit of the occasion coinciding with Holi. DC Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma was chief Guest during the celebrations.

In Kishtwar, Holi was celebrated with enthusiasm as locals joined

security personnel in the festivities. MLA Kishtwar Shagun Parihar participated in the celebrations alongside CRPF and Jammu and Kashmir Police personnel, conveying greetings to the people and lauding the spirit of unity displayed on the occasion.

Poonch district witnessed vibrant celebrations, with the main programme organised at Shri Geeta Bhawan under the aegis of Sanatan

Dharam Sabha. A religious procession passed through key areas of the town, drawing participation from members of different communities. Deputy Commissioner Poonch Ashok Kumar Sharma conveyed greetings and appreciated the peaceful conduct of celebrations.

In Udhampur, a mega Holi procession was organised by Beopar Mandal in collaboration with the district administration. The procession commenced from Radha Krishan Temple, Adarsh Colony, and moved through the main markets of the city, spreading the message of communal harmony.

Adequate security arrangements were put in place, with DySP Headquarters Prehlad Sharma stating that all necessary measures were put in place to ensure peaceful celebrations. Vice-President of Beopar Mandal Rahul Magotra expressed gratitude for the cooperation of traders and citizens.

Educational institutions including University of Jammu and institutes at district headquarters across the region also organised cultural programmes and colour-themed events, with students and officials participating in celebrations marked by music, dance and distribution of sweets—(KNO)

9 Corps reviews security preparedness in Mamun sector



YOGESH

Jammu, Mar 04: General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the Rising Star Corps, also known as 9 Corps, Lieutenant General Rajan Sharawat on Wednesday reviewed the operational preparedness of troops deployed in the strategically significant Mamun sector.

The Rising Star Corps based in Yol, Himachal Pradesh oversees key training institutes in the state along with operational responsibilities in the Mamun sector. The Mamun headquarters, located at Pathankot, supervises operational areas spanning Samba, Kathua and parts of Jammu district in Jammu and Kashmir.

"The GOC of Rising Star Corps reviewed operational preparedness of troops in Mamun sector," Army said in a post on X.

During the visit,

Lieutenant General Sharawat assessed the security grid and readiness levels of the formations tasked with safeguarding the sensitive belt.

He commended the troops for their professionalism, high morale and unwavering commitment to the nation, emphasizing the need for constant alertness in view of prevailing security challenges.

The review assumes added significance amid heightened security in Jammu and Kashmir, triggered by the ongoing conflict in West Asia and its possible ramifications.

The Army's North-eastern Command has been maintaining close watch over the evolving situation, with the White Knight Corps and the Chinari Corps intensifying surveillance and operational readiness across their respective areas of responsibility—(KNO)

Dy CM visits reviews Reasi infra projects



KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Mar 04: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, today visited various areas of Reasi to review the ongoing development works.

During the tour, the Deputy Chief Minister assessed progress on key infrastructure projects aimed at strengthening the connectivity and public convenience. The Deputy CM conducted an on-the-spot inspection of the link road from Kalidhar Mandir to Samadhi Ghaj Jagi. He reviewed the status of the project and directed the PWD (R&B) Division Reasi to ensure immediate completion of the road, including blacktopping (BT), at the earliest for

convenience of the general public and the visiting devotees. He instructed the concerned officers and field functionaries to expedite the execution of work and ensure timely completion strictly as per approved specifications and quality standards.

The Deputy Chief Minister also paid obeisance at Kalidhar Mandir and sought divine blessings for peace and prosperity in Jammu and Kashmir.

He inspected the ongoing works being undertaken to ensure seamless accessibility, improved facilities and greater convenience for the devotees. He also inspected other ongoing projects and stressed on timely completion.

J&K logs above normal day temperatures



SAJID RAINA

Srinagar, Mar 04: Day temperatures across Jammu and Kashmir remained several degrees above normal on Wednesday, while no rainfall was recorded in most parts of the Union Territory, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

As per the IMD's evening bulletin, Srinagar recorded a maximum temperature of 20.5 degrees Celsius, 7.5

degrees above normal, while the minimum settled at 4.2 degrees Celsius, 1.7 degrees above normal.

Qazigund registered a high of 22.0 degrees Celsius, 9.4 degrees above normal, and a low of 2.2 degrees Celsius. Pahalgam recorded a maximum of 18.9 degrees Celsius, 8.9 degrees above normal, while the minimum dipped to minus 0.1 degrees Celsius.

Kupwara recorded a high of 19.8 degrees Celsius, 7.3

degrees above normal, while Kokernag registered 20.6 degrees Celsius, 9.4 degrees above normal. Gulmarg, the ski resort, recorded a maximum of 12.6 degrees Celsius, 9.1 degrees above normal, and a minimum of 2.0 degrees Celsius.

In the Jammu division, the winter capital recorded a maximum of 30.3 degrees Celsius, 6.0 degrees above normal, and a minimum of 14.3 degrees Celsius. Banihal registered a high of 24.6 degrees Celsius, 9.8 degrees above normal, while Batote recorded 25.3 degrees Celsius, 10.7 degrees above normal.

Katra recorded a maximum of 29.6 degrees Celsius, 7.7 degrees above normal, and Baderwah settled at 25.4 degrees Celsius, 9.1 degrees above normal. The IMD said no rainfall was recorded in the past 24 hours in most stations across the Union Territory. Relative humidity at 5:30 pm stood at 43 per cent in Srinagar and 43 per cent in Jammu—(KNO)

DC Ramban reviews development scenario in Gool, Sangaldan



KT NEWS DESK

Ramban, Mar 04: Deputy Commissioner Ramban, Mohammad Alyas Khan, Wednesday, conducted an extensive tour of Sub Division Gool and reviewed the overall developmental scenario in the area and assessed the status of essential services and supplies.

SSP Arun Gupta; ACR Showkat Hayat Mattoo; SDM Gool Imtiaz Ahmed and other concerned officers accompanied the Deputy Commissioner during the visit.

During the tour, the Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, took stock of essential services including power and water supply, healthcare facilities, sanitation and road connectivity in the area. He directed the concerned departments to ensure uninterrupted delivery of services, particularly in view of the prevailing weather conditions. He asked field officers to remain proactive in addressing public grievances and maintain close coordination for effective service delivery.

The DC also reviewed the progress of ongoing developmental works in the Sub Division. He assessed the status of the infrastructure projects and instructed the executing agencies to expedite the

pace of work while strictly maintaining quality standards and adhering to the timeline.

As part of the visit, the Deputy Commissioner conducted market inspection in Gool and Sangaldan markets. He directed the concerned officers to maintain strict vigilance against overpricing, hoarding and black marketing. Stressing transparency, he instructed shopkeepers to display updated rate lists and maintain proper hygiene standards in their establishments. The DC interacted with shopkeepers and members of civil society, seeking feedback regarding availability and pricing of essential commodities and other civic issues.

The Deputy Commissioner also visited CHC Gool, where he inspected different sections of the hospital and reviewed the availability of doctors, paramedical staff, medicines and diagnostic facilities. He directed the health authorities to ensure quality healthcare services and timely attendance of staff to cater to the needs of the public.

Emphasizing people-centric governance and public welfare, the Deputy Commissioner assured the public that their genuine concerns would be addressed on priority.

Sopore villagers decry riverbank illegal mining

WARIS FAYAZ

Sopore, Mar 04: Residents of Manz Seer in Sopore have expressed concern over unabated illegal sand mining along the riverbank, warning that the rampant excavation is posing a serious threat to the stability of embankments and nearby land. Locals said that the so called "sand mafia" continues its operations, particularly during late evening and night hours, using earth movers and carriers to remove sand and riverbed material without any visible check, even from the "Red Zone". "Illegal mining patches are deepening day by day," residents told KNO, adding they fear that loosening of the riverbank soil could lead to erosion, landslips and possible collapse of the bund during the next high water season.

Locals alleged that despite repeated complaints and occasional drives, the sand mafia remains active. They have called for round the clock patrolling, night checks and installation of CCTV cameras at vulnerable spots.

District Mineral Officer (DMO) Baramulla, Zulfiqar Ahmed Bhat, said continuous action is being taken against the sand mafia. "We are seizing vehicles and machinery involved in illegal sand extraction," he said. Bhat said he will write to Deputy Commissioner (DC) for stricter monitoring and assured that the area under suspicion will be sealed and put under surveillance to prevent further encroachment.

The DMO urged the public to report any suspicious activity immediately so that revenue and police teams can respond on time—(KNO)

Kashmir orchardists warn of increasing pesticide scam

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Pulwama, Mar 04: With the fruit season approaching, orchardists across Kashmir have raised serious concerns over the unchecked sale of substandard and counterfeit pesticides and fertilisers, urging authorities to enforce strict quality control measures before crops are put at risk.

Horticulture, widely regarded as the backbone of Kashmir's economy, supports lakhs of families directly and indirectly. From apple orchards to cherry, pear, and walnut cultivation, the sector plays a vital role in sustaining rural incomes and contributing significantly to the region's economy.

However, growers warn that increasing uncertainty due to pests, diseases, and unreliable farm inputs is putting this crucial sector under stress.

Farmers say that with each passing year, new pest attacks and plant diseases are emerging, making orchard management more complex and expensive. The changing nature of these threats has left many growers struggling to adapt.

"Earlier, we had a fair understanding of the common pests and how to control them, but now every season brings a new challenge," said Abdul Hamid,



an orchardist from Pulwama. "Without proper guidance and access to quality pesticides, it becomes extremely difficult to protect our orchards."

Experts attribute this growing trend to climate change and erratic weather patterns. Unseasonal rainfall, sudden temperature fluctuations, and prolonged dry spells have created favourable conditions for pests and diseases to thrive, often reducing both yield and fruit quality.

Growers allege that the situation is being worsened by the widespread availability of substandard, counterfeit, or improperly labelled pesticides and fertilisers in the market.

Many farmers claim that despite investing heavily in sprays and treatments, they fail to achieve desired results due

to poor-quality products. "We spend thousands on sprays every season. If the pesticide turns out to be fake or ineffective, the entire crop is at risk," said another grower. "There must be strict checking of these products before they reach the market."

The demand for regulation has gained urgency amid reports of unauthorised and counterfeit agro-chemicals being sold through informal networks and even online platforms.

Industry stakeholders have repeatedly flagged the issue, calling for stronger enforcement and accountability mechanisms.

Agriculture experts warn that the indiscriminate use of unverified pesticides not only harms crops but also poses serious risks to human health, soil fertility, and the broader ecosystem. Weak monitoring and gaps in

regulatory enforcement continue to allow unsafe practices to persist, they said.

Fruit growers have urged the horticulture and agriculture departments to take proactive steps, including conducting pre-season quality checks of fertilisers and pesticides, launching a crackdown on counterfeit and unregistered products, and ensuring timely advisories on disease management.

They have called for awareness campaigns to educate farmers about the proper and judicious use of pesticides, along with the promotion of safer and more sustainable alternatives.

"If the government ensures the availability of genuine inputs and provides proper technical guidance, a major part of our problems will be solved," growers said. "Otherwise, farmers will continue to face losses year after year."

Experts have called for long-term strategies, such as ensuring disease-free planting material and adopting preventive orchard management practices. Programmes focused on clean planting stock and integrated pest management, they say, can significantly reduce dependence on excessive pesticide use while improving productivity and sustainability—(KNO)

EDITORIAL

The Governance Transformation India Needs At Every Level

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's speech at the National Conference on Holistic Development of Districts highlights a basic truth that must guide India's journey toward 2047: a developed India cannot be achieved if growth stays limited to only a few areas. The message is not merely rhetorical but a clear reminder that the foundation of a developed nation must be built from the ground up, not simply imposed from the top down. This vision challenges the comfortable

belief that overall national growth numbers tell the full story. When leaders across the country assert that development must reach from one region to another, from north to south and east to west, they are describing what true nation-building really means—progress that includes everyone, treats all regions fairly, and leaves no one behind. A developed India that ignores any region is, by its very meaning, not truly developed at all. The focus on district-led reforms is

particularly significant. The argument that when districts perform well, states perform well, and when states perform well, the country performs well places the responsibility for change exactly where it belongs: at the local level, where government policies actually meet the people. This bottom-up approach ensures that development is not just an abstract idea but something real that people can experience in their daily lives. Technological reforms, particularly the shift to e-office

systems that have nearly eliminated paper files, offer a model for other places to follow for greater transparency and efficiency. The call for states to share their best practices while adapting them to local conditions recognises that solutions cannot simply be copied from one place to another. What works well in one region may require adjustments for another. But the willingness to learn and adapt is itself a powerful force for change. This spirit of working together, breaking down

the barriers that have long stood in the way of good governance, is exactly the approach needed for national development. Ultimately, elected representatives and administrators share one common goal: ensuring that citizens receive quality services in education, health, and infrastructure. When this shared purpose is fulfilled in every district and every state, the vision of a developed India will become a living reality. And that reality may arrive even before 2047.

World Wildlife Day 2026 Medicinal And Aromatic Plants: Conserving Health, Heritage And Livelihoods

Press Information Bureau

Every year on 3 March, the world observes World Wildlife Day, proclaimed by the United Nations to celebrate wild fauna and flora and to raise awareness about their importance to people and the planet. The day marks the adoption of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), reinforcing global commitment to ensuring that trade in wildlife does not threaten species survival. The day underscores that wildlife is not merely part of nature's beauty, but a critical pillar of food security, healthcare, livelihoods, climate resilience, and sustainable development. At a time when biodiversity faces mounting pressure from habitat destruction, overexploitation, illegal trade, and climate change, World Wildlife Day serves as a global call to conserve and sustainably use biological resources for present and future generations.

The theme for World Wildlife Day 2026 – "Medicinal and Aromatic Plants: Conserving Health, Heritage and Livelihoods" – highlights the importance of plants used for medicine, their role in preserving cultural traditions, and the income they provide to local communities. Across the world, 70–95% of people in developing countries depend on traditional medicine for basic healthcare, much of it derived from plant-based resources. Medicinal and aromatic plants form the foundation of traditional systems of medicine and also contribute significantly to modern pharmaceuticals. Beyond their health applications, these plants strengthen ecosystems by supporting pollinators, improving soil health, and enhancing biodiversity. Their conservation is therefore a global priority, especially for biodiversity-rich countries like India.

India's Rich Biodiversity of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants

For India, the 2026 theme carries particular significance. India is one of the 17 mega biodiversity-rich countries in the world and has 7% of the world's bio-diversity. It has 15 agro-climatic regions, 45,000 different plant species out of which 15,000 are medicinal plants. Of these, about 8,000 species are used in Indian systems of medicine and folk medicines. Nearly 70% of India's medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) are found in the

tropical forests of the Western and Eastern Ghats, the Himalayas, and the Aravalli range.

The Botanical Survey of India has identified over 5,250 plant species and documented over 9,567 folk claims for various ailments. India has been taking strong steps to protect this rich heritage. The National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB) runs a dedicated scheme for the conservation and sustainable management of medicinal plants. It supports Conservation, IEC activities, farmer training, research & Development and marketing. These efforts reflect India's strong and unwavering commitment to protecting its rich medicinal plant heritage.

Conservation Mechanisms
India has adopted a strong and multi-layered approach to conserve its rich medicinal and aromatic plant heritage.

In-Situ Conservation
In situ conservation means protecting plants and animals in their natural habitats. It is carried out through national parks, biosphere reserves and gene sanctuaries. One important example of such conservation for medicinal plants is the Medicinal Plants Conservation Area initiative (MPCA). MPCA is a designated site aimed at protecting medicinal plant species in their natural habitats. Presently, 115 MPCA sites in India represent models to implement indigenous health traditions along with biological and cultural diversity using in-situ conservation techniques.

Ex-Situ Conservation
Ex situ conservation means protecting plant genetic resources outside their natural habitats under controlled conditions to ensure long-term preservation and possible reintroduction into the wild. In India, this includes the conservation of 9,361 medicinal and aromatic plant (MAP) accessions at the National Seed Gene Bank, National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR), New Delhi. These ex-situ methods are used for species with poor seed formation or vegetative propagation. Together, they help secure medicinal plant diversity for future use.

Key Government Schemes and Initiatives
The Government has launched several key schemes and initiatives to promote the conservation, cultivation, and sustainable use of medicinal plants across the country.

National Ayush Mission (NAM)
In the past Ministry of Ayush had implemented Medicinal Plant Component under

the National Ayush Mission (NAM) a flagship scheme of the Ministry of AYUSH through States and Union Territories to promote the cultivation of medicinal plants integrated with farming systems to support crop diversification and enhance farmer incomes from the financial year 2015-16 to 2020-21.

Currently, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare under its Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) – A Centrally Sponsored Scheme is promoting the holistic growth of the horticulture sector including medicinal plants. All States and UTs are covered under MIDH.

Aushadhi Vanaspati Mitra Program (AVMP)

NMPB Ministry of Ayush recognizes and rewards individuals, communities, and institutions for their outstanding contribution to medicinal plant conservation, cultivation, and marketing. It encourages more people to actively participate in protecting medicinal plants.

Central Sector Scheme for Conservation, Development and Sustainable Management of Medicinal Plants

The Government of India, through NMPB, runs this flagship scheme with an outlay of 322.41 crores for 2021-22 to 2025-26. Under this scheme, Medicinal Plants Conservation and Development Areas (MPCDAs) are set up to protect plants in their natural habitats. The conservation initiatives are also promoted by supporting plantations on degraded and rural lands. Research and quality assurance are key focus areas, supported through GACPs and Raw Drug Repositories across the country.

e-CHARAK

To provide a platform for trade of Medicinal Plants & to provide easy market access National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB), Ministry of AYUSH has launched "e-CHARAK" mobile application as well as web portal for the promotion and marketing of medicinal plants/herbs. "e-CHARAK" is a platform to enable information exchange between various stakeholders mainly farmers involved in the medicinal plants sector across the country. The "e-CHARAK" application is available in different local languages. Fortnightly market price of 100 MPs from 25 herbal markets across India is updated regularly on e-Charak platform.

Herbal Gardens and Awareness Programs
Herbal gardens are promoted in schools,

institutions, and public spaces to build awareness among students and the general public. Species-specific campaigns are also run on and print media to highlight the importance of medicinal plants in daily life.

Livelihood Support to Local Communities

The scheme provides financial and infrastructural support to Joint Forest Management Committees, Self Help Groups, Van Panchayats, and Biodiversity Management Committees. This helps local communities with value addition, drying, warehousing, and marketing of medicinal plants, directly improving their livelihoods.

Bilateral and International Cooperation
NMPB, Ministry of Ayush actively collaborates with international organisations to promote the medicinal plant sector globally. It also participates in international exhibitions and works to protect India's traditional knowledge and ensure fair benefit-sharing under global agreements.

Integrated Component (IC)

NMPB, Ministry of Ayush, Government of India is implementing a component namely "Forward and backward linkage in supply chain of medicinal plants (Integrated Component)" under Central Sector Scheme on "Conservation, Development and Sustainable Management of Medicinal Plants" throughout the country wherein the following activities are being supported under the Integrated Component:

Infrastructure for Quality Planting Material to raise the planting material of medicinal plants for cultivation.

Information Education Communication (IEC) activities to aware the farmers.

Infrastructure for Post-Harvest Management and Marketing to increase the marketability of the medicinal plants, adding value to the produce, increasing profitability and reducing losses

Quality Testing and Certification of raw material.

Medicinal Plants Business Centre (MPBC)
NMPB, Ministry of Ayush recently incorporated a new component "Medicinal Plants Business Centre (MPBC)" under the existing Central Sector Scheme of NMPB with following objectives: -

- To develop Medicinal Plants Business Centre for effectively managing Medicinal Plants produce
- To promote innovative and latest

technologies in Medicinal Plants post-harvest management and marketing infrastructure.

- To promote creation of scientific storage capacity for storing farm produce, graded/primary processed farm produce to reduce post-harvest handling losses.

- To provide infrastructure facilities for washing, sorting, grading, value addition, packaging, storage and quality testing of Medicinal Plants raw material.

Protecting India's Medicinal Plant Heritage Through GI Tags

Navara Rice (*Oryza sativa* L.) is grown mainly in Palakkad and nearby districts of Kerala. It is called Shashatikashali in Ayurveda. It is an important part of the Panchakarma treatment known as Navarakizhi. It helps in treating rheumatic pain. It is useful for polio-related disabilities. It improves blood circulation problems. It also helps in respiratory diseases.

Green Cardamom (Elettaria cardamomum (L.) Maton) has two GI varieties – Alleppey from Kerala and Coorg from Karnataka. In Ayurveda, it is known as Sukshma-ela or Elaichi. It is used to treat asthma, relieve cough, and difficulty in urination.

Ganjam Kewda Flower (Pandanus odorifer (Forssk.) Kuntze) is GI tagged for Odisha, mainly from Ganjam district. It is known as Ketakipushpa in Ayurveda. It is used in the treatment of eye problems and respiratory disorders.

Saffron (Crocus sativus L.) is GI tagged for Jammu and Kashmir. It is known as Kumkuma in Ayurveda. It is used to treat migraine, heal wounds, vomiting, and skin discoloration and patches.

"Nagauri Ashwagandha" (Withania somnifera) is GI tag registered under NMPB-supported project vide GI Application No. 1143, on 24 November 2025.

Conclusion
India's journey in protecting its medicinal and aromatic plant heritage is a story of deep roots and forward vision. From the forests of the Western Ghats to the farms of Vidarbha, from ancient Ayurvedic wisdom to modern digital platforms like e-CHARAK, the country is weaving conservation, livelihood, and healthcare into a single strong thread. With committed institutions, empowered communities, and inclusive policies, India is not just preserving its green wealth, it is turning it into a source of health, pride, and prosperity for generations to come.

Democratising AI In India

Expanding Access To AI Resources, Skills, And Technology Nationwide

Press Information Bureau

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a central pillar of India's development journey. It is strengthening governance, improving public service delivery, and enabling solutions that can reach citizens at scale. For India, the democratisation of AI is essential to ensure that these benefits are widely shared and aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

What is Democratisation of AI?

Democratisation of AI refers to making artificial intelligence accessible, affordable and usable for a wide and diverse set of users. It goes beyond access to finished applications. It includes access to the core building blocks of AI such as computing power, datasets and model ecosystems. As these resources become available at scale, individuals and institutions are expanding what they can achieve with AI.

Democratising AI Applications for Public Impact

AI creates value only when it reaches people at scale. India's approach focuses on practical deployment across sectors so that AI improves everyday life and public services. Just as the internet and mobile phones transformed society through widespread use, AI is now following the same path. By prioritising applications that are easy to use and widely accessible, India is ensuring that AI delivers inclusive and measurable public impact.

Across key sectors, AI applications are already making a difference. In agriculture, AI supports farmers by predicting weather, identifying pest risks, and guiding irrigation and sowing decisions. Platforms such as Kisan e Mitra simplify access to government schemes, while the National Pest Surveillance System and Crop Health Monitoring use satellite and weather data to protect crops and improve income security. In healthcare, AI enables early disease



detection, assists in analysing medical images, and strengthens telemedicine services, connecting rural patients with specialists and improving the quality and reach of care.

AI is also strengthening disaster preparedness. The India Meteorological Department uses AI to forecast rainfall,

fog and extreme weather, while tools like the Advanced Dvorak Technique support cyclone intensity assessment and MausamGPT is being developed to offer real-time advisories. This widespread application is reflected in India's innovation landscape. As of January 2026, India ranks among the top three startup ecosystems globally, with over two lakh startups. Nearly 90 percent of these startups are estimated to be AI-powered in some form, highlighting how deeply AI has been integrated into innovation and problem-solving across the country.

Democratising Access to AI Infrastructure

Democratising AI requires ensuring that the foundational infrastructure powering artificial intelligence is open, affordable and widely accessible. India's approach is guided by its full AI stack, which spans applications, models, compute, infrastructure and energy, and treats these layers as interconnected national capabilities. Approved

in March 2024 with a financial outlay of 10,371.92 crore over five years, the India AI Mission is laying the groundwork for this approach by expanding access, strengthening data availability and enabling responsible use of AI for public good.

Conclusion

India's approach to the democratisation of AI shows that scale, inclusion and innovation can progress together. The focus on affordability, openness and trust ensures that benefits of AI reach farmers, students, researchers, startups and public institutions alike. As India hosts the India-AI Impact Summit 2026, it also places this experience within a global context, offering a model shaped by the priorities of the Global South. The path ahead is clear. Democratising AI is not a one-time effort but a continuing commitment to ensure that technological progress strengthens societies, reduces inequalities and supports sustainable development for all.

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

India's Livestock, Fisheries & Allied Sectors Drive Rural Growth, Global Leadership In Agri-Food Economy

Strategic government initiatives, technological innovations, and market integration are transforming India's rural livelihoods, boosting productivity, and positioning country as key player in global dairy, fish, and poultry markets, while advancing sustainable development goals

Press Information Bureau

India's agricultural progress is increasingly supported by the expansion of allied sectors such as livestock, dairy, poultry, and fisheries. These sectors have become major contributors to agricultural Gross Value Added (GVA) and rural employment. Over the last decade, agriculture and allied sectors have witnessed a steady 3-5% CAGR, fuelled by extensive government efforts, private innovations, and sizeable domestic demand. It is estimated that by 2047, the sector could potentially triple in size, powering India's growth.

Although rural livelihoods remain largely agriculture-based, changes in land use, climate variability, and income uncertainty have encouraged households to adopt additional income sources. For small and marginal farmers, diversification has become an important way to manage seasonal income fluctuations and ensure more stable earnings.

Diversification includes income from farm, allied, and non-farm activities to reduce risk and smooth household consumption. Rather than moving away from agriculture, it reflects a more integrated and resilient rural economy where farming remains central but is supported by multiple livelihood options. Stronger institutions such as cooperatives, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have improved access to credit, technology, and organised markets, helping small producers connect better with value chains.

Livestock and Fisheries: Drivers of Rural Income Diversification and Growth

Within allied agricultural activities, livestock and fisheries have demonstrated relatively stable growth rates of approximately 5-6 percent, underscoring their strategic importance in generating rural incomes. Their economic significance lies in generating regular and comparatively predictable cash flows. Dairy production facilitates frequent income realisation through routine milk sales, while fisheries enable multiple production cycles, thereby providing sustained employment opportunities. Furthermore, dairy-based rural households commonly integrate crop cultivation for food and fodder with livestock rearing, enabling circular resource use and reducing dependence on external inputs. Such diversification reduces reliance on a single income source and enhances resilience to seasonal and market shocks.

Between FY15 and FY24, the sector's Gross Value Added (GVA) increased by nearly 195 percent, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 12.77 percent at current prices. In the Union Budget 2026-27, 6,153.46 crore has been allocated to the Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying, reflecting a 16 percent increase from 5,302.83 crore in FY 2025-26. This expansion underscores the sector's role in income diversification and livelihood resilience, supported by investments in breed improvement, veterinary infrastructure, and disease control.

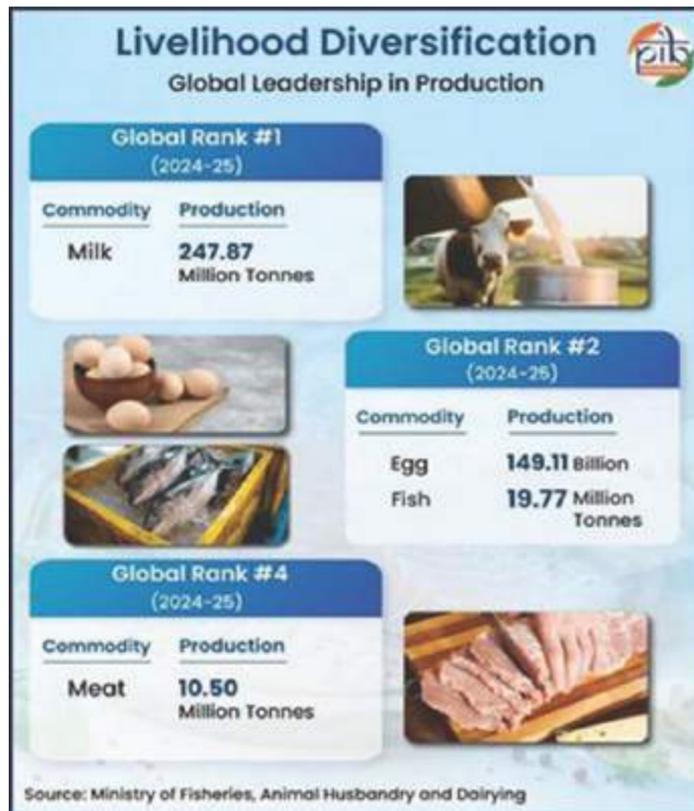
India as a Global Leader in Livestock and Fisheries

India holds the leading global position in milk production, accounting for nearly 25 percent of global output. Over the decade, the sector has recorded a compound annual growth rate of 5.41 percent, with production increasing from 146.31 million tonnes in 2014-15 to 247.87 million tonnes in 2024-25, representing a growth of over 69.4 percent. This sustained expansion has contributed to improved nutritional access, reflected in per capita milk availability of 485 grams per day in 2024-25, significantly exceeding the global average of 328 grams.

India ranks second globally in egg production. National output has increased from 78.48 billion eggs in 2014-15 to an estimated 149.11 billion eggs in 2024-25, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.63 percent more than a decade. This sustained expansion has translated into improved access to nutrition, with per capita egg availability rising from 62 eggs per annum in 2014-15 to 106 eggs per annum in 2024-25.

India is the world's second-largest fish producer. Output has increased to 19.77 million tonnes in FY 2024-25 from 9.58 million tonnes in FY 2013-14. It contributes nearly 8 percent of global output and supports over 30 million livelihoods, thereby constituting a central pillar of the blue economy. Coastal States and Union Territories, comprising approximately 4,434 fishing villages, account for 72 percent of production and 76 percent of seafood exports. The sector contributes 7.43 percent to agricultural GVA, with policy measures such as reducing GST on key fish products and enhancing domestic demand and export competitiveness.

India ranks fourth globally in meat production. Output has increased from 6.69 million tonnes in 2014-15 to 10.50 million tonnes in 2024-25, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.61 percent. Taken



together, these indicators affirm India's prominent position as a major contributor within the domestic and global agri-food economy.

Policy-led Intervention for Livestock Productivity

The expansion of India's livestock sector has been driven by focused government interventions through initiatives such as the National Livestock Mission (NLM), the Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM), and the National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP), which emphasise productivity improvement, animal health, breed development, and livestock-based entrepreneurship. Together, these initiatives have strengthened livestock systems, reduced production risks, and reinforced livestock as a resilient and diversified source of income for rural households.

The National Livestock Mission promotes livestock-based entrepreneurship, improves breed productivity, and boosts production of meat, eggs, milk, and fodder.

The Rashtriya Gokul Mission focuses on conserving indigenous bovine breeds, enhancing milk productivity, and making dairying more remunerative for rural farmers.

The National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP) focuses on controlling Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Brucellosis through 100% vaccination of cattle, buffalo, sheep, goats, and pigs against FMD, and vaccination of all female bovine calves (4-8 months) against Brucellosis.

Genetic Improvement through Artificial Insemination with Last Mile Service Delivery

Genetic improvement interventions under the RGM have reinforced productivity-led growth within the livestock sector mentioned as follows:

A total of 14.56 crore artificial inseminations have been conducted, covering 9.36 crore animals and benefiting 5.62 crore farmers.

The training of nearly 39,810 MAITRI artificial insemination technicians has strengthened last-mile service delivery.

These measures have accelerated genetic gains, improved milk yields, and strengthened the income potential of dairy-based livelihoods.

Strengthening Animal Health and Risk Mitigation

Livestock productivity and income stability are closely linked to disease control. Under the NADCP, large-scale vaccination and surveillance efforts have significantly reduced disease incidence. Over 125.75 crore Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) vaccinations were administered, and approximately 26.27 crore farmers benefited. Vaccination coverage expanded in 2025 to include pastoral sheep and goats.

FMD outbreaks reduced sharply from 132 cases in 2019 to 6 cases in 2025. Brucellosis outbreaks have been reduced to zero.

The decline in disease outbreaks has mitigated productivity losses.

Livestock Productivity Enhancement Supporting Livelihood Diversification

The combined impact of genetic and

health interventions is reflected in sustained improvements in bovine productivity. India is home to the world's largest bovine population and has witnessed significant growth in meat and poultry production.

Indigenous (local) and non-descript (mixed) cattle productivity increased from 927 kg per animal per year (2014-15) to 1,292 kg (2023-24), a rise of 39.37 percent.

Buffalo productivity increased from 1,880 kg to 2,161 kg, registering 14.94 percent growth during the same period.

Average bovine productivity improved from 1,648.17 kg (2013-14) to 2,079 kg (2024-25), reflecting a 27 percent rise.

These productivity gains represent one of the highest recorded improvements globally and directly enhance income realisation from dairy-based livelihoods.

Scaling Milk Procurement and Processing Capacity

The expansion of dairy cooperatives has played a pivotal role in strengthening market integration by incorporating smallholders into organised procurement and processing systems.

The dairy network encompasses: 22 milk federations, 241 district unions, 28 marketing dairies,

25 Milk Producer Organisations (MPOs), covering approximately 2.35 lakh villages and 1.72 crore farmer-members.

31,908 dairy cooperative societies have been organised, integrating 17.63 lakh producers into formal value chains and increasing daily milk procurement by 120.68 lakh kilograms.

India is strengthening value addition through the planned expansion of milk processing capacity to 100 million litres per day by 2028-29, from the current 660 lakh litres per day, strengthening the sector's contribution to food security and farm incomes.

Institutional Credit Support for Livestock

Access to affordable institutional credit has been instrumental in enabling livelihood diversification within the livestock and fisheries sectors, facilitating producers' transition from subsistence-based operations to formal market integration. Under the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme, substantial credit support has been extended to allied activities to meet working capital requirements, promote asset formation, and reduce reliance on informal lending channels. The facts and figures indicate a strong institutional response to credit demand in allied agricultural activities.

In animal husbandry, the exceptionally high acceptance rate, 55.08 lakh out of 55.9 lakh applications, reflects effective screening mechanisms and sustained policy support. The sanctioning of 39.22 lakh applications further suggests substantial credit flow, translating into actual financial support.

Policy-led Intervention for India's Fisheries Sector

Over the decade, India's fisheries sector has recorded a sustained average annual growth rate of 8.74 percent, with total fish production increasing from 95.79 lakh tonnes in 2013-14 to 197.75 lakh tonnes in 2024-25. Inland fisheries and aquaculture have been the primary drivers of this expansion, registering a 147

percent increase from 61.36 lakh tonnes to 151.60 lakh tonnes during the same period.

The Union Budget 2026-27 allocated a record 2,761.80 crore (approximately USD 332.75 million) to fisheries, reinforcing sustained investment initiated under the Blue Revolution and consolidating India's leadership in aquaculture and seafood exports. This trajectory underscores fisheries as a key growth engine within non-farm livelihood diversification, particularly in rural and coastal regions.

Deep-sea and offshore fisheries further integrate India into global seafood value chains, strengthening the sector's economic and food security importance. This integration has been reinforced through focused interventions under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) and Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PM-MKSSY), under which seafood exports have more than doubled from 30,213 crore in 2013-14 to 62,408 crore in 2024-25, reaching over 130 countries.

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) promotes fisheries development through infrastructure, modernization, and value chain strengthening to boost production, exports, jobs, and fishers' incomes.

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PM-MKSSY), a sub-scheme of PMMSY, supports sector formalisation through insurance, credit, performance incentives, and traceability to improve income security and sustainability for fish farmers.

Strengthening Fisheries Infrastructure and Market Access

Under PMMSY, productivity gains have been accompanied by large-scale infrastructure development to reduce post-harvest losses and improve market access.

27,189 fish transportation and handling units established

6,733 fish retail markets and kiosks sanctioned

128 value-added enterprise units supported

To bridge infrastructure gaps, the Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF), launched in 2018-19 with a corpus of 7,522.48 crore, supports fishing harbours, landing centres, aquaculture units, and cold-chain logistics.

Institutional Credit Support for fisheries

In fisheries, 6.83 lakh applications were received under the Kisan Credit Card (KCC), of which 6.77 lakh were accepted. Of which, 4.82 lakh applications were sanctioned, indicating a meaningful conversion of demand into credit access. Financial inclusion and welfare programmes have extended KCC benefits to 4.39 lakh fishers, providing insurance coverage to 3.3 million beneficiaries, and delivering livelihood assistance to an average of 7.44 lakh fisher families during lean periods. These measures underscore the role of formal credit in enhancing resilience, stabilising incomes, and deepening integration with organised markets.

Sustainable Governance of Marine Fisheries and EEZ Resources

India's extensive coastline of over 11,099 km and an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of approximately 24 lakh square kilometres sustain the livelihoods of more than 50 lakh members of the fishing community across 13 maritime States and Union Territories. Marine fisheries constitute a strategic component of the blue economy, contributing to export earnings and national nutritional security.

To ensure responsible harnessing of aquatic resources, the Government has notified the Rules and Guidelines for Sustainable Harnessing of Fisheries in the EEZ and High Seas (2025), establishing a forward-looking regulatory framework aligned with sustainability and international compliance standards. Policy measures granting duty-free status to catch landed abroad and treated as exports aim to enhance price realisation and global competitiveness, while traceability, sustainability, and compliance safeguards mitigate misuse. The Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) further anchors sustainable export growth through quality assurance, market facilitation, capacity building, and ecological stewardship, reinforcing long-term resource security and livelihood resilience.

Mission-Driven Reservoir Development and Fisheries Value Chain Expansion

India possesses one of the world's largest inland reservoir networks, spanning approximately 31.5 lakh hectares, which presents significant potential for expanding inland fisheries. Under Mission Amrit Sarovar, the Government of India has facilitated the development of 68,827 Amrit Sarovars, including 1,222 water bodies integrated with fisheries activities, thereby promoting fish culture, livelihood diversification, and the enhancement of aquatic ecosystems. The targeted interventions are proposed to

integrate the development of 500 reservoirs and Amrit Sarovars to further consolidate the fisheries value chain, particularly across coastal and inland regions. These measures seek to strengthen market linkages and value addition by involving startups, women-led collectives, and Fish Farmer Producer Organisations (FFPOs), fostering inclusive growth, entrepreneurship, and sustainable fisheries-based livelihoods.

Data-driven Institutional Reform in Livestock and Fisheries Sectors

Digitalisation has become a critical instrument for enhancing efficiency, transparency, and producer welfare in the dairy sector. The introduction of the 12-digit unique livestock identification system, Pashu Aadhaar, has established a foundational digital architecture for recording animal health, breeding, and service delivery transactions, thereby enabling data-driven planning and real-time access for farmers and veterinarians.

By January 2026, more than 36.45 crore livestock had been registered on the Bharat Pashudhan Portal. Complementing this, the Automatic Milk Collection System (AMCS) has improved transparency in procurement through automated quality testing and pricing, ensuring timely payments.

The Internet-based Dairy Information System (i-DIS) further integrates data across unions and federations, enabling performance monitoring.

Operational in 12 States and Union Territories, AMCS covers over 26,000 cooperative societies and benefits 17.3 lakh producers.

Parallel digital reforms in fisheries include the National Fisheries Digital Platform (NFDPP), launched in 2024, under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana. NFDPP creates digital identities and a unified national database for fishers and enterprises, facilitating access to credit, insurance, traceability, and performance incentives. With over 28 lakh stakeholders registered, integration of 12 banks on a common digital platform, and 217 loans disbursed, the platform advances formalisation, financial inclusion, and transparency in the fisheries value chain. Together, these digital platforms are reinforcing market integration, reducing transaction costs, and improving income certainty.

Sustainable Marine and Dairy Economies: Advancing Inclusive Growth and the SDGs

India's marine and dairy economies constitute foundational pillars of sustainable livelihoods, nutritional security, and inclusive growth aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sustainable management of marine resources, aligned with SDG 14, is particularly critical given India's EEZ exceeding 2 million square kilometres, necessitating effective governance of deep-sea and offshore fisheries to prevent overexploitation, conserve biodiversity, and safeguard food and livelihood security.

Complementing this, the dairy sector advances multiple social SDGs by sustaining the livelihoods of nearly 150 million farmers, particularly smallholders, thereby contributing to poverty reduction (SDG 1), productive employment (SDG 8), and reduced inequalities (SDG 10). Collectively, sustainable fisheries and inclusive dairy development reinforce integrated and equitable progress across key Sustainable Development Goals.

Conclusion

India's strategic focus on livelihood diversification through the dairy and fisheries sectors has successfully transitioned rural households from subsistence-oriented production to market-integrated, commercially viable models. Beyond enhancing farm incomes, diversification contributes to employment generation, risk mitigation, and the strengthening of food system resilience. India has emerged as the world leader in milk production and ranks second in fish and egg production, achieving significant productivity gains without necessarily increasing herd sizes. The expansion of cooperatives, Farmer-Producer Organisations (FPOs), and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) has deepened market integration, providing small producers with better bargaining power and structured value chains.

The deployment of digital public infrastructure, such as Pashu Aadhaar and the National Fisheries Digital Platform, alongside the expansion of Kisan Credit Cards (KCC), has enhanced transparency, reduced transaction costs, and provided essential liquidity to rural producers. These sectors are vital for the economic empowerment of women and smallholders, supporting livelihoods on a large scale, and aligning with global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for poverty reduction and environmental stewardship. Together, the convergence of productivity-led growth, institutional support, and technological innovation has created a resilient rural economy capable of withstanding seasonal and market shocks while ensuring national nutritional security.

Cracks appear in Trump's MAGA base as leading figures criticise Iran war

AP

New York, Mar 04: For President Donald Trump, some of the sharpest criticism he's faced in the early days of the Iran war has come from once-loyal media figures far more accustomed to singing his praises.

Tucker Carlson, Megyn Kelly and Matt Walsh are among those to express discontent. It's been noticed in the White House, which has been playing defense on social media and in interviews.

To be sure, these critics are the minority of the media MAGAsphere, where Fox News' biggest stars remain cheerleaders. But their words illustrate conservative media's influence and how valuable it is to Trump when all runs as a well-oiled machine - and, by contrast, how much of a problem it can be if it fractures.

Much of the criticism has centered on Israel's influence on Trump's decision to go to war. Carlson, the former Fox News star who has built his own independent operation, told ABC News over the weekend that the attack was "absolutely disgusting and evil."

"It's hard to say this, but the United States didn't make the decision here. Benjamin Netanyahu did," Carlson said on his podcast, referring to the Israeli prime minister.

Kelly, another former Fox anchor gone indie, said about American casualties on her show that "no one should have to die for a foreign country."

"I don't think those service members died for the United States," Kelly said. "I think they died for Israel."

Secretary of State Marco Rubio's remarks prior to a Capitol Hill briefing were a flashpoint. Rubio said that Trump had given the go-ahead for the operation knowing that Israel was prepared to strike and he feared retaliation from Iran against US bases in the



region.

"We knew that if we didn't preemptively go after them, before they launched those attacks, we would suffer higher casualties," Rubio said. House Speaker Mike Johnson said that if the Trump administration had not acted, lawmakers would have wondered why.

Walsh, a Daily Wire host, wrote on X that Rubio was "flat out telling us that we're in a war with Iran because Israel forced our hand. This is basically the worst possible thing he could have said."

The Republican president told journalist Rachael Bade in an interview that he did not believe that the opinions of Carlson and Kelly are shared by his base of supporters. "I think that MAGA is Trump," he said. "MAGA's not the other two."

Republican former US Rep Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, who has fashioned herself as an influencer and media figure since bitterly breaking with Trump, said on Kelly's podcast that she was furious over the US military action. "Make America Great Again," Greene says, "was supposed to be America first, not Israel first."

Trump is probably right to think that most of his supporters will return to the fold if they're unhappy with the Iran attack, said Jason Zengerle, author of "Hated By All the Right People: Tucker Carlson and the Unravelling of the Conservative Mind."

Given the consistency of his views on the topic, Carlson is probably the most important of Trump's conservative critics, Zengerle said.

"If the war does go badly, I think it strengthens the hand of someone like Tucker," he said. "All of this is a debate about what happens after Trump is gone anyway."

Carlson was at the centre of a controversy last fall over anti-semitism in conservative media for giving attention to polarizing influencer Nick Fuentes with an interview on Carlson's podcast.

Fuentes has called Adolf Hitler "cool," suggested there is a genocide against white people and said his young followers are "tired of hearing about slavery and the Holocaust."

There have been cracks in Trump's conservative media support prior to Iran, notably with the vast and sprawling narratives around the Jeffrey

Epstein report. But this week's criticism unleashed some startling internal vitriol.

Ben Shapiro, of "The Daily Wire," called Kelly "wildly inconsistent" and a coward. Elisabeth Hasselbeck denounced Kelly for her suggestion that American servicemen died for Israel. "How dare you?" Hasselbeck said Tuesday on "The View."

Fox News' Sean Hannity said that Carlson was "not the person I knew when he was at Fox." Kelly denounced Hannity as a supplicant who "would never say anything other than to puff Donald Trump up."

It's worth remembering that most of what readers and viewers are seeing in conservative media supports Trump. Howard Polskin, publisher of The Righting newsletter, estimated Tuesday that about 95% of what he's monitored on websites is behind the president. "Trump Stands Tall on Iran," headlined The American Spectator.

The most popular personalities on Fox News - still the top dog among conservatives - continue to be supportive. Hannity, Brian Kilmeade and Mark Levin were among the most vociferous leading up to the attack and

after.

"The president has shown more courage, and this Pentagon, Pete Hegseth's Pentagon, has executed brilliantly once again," said Kilmeade, the "Fox & Friends" co-host.

"I think that MAGA gives him the benefit of the doubt, no question about it," Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary during the early part of Trump's first term, said on his podcast Tuesday.

"I think he's built up a ton of credibility with the base... Look, you've got PTSD from a lot of our former leaders between Iraq and Afghanistan in particular, who only know forever wars, and so I get it. But this president has proven now twice that he knows what he's doing."

The podcast influencers who helped to drive many young men into Trump's camp during the 2024 campaign have been largely quiet.

Some of Walsh's criticism this week appeared to sting so much that it drew a specific rebuke from White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt.

"So far we've heard that although we killed the whole Iranian regime, this was not a regime change war," Walsh wrote on Monday.

"And although we obliterated their nuclear programme, we had to do this because of their nuclear program. And although Iran was not planning any attacks on the US, they also might have been, depending on who you ask."

And although we are not fighting this war to free the Iranian people, they are now free, or might be, depending on who seizes power, and we have no idea who that will be, is the messaging on this thing is, to put it mildly, confused."

Leavitt posted a lengthy response on X explaining Trump's rationale. "Simply put," she wrote, "the terrorist Iranian regime would not say yes to peace."

The Quintessential Editor: HK Dua, who helmed 4 national dailies, passes away

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 04: H K Dua, a distinguished journalist and a veteran of Indian public life who held the rare distinction of helming editorial operations at four of India's leading newspapers, passed away on Wednesday at the age of 88.

He breathed his last peacefully this afternoon at a private hospital, a member of his family said. His cremation will take place at Lodhi Road crematorium on Thursday.

Dua was admitted to the hospital around three weeks ago. He was survived by his wife Aditya and son Prashant.

In a remarkable career spanning over four decades, Dua traversed the world of journalism, served as a media advisor to two prime ministers -- Atal Behari Vajpayee and HD Deve Gowda -- and transitioned into the roles of a diplomat and parliamentarian.

A Padma Bhushan recipient, Dua was known for his affable persona, sharp political insight and unwavering commitment to editorial independence. He commanded respect across the political spectrum.

Dua served as editor of The Hindustan Times (1987-94), Editor-in-Chief of The Indian Express (1994-96) and The Tribune (2003-09), and Editorial Advisor for The Times of India (1997-98).

Born on July 1, 1937, Dua also served as India's ambassador to Denmark (2001-03).

He was a nominated member of the Rajya Sabha (2009-15), where he contributed significantly to debates on foreign affairs and national security. He was also part of several high-profile parliamentary committees, including the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Consultative Committee for the Ministry of Home Affairs.

A former president of the Editors' Guild of India and a steadfast defender of democratic values, Dua also served on



the National Security Advisory Board and received honorary doctorates from Punjab and Kurukshetra Universities for his contributions to the Fourth Estate.

Apart from the Padma Bhushan, he received several awards, including the Durga Ratan award and the Bal Gangadhar Tilak award for excellence in journalism.

Leaders across the political spectrum and members of the media fraternity expressed condolences over Dua's demise.

"My deepest condolences on the passing of H K Dua, a distinguished journalist, diplomat and Padma Bhushan recipient whose commitment to truth, editorial independence, and public service enriched public discourse," Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge said on social media.

Shiromani Akali Dal President Sukhbir Singh Badal said Dua upheld editorial independence with unwavering integrity, sharp insight, and commitment to democratic values.

"His contributions as a journalist and an editor across leading newspapers leave behind an enduring legacy," he said.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said, "A journalistic giant has left us."

The Editors Guild of India (EGI) also condoled Dua's demise.

"Throughout his distinguished career as a journalist and public figure, Dua not only upheld the highest values of media ethics but was also a vocal champion of media freedom and free speech. The Guild is deeply saddened by his passing," it said.

Dua served as the EGI's general secretary from 1987-89 and as president from 1992-93.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

LG Sinha chairs

Preserving peace and sustaining the progress of society is a shared responsibility that rests equally upon each one of us."

It may be recalled that MHA in its advisory had stated that intelligence inputs suggest that extremist groups may seek to exploit the prevailing tensions to foment unrest or carry out disruptive activities.

The MHA in its advisory had instructed the Directors General of Police to ensure that quick response teams remain operational and ready to respond swiftly to any untoward incident.

The Home Ministry had also placed special emphasis on monitoring social media platforms to curb the spread of inflammatory messages, misinformation and rumours that could disturb communal harmony. (KNO)

Precautionary restrictions

under control; however, minor protests were reported from parts of Sopore, Baramulla, Budgam and Bandipora districts.

Meanwhile, the Home Department of Jammu and Kashmir in an order stated that prepaid mobile internet services across the Valley have been restricted to 2G speed, not exceeding 128 kbps, till 8 pm on March 4.

An official order said the directions were issued under the Temporary Suspension of Telecommunication Services Rules, 2024, and Section 20 of the Telecommunication Act, 2023, after authorities assessed the prevailing situation.

The order stated that precautionary restrictions were imposed across Kashmir on March 1. "The decision was taken in view of apprehensions that high-speed internet services could be misused, potentially affecting public order," it added. (KNO)

Northern Army Commander

reiterated that the Northern Command remains resolute in its commitment to ensure safety & security of citizens of Jammu and Kashmir.

Pertinently, armed forces are on high alert in the wake of recent US and Israeli attacks on Iran, which led to the killing of Iran's Supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Saturday. The attack led to Iran hitting Israel and the US bases in Middle East countries, including UAE and Saudi Arabia. The situation is tense as US and Israel continue to pound Iran. The Ministry of Home Affairs has also issued a nationwide security alert to all states and Union Territories, warning of possible violence and sporadic protests in the wake of recent geo-political scenario. (KNO)

Don't take law

government. Any change in Iran must come from within. If the people are unhappy, only they have the right to decide how they want to change their government," he said.

CM Omar also said the J&K government is in close contact with the Ministry of External Affairs regarding students and residents from the Union Territory in Iran. Most have been moved to safer locations, though some final-year students are reluctant to leave hospitals where they are working. "I urge them to follow the embassy's advice. If they are asked to move to safer areas or leave Iran, they should comply," he said.

On regional tensions, the Chief Minister said war benefits no one. He described the attack on Iran as wrong and said retaliatory strikes in the region were also unacceptable. "War is not the solution; instead of ending, it is spreading," he said. (KNO)

LG, CM greet

peace, prosperity and progress in Jammu and Kashmir, and expressed confidence that the festival would usher in renewed hope and happiness for all residents.

Viksit Bharat will

reality if all of India develops. A developed India will not become a reality if that development is confined only to select pockets," the Chief Minister said, as reported by the news agency--Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

Omar said that unless every region, from Jammu and Kashmir in the north to Assam in the east, Gujarat in the west and Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala in the south experiences tangible development, the idea of Viksit Bharat would remain "a dream and merely a slogan."

"Unless all of us see that development and that progress, Viksit Bharat will remain unfulfilled," he said.

Abdullah stressed that development must be anchored in balanced growth and strengthened district-level governance.

Advocating a ground-up approach, the Chief Minister said India's transformation depends on empowered districts rather than a purely top-down model of governance.

"India develops through conferences like this and by taking a bottom-up approach. If our districts perform, our states and Union Territories perform. If our states perform, our country performs. And if our country performs, the goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047 may perhaps be realised even before the timeline we have set for ourselves," he said.

He said that district-level reforms are central to achieving national goals and called for strengthening administrative efficiency at the grassroots.

Omar said such conferences play a crucial role in promoting collaboration and preventing duplication of efforts. "For far too long, governance functioned in silos where sharing information was discouraged. Today, we are moving towards a more collaborative and holistic model," he said.

He added that successful models from one

district or state should be adapted and replicated elsewhere, though solutions must be tailored to local realities.

"There is no quick-fix solution. What works in one state may not work in another. What works in J&K may not work in Gujarat or Maharashtra. But we can adapt and modify successful practices to suit our local conditions," the CM said.

Highlighting administrative reforms in Jammu and Kashmir, Abdullah described the transition to the e-office system as a major milestone.

"One reform that has made a huge difference is the e-office system. Paper files have virtually disappeared. I now rarely see a paper file," he said.

He noted that digitisation has enhanced efficiency, transparency and accountability, with time-stamped file movements ensuring prompt decision-making. In a lighter vein, he remarked that officers sometimes compete to clear files at odd hours to demonstrate efficiency.

The Chief Minister also spoke about the growing use of virtual platforms for official meetings, which has enabled frequent interaction with district administrations without requiring officers to travel to Jammu or Srinagar.

"Earlier, district collectors had to travel once or twice a year for meetings. Now interactions happen at the drop of a hat," he said, while cautioning against overuse of virtual meetings and stressing disciplined utilisation to avoid disrupting fieldwork.

Stressing practical governance reforms, the CM called for an effective implementation of citizen-centric initiatives. "If we have a single window, it should actually function as a single window," he said, noting that in some cases, such systems end up adding layers instead of simplifying processes.

He stressed that governance reforms must translate into real ease of access and service delivery for citizens.

The Chief Minister said that elected representatives and administrators share a common objective, ensuring that citizens receive quality services in education, health, infrastructure and other key sectors.

"Whether it is myself, Dr Jitendra Singh Sahab or the Hon'ble MP, we have the same goal as you to ensure that people receive what they expect from us in development, governance and services," he said.

He added that national-level interactions serve both as knowledge-sharing platforms and as opportunities to strengthen professional relationships, which ultimately help improve coordination and service delivery.

Expressing gratitude to the Union Minister for choosing Jammu as the venue for the conference, the Chief Minister extended an invitation to hold similar events in Srinagar in the future to sustain the momentum of collaborative

governance.

The CM further welcomed the delegates and expressed confidence that the deliberations would meaningfully contribute to strengthening governance frameworks across the country and advancing the vision of "minimum government and maximum governance."

Pertinently, the conference was organised by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Government of India, in collaboration with the Government of Jammu and Kashmir.

Union Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions Jitendra Singh, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) Jugal Kishore Sharma, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Secretary DARPG Rachna Shah, Additional Secretary DARPG Puneet Yadav, Joint Secretary DARPG Sarita Chauhan, Commissioner Secretary GAD M Raju, senior IAS and JKAS officers, retired civil servants and participants from across the country were present on the occasion. (KNO)

World Hearing Day: Experts

issues like earwax buildup, fluid accumulation, infections, perforation of the eardrum, or abnormalities in the ear bones," Dr Neelofar said, adding that many such cases are treatable.

On the other hand, sensorineural hearing loss is linked to damage in the inner ear or auditory nerve. "This type is commonly caused by prolonged exposure to loud noise or natural ageing, also known as presbycusis. It is usually managed with hearing aids," she said.

Dr Tabassum, another ENT specialist, said the World Hearing Day aims to promote ear and hearing care, early detection, and access to treatment, noting that many cases of hearing impairment can be prevented or effectively managed if diagnosed early.

"Good hearing is essential for communication, learning, and overall well-being. Our ears work closely with the brain to process sounds, helping us understand our surroundings," she said.

She added that hearing loss may be congenital or acquired, with common acquired causes including noise exposure, ageing, viral infections such as meningitis, measles, and mumps, as well as autoimmune conditions.

Doctors also pointed out that symptoms of hearing loss often go unnoticed initially and may include muffled speech, difficulty understanding conversations in noisy environments, frequently asking others to repeat themselves, increasing volume levels of devices, and social withdrawal.

Another ENT specialist from Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar said that damage to delicate hair cells in the inner ear due to ageing or noise exposure is a major cause. "Once these cells are damaged, sound signals are not transmitted efficiently to the brain, leading to hearing impairment," he said.

They further added that earwax blockage, infections, sudden loud blasts, pressure changes, or injury to the eardrum can also impair hearing, while conditions like tinnitus and Meniere's disease may additionally affect ear health.

Experts stressed that while some forms of hearing loss--especially conductive types--can be medically or surgically treated, others may require assistive devices such as hearing aids. In severe cases, cochlear implants can offer significant improvement.

Raising concern over the broader impact, Dr Tabassum said, "Globally, nearly one in four individuals experiences some degree of hearing loss. In our communities, too, every third or fourth person may have some level of hearing difficulty, often ignored."

She urged people to prioritise regular ENT check-ups, avoid prolonged exposure to loud sounds, and seek medical advice at the early signs of hearing issues. "Protecting hearing today is essential to ensuring better communication, social inclusion, and quality of life tomorrow," she added. (KNO)

Dry conditions to prevail

On March 4, from March 7 to 9, the weather department, as reported by the news agency--Kashmir News Observer (KNO), has forecast generally cloudy conditions with light rain and snow over higher reaches at isolated to scattered places.

Similar conditions are likely on March 10 and 11. The weather is expected to remain generally dry from March 12 to 14, while March 15 and 16 may see generally cloudy skies.

The Met office advised farmers to continue farm operations. It said day temperatures are likely to rise by 1-2 degrees Celsius at most places over the next four days, followed by a fall of 2-4 degrees Celsius at many places.

During the past 24 hours, maximum temperatures remained above normal in several parts of the Union Territory. Srinagar recorded a maximum of 21.4 degrees Celsius, against a normal of 13.0 degrees, while the minimum settled at 2.1 degrees.

Qazigund recorded a high of 21.2 degrees and a low of 0.4 degrees. Pahalgam registered 17.5 degrees as the maximum and minus 2.1 degrees as the minimum. Kupwara recorded a high of 21.1 degrees and a low of minus 0.2 degrees, while Kokernag settled at 19.0 and 4.0 degrees, respectively. Gulmarg recorded a maximum of 11.6 degrees and a minimum of minus 0.2 degrees.

In the Jammu division, Jammu city recorded a maximum of 28.6 degrees Celsius and a minimum of 11.7 degrees. Banihal registered 21.1 and 10.4 degrees, Batote 21.7 and 10.6 degrees, Katra 26.6 and 14.6 degrees, Bhaderwah 22.7 and 3.4 degrees, and Kathua 27.8 and 12.8 degrees. (KNO)

India celebrates Holi with splash, sweets and smile

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 04: Holi festivities swept across India on Wednesday with a splash of colours, foot-tapping music and traditional celebrations as people exchanged sweets to mark the victory of good over evil with a smile.

From temple rituals at Mathura-Virndavan, the vibrant 'Dhulandi' celebrations in Rajasthan, to AAP's 'Kattar Imandar Holi' in the national capital, cities and villages were drenched in colours as devotees and locals celebrated Holi with a bright display of festive spirit.

Extending Holi greetings to the people, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the festival infuses the atmosphere with new energy.

"Heartiest greetings to all fellow citizens on the occasion of Holi. May this festival, filled with colours and zeal, bring a spring of happiness for everyone," Modi said in a message in Hindi.

"The festival of Holi infuses the entire atmosphere with new energy. This is the greatest speciality of this celebration. The way the colours of happiness are seen scattered everywhere, it leaves everyone drenched in exuberance and joy," he said.

The temple town of Mathura in Uttar Pradesh soaked in the festivities as devotees and locals celebrated Holi with traditional fervour.

Holi was played with full gusto outside the Bankey Bahari temple, but not inside the sanctum sanctorum.

The Bachcha village in the district celebrated 'Chappal Holi', where elders in the family playfully hit the younger ones with slippers, following a 150-year-old tradition that started with opposing the atrocities of the Britishers.

A similar tradition was followed in Uttar Pradesh's Shahjahanpur, where the 'Lat Sahab' procession was taken out, with revellers chanting slogans and symbolically striking the 'Lat Sahab' with shoes.

The annual procession marks a



centuries-old Holi tradition where a man representing a colonial-era 'Lat Sahab' - a figure of authority - is paraded through the town on a bull-cart, while revellers chant slogans and strike him with shoes in a symbolic act of mischief.

In Delhi, AAP leaders, including former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, celebrated what they called 'Kattar Imandar Holi' at Manish Sisodia's residence.

"Today, the colours of 'kattar imandaar' (staunch honest) will fly in the air, not the colours of corruption. This Holi is very special for AAP," Sisodia said, days after a Delhi court gave a clean chit to him, Kejriwal, and 21 others in the excise policy case.

At the Congress office on 24, Akbar Road, Rahul Gandhi celebrated Holi with party workers, applying colours on everyone before being smeared with 'gulaal' in return.

In a post on X, Gandhi said, "Heartiest greetings to all of you on the festival of colours and love, Holi. May the colours of Holi fill your lives with new hopes, new

enthusiasm and countless happiness." Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said, "On this joyous occasion that bridges distances, I wish you all a very Happy Holi. May your life always be filled with the colours of happiness."

Jammu celebrated Holi with gaiety, with Army and paramilitary forces joining the festivities along the Indo-Pak border.

The main celebrations were held across Jammu city, where people of different communities exchanged greetings and shared festive delicacies in a spirit of harmony.

Army and BSF troops deployed along the LoC and International Border celebrated Holi with the border residents and NGOs.

'Dhulandi', often referred to as the main day of Holi or 'Rangwali Holi', was celebrated across Rajasthan, a day after partial observance in some areas due to a lunar eclipse.

In Jaipur, a Holi Milan ceremony was organised at the chief minister's residence, where Bhajanlal Sharma played

Holi with domestic and foreign tourists, and members of former royal families.

In Ajmer's Pushkar, a large number of tourists, including foreigners, attended the International Holi Festival at the fairground.

In Punjab, Haryana and their common capital, Chandigarh, people celebrated Holi with traditional zeal, smearing 'gulaal' on each other, and exchanging sweets to mark the occasion.

A huge rush of devotees flocked to Anandpur Sahib in Punjab for the 'Holla Mohalla' festival of the Sikh community, offering prayers at the Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib.

In West Bengal, people continued the festivities on Wednesday, a day after 'Doljatra'.

Bonhomie and camaraderie marked the occasion, as revellers danced to popular songs while children splashed passers-by with colours, cutting across religious and linguistic divides.

The revelry was particularly lively in Kolkata's Burrabazar, Chitpur, Bhawanipur, Lake Town and Kashiipur, which house a sizable north Indian population.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee posted on X: "HAPPY HOLI! May this vibrant festival fill every home with joy and colour."

The festival of colours was celebrated with much enthusiasm in Telangana and Odisha, while traditional fervour marked Holi in Jharkhand, with revellers smearing one another with 'gulaal', and dancing to the tunes of traditional Holi songs.

In Hyderabad, children and youth revelled in Holi celebrations at apartments and residential complexes, with north Indian communities organising 'Holika Dahan' to ring in the festival.

In Puri, special arrangements were made for foreign tourists participating in Holi festivities, while hoteliers and lifeguards were asked to keep a close watch on tourists to prevent drowning incidents at Puri beach.

IndiGo cancels over 500 flights to Middle East in past 4 days amid widening crisis



PTI

Mumbai, Mar 04: IndiGo on Wednesday said it cancelled over 500 flights to the Middle East and select international destinations from February 28 to March 3 due to the evolving airspace restrictions over Iran and other Gulf countries.

In a regulatory filing, the airline said that it will continue to closely monitor the revenue environment arising from this situation.

With airspace curbs in the Middle East due to the conflict involving the US, Israel and Iran, flight services have been significantly impacted since February 28. "More than 500 flights to the Middle East and select international destinations have been cancelled between February 28 and March 3," IndiGo said.

It said in the filing, "Our operational teams are continuously assessing the evolving regional developments, recalibrating flight schedules, and planning repatriation operations in coordination with relevant authorities in India and the respective international jurisdictions, with the objective of minimising disruption to passengers."

The Civil Aviation Ministry said on Tuesday that 1,221 flights by Indian carriers and 388 flights by foreign carriers had been cancelled (till March 3) due to the ongoing situation.

As per the Ministry website, the number of departed international flights from India was 356, while 338 international flights landed at various international airports in the country on March 3.

TMC resorting to violence ahead of elections, alleges Bengal BJP chief

PTI

Kolkata, Mar 04: Alleging attacks on BJP workers in several districts ahead of the upcoming West Bengal assembly elections, the main opposition BJP on Wednesday accused the ruling TMC of resorting to violence and intimidation to retain power in the state.

Addressing a press conference, state BJP president Samik Bhattacharya claimed that party workers had been targeted in various districts such as Hooghly, Murshidabad and North 24 Parganas, besides several places in Kolkata.

"Criminal elements and the Trinamool Congress have become one. Even before the festival of democracy begins, central forces have had to be deployed. It is a shame for the state," Bhattacharya said.

The BJP Rajya Sabha MP also accused the ruling party of indulging in religious polarisation.

"They (TMC) know they will have to give up power, and that is why they have become desperate to hold on to it," Bhattacharya said. He claimed that

the law and order situation in the state deteriorated, necessitating early deployment of central forces ahead of polls, a demand the party had repeatedly raised in previous elections as well.

Bhattacharya issued a warning to the state administration, saying officials would eventually have to work under a BJP government.

"Those state officers toeing the TMC line will have to work with the BJP government in the future," he said.

Trinamool Congress state general secretary Kunal Ghosh denied Bhattacharya's allegations.

"The BJP is attempting to create unrest and polarisation for electoral gains," Ghosh said.

Meanwhile, Union minister and BJP leader Sukanta Majumdar said the TMC would have to face the consequences if the opposition party's Poriborton Yatra from March 5 is attacked.

"Don't dare stop or attack our Poriborton Yatra. You will get fit for tat treatment," said Majumdar, a former state BJP president.

The elections to the 294-member West Bengal assembly are likely to be held in April.

Qatar shuts LNG output; supplies to India hit, city gas sector flags crisis

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 04: Qatar has halted liquefied natural gas (LNG) production after its facilities came under attack amid the ongoing West Asia conflict, disrupting supplies to India and squeezing feedstock availability for key domestic sectors.

India, which depends on long-term LNG contracts with Qatar for a significant share of its gas needs, has seen a temporary suspension of cargoes, leading to supply cuts up to 40 per cent for a range of industrial consumers and city gas distribution (CGD) companies.

While some industrial users can switch to alternative - though costlier - fuels, the CNG-retailing city gas sector has warned of severe stress. CGD operators said replacing

contracted Qatari volumes with spot LNG priced at more than double the contracted rate could erode CNG's price advantage and result in a permanent shift of customers to electric vehicles.

Petronet LNG Ltd, India's largest LNG importer, hasn't been able to send ships to Qatar to ferry LNG as the Strait of Hormuz - a narrow shipping route through which West Asian countries, including Qatar, export most of their oil and gas - is all but closed.

Additionally, Qatar has shut down liquefied natural gas production at the world's largest export facility - which also supplied gas to India - after it was targeted in an Iranian drone attack.

In a stock exchange filing, Petronet said it has sent force majeure notice to Qatari



supplier, QatarEnergy for inability to send ships.

QatarEnergy too has served a force majeure notice for inability to serve its buyer - Petronet LNG - due to hostilities in the region. "In light

of the recent and ongoing war in the Middle East region involving Iran and Israel, vessels are presently unable to safely transit through the Strait of Hormuz to reach Ras Laffan, the loading port of

QatarEnergy," Petronet said. "Considering the prevailing security situation and the material risks posed to maritime navigation, the company (Petronet) has issued a force majeure notice to QatarEnergy in respect of its LNG tankers, namely Disha, Raahi, and Aseem.

Petronet said it has, in turn, issued corresponding force majeure notices to its downstream off-takers.

Qatar supplies 40 per cent of the 27 million tonnes a year of LNG that India imports annually.

The supply cuts have also been effected on city gas firms, which have written to government-owned gas utility GAIL, expressing concerns over the availability of domestic gas and LNG to meet the requirements of CNG for automobiles and piped cooking gas for households.

Most nations, including India, off track to meet 2030 target to halt childhood obesity: Global body

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 04: The World Obesity Federation, a global organisation focused exclusively on obesity and a lead partner to international agencies, including the World Health Organization, has warned that most countries, including India, are off the track to meet the 2030 global target to halt the rise in childhood obesity.

The target was set for 2025, which was extended to 2030 after most countries failed to achieve it. Estimates by the World Obesity Federation (WOF) suggest that by 2040, 20 million children in India will be living with obesity, and 56 million will be living with overweight and obesity.

At least 120 million school-age children across the globe are expected to have early signs of chronic disease such as hypertension and cardiovascular ailments due to overweight and obesity by 2040, it said.

According to the World Obesity Atlas 2026 released by the WOF on World Obesity Day on Wednesday, 14.921 million children from the age of 5-9 years and more than 26.402 million children from the age of 10-19 in India were overweight or obese in 2025.

The top 10 countries alone account for over 200 million school-age children, 5-19 years, with high body mass index (BMI).

By the end of 2025, eight countries were



projected to have more than 10 million children with high BMI, while China, India and the United States each had more than 10 million children living with obesity, the Atlas stated. China leads

both categories, with 62 million children with high BMI and 33 million with only obesity, followed by India (41 million high BMI; 14 million obesity) and the US (27 million high BMI; 13

million obesity).

In India, from 2025 to 2040, children aged 5-19 years with disease indicators attributed to high BMI is projected to rise substantially, including BMI-attributed hypertension increasing from 2.99 million to 4.21 million; hyperglycaemia from 1.39 million to 1.91 million; high triglycerides from 4.39 million to 6.07 million; and metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD), previously known as nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), from 8.39 million to 11.88 million.

According to the Atlas, 74 per cent of adolescents aged 11-17 years fail to meet the recommended physical activity levels; only 35.5 per cent of school-age children (primary and secondary) receive school meals; and 32.6 per cent of infants aged 1-5 months experience sub-optimal breastfeeding.

The report also highlighted that 13.4 per cent of women aged 15-49 years are exposed to high BMI; 4.2 per cent of women aged 15-49 years live with Type 2 diabetes; and children aged 6-10 years consume an average of 0-50 ml of sugary drinks per day.

The Atlas found that more than one in five (20.7 per cent) 5-19-year olds worldwide are living with obesity and overweight, an increase from 14.6 per cent in 2010.

The WOF predicts that by 2040, a total of 507

million children worldwide will be living with obesity or be overweight.

Childhood obesity and overweight lead to similar conditions as seen in adults, including hypertension and cardiovascular disease, the WOF said. It is estimated that by 2040, more than 57 million children will show early signs of cardiovascular disease (high triglycerides), while over 43 million will show signs of hypertension.

WOF Chief Executive Johanna Ralston said, "The increase in childhood obesity worldwide shows we have failed to take seriously a disease that affects one in five children."

"Governments urgently need to step up prevention and management efforts for children living with overweight and obesity, and ensure that they receive the care they need."

"We need to implement policies to create healthy environments, whether children are at home, school or out and about: We know that taxes on sugar-sweetened drinks and limits on advertising unhealthy food to children work, alongside greater access to physical activity and monitoring that starts in primary care."

"There is no reason to hesitate in bringing these about. It is not right to condemn a generation to obesity and the chronic and potentially fatal non-communicable diseases that often go with it," Ralston said.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

رمضان المبارك

1447 H / 2026 CE

وقت افطار	اختتام سحری	رمضان المبارک	تاریخ
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06:44 PM	05:14 AM	29	19
06:45 PM	05:12 AM	30	20

وقت افطار	اختتام سحری	رمضان المبارک	تاریخ
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06:33 PM	05:34 AM	14	04
06:33 PM	05:33 AM	15	05

DUA FOR SEHRI

وَبِصَوْمٍ غَدٍ نَّوَيْتُ 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

Kashmir
Thunder

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