



# Eid-ul-Fitr today

## LG Sinha CM Omar, others extend greetings

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Mar 20: Mosques and Eidgahs across Jammu and Kashmir are being prepared to host thousands of worshippers for the special Eid prayers on Saturday morning, as the region gears up to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr, marking the culmination of the holy month of Ramadan.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) the Eid congregation in the Valley are expected to take place at Asar-i-Sharif at Hazratbal, Khanqah-e-Muala, Ziarat Syed Sahib at Sonwar, Janab Sahib Saura, Asar-e-Sharif Kalashpora, Asar-e-Sharif Lal Bazar and other mosques and



shrines. Imams and clerics will deliver sermons on the occasion highlighting the essence of festival.

On the Eid eve, markets across Srinagar, Budgam, Anantnag, Baramulla, Pulwama,

Bandipora and other areas remained crowded with shoppers despite rain and chill.

"Eid is about joy, gratitude, and sharing," said Mohammad Sultan from Nishat, Srinagar. "We pray for | More on P6



Toy and candy sellers braving rain in Srinagar, just a day before Eid-ul-Fitr, as shoppers flock to markets for festive celebrations. Pic: Jahangir Shah (KNO/KT)

## President extends Eid greetings

KT NEWS DESK

The President of India Droupadi Murmu on Friday greeted fellow citizens on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr. In her message the President said, "On the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, I extend my

heartfelt greetings and best wishes to all fellow citizens, especially to Muslim sisters and brothers living in India and abroad." She added, "Celebrated after the end of the holy month of Ramadan, this festival gives the message of self-control, charity and | More on P6

## Tears, faith mark last Friday of Ramadan in Kashmir

### Emotional scenes at shrines, mosques; worshippers pray for peace

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Mar 20: A mixture of joy and sorrow filled the air across Jammu and Kashmir on the last Friday of Ramadan, as thousands gathered in mosques and shrines, not just in prayer, but in farewell too.

"Afsos, Azee Govham Juddaa, Aai Maah-e-Ramadan Alwada" (O beloved month you are departing, O Ramadan, Good-bye), whispered many, as the Valley witnessed deeply emotional scenes, with tears in their eyes, hands raised in dua and hearts heavy at the thought of the holy month coming to an end.

Devotees gathered in large

numbers at mosques and shrines across the Valley and parts of Jammu, with many lingering longer than usual, reluctant to let go of the spiritual calm Ramadan brings.

"It feels like a guest we love is leaving," Abdul Rasheed from Khanyar told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO). "One waits all year for Ramadan, and suddenly it is over."

At the historic Jamia Masjid Srinagar, thousands offered congregational prayers, but the absence of chief cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq added to the emotional weight of the day.

"It feels incomplete without his sermon," | More on P6

## PM Modi speaks to King of Bahrain

### Condemns attacks on energy infra in West Asia

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday spoke to King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain and while discussing with him the current situation in West Asia, condemned attacks on the energy and civilian infrastructure in the region.

During his telephonic conversation with the King of Bahrain, the prime minister reiterated the importance of ensuring freedom of navigation and keeping shipping lines open and secure.

"Had a fruitful discussion with the King of Bahrain, His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa. Conveyed warm greetings on the occasion of Eid



al-Fitr to him and the people of Bahrain.

"We discussed the current situation in the West Asian region. Condemned attacks on the energy and civilian infrastructure in the region,

underscoring their adverse impact on global food, fuel and fertiliser security," Modi said in a post on X.

The prime minister also thanked the king for his continued support for | More on P6

## Dry spell likely from today, MeT predicts

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Mar 20: Jammu and Kashmir witnessed light to moderate rainfall in the plains and snowfall in the higher reaches over the past 24 hours, the Meteorological Department said on Friday.

Officials said snowfall was recorded in higher altitude areas, including Gurez, Keran, Tangdhar, Uri, Gulmarg and Pahalgam, while most plains received light to moderate rain.

The MeT Centre Srinagar informed the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that weather conditions on March 20 are expected to remain partly to generally cloudy, with spells of light rain in plains and light snowfall over higher reaches at many places

towards late afternoon and evening. Improvement is expected thereafter.

From March 21 to 25, the weather is likely to remain generally dry across the Union Territory, with a brief spell of light rain or snowfall at isolated places on March 23.

For the subsequent period from March 26 to 28, officials have forecast generally cloudy conditions with light rain in the plains and snowfall over the higher reaches at a few places. Another spell of light to moderate rain in plains and snowfall in higher reaches is expected at many places between March 29 and 31, the MeT office said.

Meanwhile, the department has issued an advisory stating that day temperatures are expected to rise | More on P6

## Husband has to equally participate in household chores as he is not marrying a maid: SC

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 20: The Supreme Court on Friday said a husband has to equally participate in household chores like cooking, cleaning and washing as he is not marrying a maid but a life partner.

The observations came from a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta who was hearing a petition filed by a man challenging an order of the Karnataka High Court.

The high court had set aside a trial court order granting divorce to the man on the ground of cruelty.



During the hearing before the apex court, the counsel appearing for the man said the mediation between the parties

had failed. He said the marriage between the parties took place in May 2017 and since 2019, the couple is separated.

"I (man) want a divorce. The trial court granted a divorce on the ground of cruelty," the counsel said.

The bench asked what the cruelty was as alleged in the matter.

The counsel appearing for the man said the woman had indulged in improper behaviour and was not cooking food.

"You have to equally participate in all these. Cooking, cleaning, | More on P6

## Did parties appoint authorised agents to verify votes of MLAs in Rajya Sabha polls?

### ECI transfers RTI query to Returning Officer

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Mar 20: The ghost of cross-voting is once again set to haunt political parties in Jammu & Kashmir, as the Election Commission of India has transferred an RTI application seeking details on whether parties had appointed authorised agents to verify whom their MLAs voted in the Rajya Sabha elections held in October last year.

The Election Commission has



transferred the RTI application to the Returning Officer of the Rajya Sabha polls.

"For point No. 1, 2 and 3 of your RTI application, your application has been transferred to the Returning Officer concerned through PIO, O/o Chief Electoral Officer, Jammu & Kashmir under Section 6(3)

of the RTI Act, 2005," reads the response of Central Public Information Officer (CPIO) S.K. Das, a copy of which is in possession of news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

The application specifically seeks the names of MLAs or Ministers who were appointed as authorized agents by political

parties to verify the votes cast by their members. It also asks for the names of substitutes or additional authorised agents who were appointed to verify the votes of MLAs or Ministers serving as authorized agents.

The appointment of authorized agents is a key requirement to ensure transparency in how MLAs cast their votes in Rajya Sabha election, which is conducted through an open ballot system. Every political party that has members in the Assembly has to appoint an authorized agent to verify whom its MLAs have voted for. These agents are seated inside the polling station in seats provided by the | More on P6

## Make life easier for taxpayers, use tech to check evasion: FM to IT officers

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 20: Emphasising that taxpayers are not adversaries, Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday asked income tax officers to ease compliance for honest assesseees while leveraging technology to crack down on wilful tax evasion.

Addressing the 'PRARAMBH 2026: Nationwide Awareness Campaign on the Income Tax Act, 2025', the minister also exuded confidence that the Income Tax Act, 2025, effective April 1, will certainly set the trend for making India a very tax-friendly country.

The multimedia campaign, spanning print, radio, television, outdoor, digital and social media, has been designed to

build awareness about the key features of the new Act, which is set to come into effect from the beginning of the next financial year.

"Make paying tax so easy that honesty becomes the natural choice. But those who are wilfully evading, those who are deliberately trying to get away, technology must catch them. If you are honest, the system will make your life easy, but if you evade, the system will find you. This message should go to the taxpayer," Sitharaman said.

Parliament, on August 12, 2025, passed a new Income Tax Bill to replace the six-decade-old Income Tax Act, 1961. It does not impose any new tax rate and only simplifies the language, which was required



for understanding the complex Income Tax laws.

The Act has removed redundant provisions and archaic language and reduced the

number of Sections from 819 in the Income Tax Act of 1961 to 536 and the number of chapters from 47 to 23.

The number of words had

been reduced from 5.12 lakh to 2.6 lakh in the new Income Tax Bill, and for the first time, it introduces 39 new tables and 40 new formulas, replacing the dense text of the 1961 law to enhance clarity.

Sitharaman also asked tax officials to hold awareness sessions across India to educate people about the new tax laws in local languages.

"I want to convey a message to the Income Tax Department. You're not just tax collectors. You're the face of the government's relationship with the taxpayer. Since you're the face of the government's relationship with the taxpayer, this new law gives you a clearer and leaner framework to make it simple, to make it simpler for people who

want to understand it better," she said.

It must be administered with empathy, fairness and efficiency, she said, adding that it is expected that every officer internalise the spirit of this new law.

"The taxpayer is not your adversary. The taxpayer is your partner in nation-building. I want a new approach, a new mindset. I urge Income Tax Officers to treat this 'PRARAMBH' as an opportunity to embrace this fresh mindset... the atmosphere should change, and one should feel comfortable coming to an IT officer," she said.

Recalling the song from Hindi film Hum Hindustani to emphasise change in mindset, she said, "Chhodo Kal Ki Baatein, Kal Ki Baat Purani; Aao Milkar

Likhenge Hum Income Tax Ki Nayi Kahani'.

Drawing a similarity, she said the film was released in 1960 when the old Income Tax Act was being framed.

Stressing that the new law provides an opportunity to build trust, she urged the department to encourage less litigation.

"So, our underlying thought with a new Act should be that I trust the taxpayer. If I made it simple, there's no need for him to come to me. Everything runs digitally. I should have less temptation to take things to court.

"So, I would think it is necessary to build trust, reduce the need for litigation, use technology to minimise human interface, but never | More on P6

## Deputy CM greets people on Eid-ul-Fitr, Nauroz

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, MARCH 20: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary on Friday extended warm greetings to the people on the auspicious occasions of Eid-ul-Fitr and Nauroz.

He said that both the festivals hold immense religious and cultural significance and reflect the rich composite heritage of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, extolled that Eid-ul-Fitr marks the culmination of the holy month of Ramzan-ul-Mubarak, symbolising compassion, gratitude and generosity. He said that Nauroz, to be celebrated on March 21, heralds the arrival of spring and is observed with great religious as well as cultural fervour and joy.

Expressing hope on the sacred occasions, he prayed for the wellbeing, peace and prosperity of all. He urged



the people to further strengthen the bonds of coexistence, harmony and brotherhood. He added that the people of Jammu and Kashmir have always

set a shining example of unity, love and communal harmony, celebrating each other's festivals with great enthusiasm and mutual respect.

## Director Agriculture reviews works of Centre of Excellence at Krishi Bhawan, Jammu

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, MARCH 20: Director Agriculture Jammu Anil Gupta Friday reviewed the final stage works of the Centre of Excellence (COE) for Entrepreneurship in Precision Vegetable and Floriculture Farming being established at Vegetable Improvement Scheme, Krishi Bhawan, Talab Tillo Jammu.

The Centre of Excellence (COE), as per an official statement, is being developed under the NABARD RIDF-XXX

scheme with a total investment of Rs. 5.92 crore. The project features a state-of-the-art polycarbonate greenhouse covering an area of 3511 square meters.

Speaking on the occasion, the Director stated that the construction of the Centre of Excellence has been completed and the facility will be inaugurated shortly to make it operational for the farming community. He added that the Centre will soon be opened to provide advanced services to farmers across the Jammu Division.

## Satish Sharma extends Eid greetings; calls for unity, mutual harmony

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, MARCH 20: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, IT, Transport, Youth Services & Sports and Science & Technology, Satish Sharma, on Friday extended warm greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the auspicious occasion of Eid.

In his message, the Minister, as per an official statement, conveyed sincere wishes for peace, prosperity and well-being of all citizens. He expressed hope that the sacred festival would bring immense joy, happiness and blessings to every household across Jammu and Kashmir.

Highlighting the spiritual and social significance of Eid, Satish Sharma said that the festival embodies the timeless values of compassion, generosity, sacrifice and brotherhood. He noted that Eid is an occasion to strengthen communal harmony and promote a sense of unity and mutual



respect among people from all walks of life.

The Minister urged the people to celebrate the festival in its true spirit by reaching out to the underprivileged and marginalized sections of society. "Eid teaches us to share our happiness with others and to ensure that no one is left behind in moments of celebration," he remarked.

Reaffirming the government's commitment towards ensuring

availability of essential commodities during the festive period, Satish Sharma maintained that adequate measures have been put in place to maintain smooth supply of food grains, LPG and other essential items across markets. He also emphasized strict monitoring to prevent black marketing, hoarding and overpricing, ensuring that people do not face any inconvenience during the

festivities.

The Minister further highlighted the importance of youth engagement and community participation during such occasions, urging young people to take a lead in promoting harmony, cleanliness and social responsibility in their respective localities.

He also called upon the transport authorities and service providers to ensure seamless mobility for the public during Eid, facilitating safe and hassle-free travel for those visiting their families and loved ones.

Satish Sharma prayed for sustained peace, progress and prosperity in Jammu and Kashmir and reiterated the government's resolve to work tirelessly for the welfare and development of the people.

He appealed to the public to celebrate Eid with responsibility, maintain cleanliness, and adhere to public safety norms so that the festival remains a joyous and inclusive occasion for all.

## DC Kathua inspects LPG distribution, assures adequate supply

KT NEWS DESK

KATHUA, MARCH 20: Deputy Commissioner Kathua Rajesh Sharma on Friday visited Vimal Gas Agency to review the availability and distribution of domestic LPG in the district.

During the inspection, the Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, stated that there is no scarcity of domestic LPG and adequate stock is available to meet the demand of consumers. He reassured the public that the supply chain is functioning smoothly and there is no need for panic.

The DC informed that teams have been constituted to keep a close vigil on LPG distribution and to ensure that no hoarding or black marketing takes place. He emphasized that strict action will be taken against any such violations.

Providing further details, the DC said that the booking cycle for LPG refills has been streamlined, with the next booking permitted after 25 days in urban areas and 45 days in rural areas. He also added that the OTP-related issues have been resolved and the system is now functioning in a regulated manner.

### NOTICE

I want to change my name in my Aadhaar Card bearing No 3846 2420 4932 from Waseema Ahad to Muskaan Waseem as per my Domicile Certificate and other documents. Now I want to apply for its correction. If anybody have any objection he/she may contact concerned authority within 7 days after that no claim shall be entertained

Muskaan Waseem  
W/o Waseem Yousuf Ahanger  
R/o Pazwalpora Shalimar  
Srinagar

### Union Territory Jammu & Kashmir OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER R&B DIVISION SOPORE.

#### NOTICE INVITING TENDER

**NIT No- 184 of RnB-Sopore of 2025-2026 e-tendering DATED: 19.03.2026.**

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K, e-tenders (in Single Cover System) are invited on Percentage rate basis from approved and eligible contractors registered with J&K State Govt. CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:

S.No.	Name of Work	Adv. cost	Cost of Tender Documents In Rupees	E/ Money	Time for completion of work	Time & Date of Opening of Bid	Class of Contractor	M. H of Account	Position of TS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
1	Construction of Girls Toilet at Primary School Dokulbal	1.72	200/-	3440	20 days	27.03.2026	DEE	Samagra Shiksha	195/TS of 2025-26 dated: 18.03.2026
2	Construction of Girls Toilet at Primary School Kawol	1.72	200/-	3440	20 days	27.03.2026	DEE	Samagra Shiksha	195/TS of 2025-26 dated: 18.03.2026
3	Construction of Girls Toilet at Middle School Cherhar	1.72	200/-	3440	20 days	27.03.2026	DEE	Samagra Shiksha	195/TS of 2025-26 dated: 18.03.2026

Project Authority: Director Samagra Available  
Position of funds: Available  
Position of AA: Accorded by Project Director Samagra vide his order No: 492-  
Chirag of 2026 dated: 18.3.2026

1. The Bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other detail's can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below

S.No.	Date of issue of tender Notice	19.03.2026
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	19.03.2026 to 27.03.2026 (upto 4 PM)
3	Bid Submission start date	19.03.2026
4	Bid submission End date	27.03.2026 (4.00 PM)
5	Date and time of opening of bides (online)	27.03.2026(04.30 AM) in the office of Ex. Engineer R&B Division, Sopore

2. Bids must be accompanied by a Treasury Challan (dated between the bid start date and the Bid Submission End date) with NIT No. Name of work and S.No. deposited in M.H. 0059 in the name of Executive Engineer R&B Division Sopore (tender inviting authority) as the cost of the tender document.

At the time of tendering, all bidders must upload earnest money/bid security equal to 2% of the Advertised Cost in the form of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to the tender receiving authority, i.e. Executive Engineer R&B Division Sopore. Besides that, the successful bidder will have to provide Performance Security @ 5% at the time of contract award, strictly in accordance with the Government's circular instructions from time to time. The earnest money/bid security of 2% will be released after submission of a performance security of 5% of the quoted cost which will be released after completion of the DLP/Maintenance Period.

3(b) Geotag Photographs Minimum 03 sets (01 set Comprising of Photograph before, during and after execution of work) of size 26 cm x 21 cm to be provided.

Unbalanced Bid- In case bid of the successful bidder is unbalanced, the Successful bidder will have to provide additional performance security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Sopore (tender receiving authority) vide Principal Secretary to Government Finance department's circular issued under endorsement No: DF-Code/ 441/ 2021-02-158 dated" 8.8.20025.

a. Where the bid price is below 10% but not below 20% of the project cost put to bid, the additional performance guarantee/security percentage shall be incremented by 0.1% for every percentage of bid price below 10% of the project cost put to bid starting at 11% with the additional bid performance guarantee being 0.1% and this additional performance guarantee percentage shall be applied on the bid price.

b. Where the bid price is 20% or more below of the project cost put to bid, the additional performance guarantee percentage shall be incremented by 0.2% for every percentage of bid price below 20% of the project cost put to bid in addition to 1% of the bid price and this additional performance guarantee percentage shall be applied on the bid price.

c. The additional performance guarantee percentage shall be rounded off to the next lower percentage based on whether the decimal point of the percentage of bid price is below 0.5% or next higher percentage based on whether the decimal point of the percentage of bid price is 0.5% or more.

d. The additional performance security shall be treated as part of the performance security. Additional performance security shall be taken only after approval of next higher authority.

The additional performance security shall be released only after successful completion of work.

4. The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same web site in the office of the Tender receiving authority.

5. The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of technical Bids.

6. Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.

6.1. Bidders are advised to download bid submission manual from the "Downloads" option as well as from "Bidders Manual Kit" on website www.jktenders.gov.in acquaint bid submission process.

6.2. To participate in bidding process, bidders have to get 'Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)' as per Information Technology Act-2000. Bidders can get digital certificate from any approved vendor.

6.3. The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with digital Signature. No Financial bid will be accepted in physical form.

6.4. Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned in Para-1

6.5. Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents with bid. Note: - Scan all the documents on 100 dpi with black and white option.

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of J&K UT,

No. 12025-34  
Dated: 19.03.2026.

DIPK-12030/25  
DATED: 20-03-2026

sd/  
Executive Engineer,  
R&B Division Sopore

### GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (R&B) DIVISION CHADOORA

#### NOTICE INVITING FRESH TENDERS

**ENIT NO. 106 OF R&B /CHADOORA/ 7183-92 of 2025-26 DATED: 18/03/2026**

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, UT J&K, e-tenders (In single cover system) are invited on Percentage basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/ Central Governments for the following works:-

SN	Nome of Work	Adv. Cost (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (In Rupees)	Earnest Money (In Rupees)	Time of completion (days)	M.H OF Account	Class Of Contactor
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Construction of road from Km 5th of Chadoora Sursyar road to interior of Gundi Maqsod (length 1km).	5.00	200.00	10000	12	PRI	DEE

Project Authority: DDC Budgam  
Position of Funds: Budgeted/Committed.  
Position of AAA: Accorded  
Position of TS: Sanctioned

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

S.No.	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	18/03/2026
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	18/03/2026
3	Bid submission Start Date	18/02/2026
4	Bid Submission End Date	24/03/2026 upto 03.00 PM.
5	Date & time of opening of Technical Bids	24/03/2026 at 3.05 PM in the office of Executive Engineer, R&B Division Chadoora

Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of Treasury Challan (deposited in MH: 0059) in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Chadoora (tender inviting authority) and Earnest money / Bid security in shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Chadoora (tender receiving authority).

Note:- The Date of Treasury Challan and Earnest Money / Bid security must be between the date of start of bid and Bid Submission End date. Any deviation shall render the bidder as Non-responsive.

1.1 The 1st lowest bidder has to produce an amount equal to 5% of contract as Performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Chadoora within 07 (Seven) days after the date of receipt of letter of acceptance and shall be released after successful completion of DLP. The Bank Guarantee should be valid till DLP period.

2. At the time of tendering, all bidders must upload earnest money/bid security equal to 2% of the Advertised Cost in the form of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to the tender receiving authority, i.e., Executive Engineer R&B Division Chadoora. Besides that, the successful bidder will have to provide Performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG @ 5% at the time of contract award, strictly in accordance with the Government's circular instructions from time to time. The earnest money/bid security of 2% will be released to the successful bidder only after the submission of a Performance Security of 5% of the total cost, which will be released after successful completion of the DLP/Maintenance Period. In case of failure to produce Performance Security shall render the L1 as non responsive and case for debarment of the Contractor for a period of 01 Year to be forwarded to Higher Authorities.

3. Unbalanced Bid: -  
As per the Circular instructions of Finance Deptt. Issued Vide No.FD-Code/441/2021-02-158 Dated:08.08.2025 & endorsed by Chief Engineer (R&B) Central Kashmir vide endorsement No. CE/R&B/CK/ WS/6375-96 dated 12/08/2025, which is reproduced as:-  
i) Where the bid price is below 10% but not below 20% of the Project Cost put to bid, the additional Performance Guarantee/Security Percentage shall be incremented by 0.1% for every percentage of bid price below 10% of the project cost put to bid starting at 11% with the additional bid performance guarantee being 0.1% and this additional performance guarantee percentage shall be applied on the bid price.  
ii) Where the bid price is 20% or more below of the project cost put to bid, the additional performance guarantee percentage shall be incremented by 0.2% for every percentage of bid price below 20% of the project cost put to bid in addition to 1% of the bid price and this additional performance guarantee percentage shall be applied on the bid price.

4. The date and time of opening of Financial Bids of a responsive bidder shall be notified on Web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address.

No. 7183-92  
DATED: 18/03/2026

DIPK-12027/25  
DATED: 20-03-2026

Executive Engineer

## 1.55 Lakh sheep transported to Kashmir in Ramadan



REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Mar 20: More than 1.55 lakh sheep were transported to Kashmir in the holy month of Ramadan.

The figures available reveal that as many as 1,55,550 sheep were transported into Kashmir during the holy month of Ramadan.

The figures further reveal that over 915 trucks carrying livestock arrived in the Valley from February 19 till March 19. General Secretary

of the Mutton Dealers Association, Mehraj-ud-Din told KNO that from February-19 till March-12, around 30 trucks of sheep were arriving daily to Kashmir.

"This steady supply kept markets well-stocked during most of the fasting month," he said.

Demand surged sharply in the last week between March-13 and March-19. During that period, 255 trucks carrying sheep entered the Valley, showing a clear spike in consumption," he added.

## Police arrest 2 drug peddlers

KNO

Srinagar, Mar 20: Continuing its drive against the drug peddlers, Police in Awantipora have arrested two drug peddlers from Reshipora, Awantipora.

According to a statement, a Police party of Police Post Reshipora at a checkpoint established at Reshipora-Panzgam Crossing, arrested 02 drug peddler identified as Nazim Hamid son of Ab Hamid Mir resident of Kawani and Faisal Ahmad Bhat son of Gulzar Ahmad Bhat resident of Dogripora. The arrested persons were travelling in a vehicle (swift) and during search 320 grams of Charas like substance wrapped in maize husk was recovered from their possession. Vehicle bearing registration number JK13J-0219 used in the commission of crime has also been seized. Accordingly, a case vide FIR Number 64/2026 under relevant section of law has been registered at Police Station Awantipora and investigation has been initiated—(KNO)

## US-Israel-Iran War

# Armenia alternative exit for Indian students

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Mar 20: In a significant development amid ongoing evacuation challenges, Indian students stranded at the Azerbaijan border have now been given the option to exit via Armenia, offering a potential breakthrough for those facing prolonged delays.

As per the details, nearly 150 Indian students remain stranded at the Azerbaijan border, particularly in the Astara region, where delays in the issuance of mandatory exit codes have left them in a state of uncertainty for around a week.

Officials and coordinators involved in evacuation efforts have now advised stranded students to consider an alternative route through Armenia.

Under this arrangement, students are expected to receive visas on arrival in Armenia. However, they will be required to arrange and book their own travel tickets back to India after crossing the border.

A large number of affected students belong to institutions such as the Islamic Azad University and the Iran University of Medical Sciences.

Meanwhile, evacuation efforts have seen partial success. Around 200-300 students have already reached Armenia, from where they are expected to return to India over the next few days, depending on flight availability. Many of them are currently waiting for confirmed flight schedules as airlines continue to operate limited but regular services.

However, the situation

remains challenging for others. Approximately 400 students are still stranded in different parts of Iran, awaiting transportation to Armenia as part of the ongoing evacuation process. Authorities are working to facilitate their movement at the earliest.

Several students from prominent institutions, including Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, and Urmia University of Medical Sciences, have already managed to return safely to India.

Dr Mohammad Momin Khan, who has been closely monitoring the situation, stated that flights are operating on a daily basis to assist in the evacuation. He, however, noted that the Armenia route has so far proven to be

relatively smoother compared to the Azerbaijan border, where procedural delays continue to hamper movement.

Parents of stranded students have expressed growing concern, urging the Government of India and relevant authorities to step in more actively to ensure the safe and swift return of their children. Many families have reported bearing the financial burden of travel and accommodation on their own, calling for logistical and financial support from the authorities.

They have appealed to higher officials to streamline the evacuation process, expedite clearances, and provide coordinated assistance so that no student is left stranded in uncertain conditions—(KNO)

## Constipation no longer a minor complaint: Doctors

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Mar 20: Doctors in Kashmir are warning that constipation – long dismissed as a minor inconvenience – is becoming increasingly prevalent due to low dietary fibre intake, sedentary lifestyles and dependence on processed foods, and can lead to serious complications if left unaddressed.

Constipation is typically identified by fewer than three bowel movements per week, accompanied by hard stools, difficulty during passage and a lingering sensation of incomplete evacuation. While occasional episodes are common, persistent or chronic constipation requires medical attention.

Speaking to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Dr Aabid Reshie, a general physician at DHSK, said diet was the primary factor in digestive health. "Fibre is

essential as it increases stool bulk and facilitates smoother movement through the intestines," he said, adding that insufficient fibre intake, low water consumption and processed food dependence were the leading contributors to the condition.

Dr Reshie added that modern lifestyle patterns – long hours of sitting, minimal physical activity, irregular eating schedules and ignoring the natural urge for bowel movements – were aggravating the problem across all age groups. Stress, he said, was another factor that negatively impacted bowel function.

Doctors pointed out that constipation was not always lifestyle-related and could be linked to underlying conditions, including irritable bowel syndrome, thyroid disorders, diabetes, neurological issues and intestinal obstructions. Hormonal changes during pregnancy and age-related decline in metabolism

and muscle strength could also contribute. Certain medications, including opioid-based painkillers, antidepressants, iron supplements and some antacids, were also known to worsen the condition.

Another doctor warned that untreated chronic constipation could result in haemorrhoids, anal fissures, faecal impaction, rectal prolapse and mental distress. "Repeated straining exerts pressure on the rectal region, increasing the likelihood of painful and sometimes severe conditions," said Dr Rayees Ahmad Lone.

Doctors recommend consuming fibre-rich foods – fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes – drinking six to eight glasses of water daily and engaging in regular physical activity such as walking. Establishing a regular bowel routine and not delaying the urge to pass stool are also important.

Continued on [www.kashmirthunder.in](http://www.kashmirthunder.in)

## Eid-ul-Fitr

# Dr Farooq, Omar greets people

■ Extends Navroz greetings to community

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, Mar 20: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference President Dr. Farooq Abdullah, and Vice President and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah extended warm greetings to the people on the auspicious occasion of Eid al-Fitr.

In his message, Dr. Farooq Abdullah prayed for the acceptance of prayers and fasting and urged people to share the joy of Eid by supporting the underprivileged.

Omar Abdullah also conveyed his greetings, emphasizing compassion, generosity, and inclusiveness, and expressed hope that the festival strengthens peace and brotherhood.

Among others, General Secretary Ali Muhammad Sagar, Treasurer Shammi Oberoi, Advisor to Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Chief Spokesperson Tanvir Sadiq, senior leaders including Sheikh



Mustafa Kamal, Abdul Rahim RATHER, Muhammad Shafi Uri, Mubarak Gul, Sakina Itoo, Shameema Firdous, along with party MPs, MLAs, and office bearers Provincial Presidents Showkat Mir, Ratan Lal Gupta, State

Spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar, Advisors Mushtaq Guroo, and Mudassar Shahmiri, In Charges of various wings, also extended Eid greetings, wishing peace, harmony, and prosperity for the people of Jammu

and Kashmir. Meanwhile, the Dr. Farooq Abdullah and Vice President and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also extended warm greetings to the people on the occasion of Navroz-e-Aalam.

In his message, Dr. Farooq expressed hope that the festival heralds peace, prosperity and well-being for all. He highlighted the cultural and spiritual significance of Navroz as a symbol of renewal, harmony, and optimism, and prayed for happiness and progress in the lives of the people.

Omar Abdullah, while extending his greetings, said that Navroz marks a time of new beginnings and inspires people to work towards unity, compassion, and collective progress. He expressed hope that the occasion strengthens bonds of brotherhood and brings lasting peace and prosperity to Jammu and Kashmir.

## SSP Traffic urges people to follow traffic advisories

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Mar 20: As Jammu and Kashmir gears up to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr on Saturday, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Traffic Ajaz Ahmed Bhat has appealed to the people to follow traffic advisories and ensure safety of the children.

Talking to the reporters here, SSP Bhat said, "Arrangements for the major Eid congregation at the Dargah on city outskirts have

been finalised." While sharing the detailed parking guidelines, the SSP said, "Vehicles coming from Tailbal and Habbak have been allocated parking at Naseem Bagh. Vehicles from Dalgate and Downtown areas can enter through Sir Syed Gate of University, where parking spaces are arranged. For the elderly, rickshaw services are available to reach Asar-e-Sharif comfortably."

Continued on [www.kashmirthunder.in](http://www.kashmirthunder.in)



## DSEJ extends greetings

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Mar 20: The Director School Education Jammu, Dr. Naseem Javaid Chowdhary extended his heartfelt greetings to students, their parents, the teaching fraternity, and all staff members of the Directorate. In his message, Dr. Chowdhary observed that Eid is not confined to rituals or festivity alone; it is, at its core, a reminder of compassion, gratitude and the dignity of sharing.

Continued on [www.kashmirthunder.in](http://www.kashmirthunder.in)

## 21st Death Anniversary

HAJI ABDUL REHMAN WANPOH  
(1931 – 2005)



"Death keeps no calendar and the destiny of a Person is fixed at the time of Birth.

We All belong to Allah, to whom we shall return."

Time has run very fast & it has been exactly twenty-one years since our beloved father Haji Abdul Rehman Wanpoh left for his heavenly abode on 23rd March 2005. He remains forever in our hearts for his principles, foresight, love, affection, and sincerity. We pray to Almighty Allah for his eternal peace and a place in Jannat-ul-Firdous (Ameen).

Fateh Khawani shall be observed on 23rd March 2026:

- Morning (08:00 AM): At ancestral village Khudwani / residence Raja House, Opposite SKUAST Khudwani
- Evening (05:00 PM): At Raja House, Lane (i), Rose Lane Colony, Chanapora, Srinagar

All bereaved family members through (Son)

Mohd Rouf Rahman (JKAS)

Chief Executive Officer

Tourism Development Authority

Kokernag / Verinag / Aharbal / Dubjan / Peer Ki Gali Galli

## EDITORIAL

### Eid-ul-Fitr: Celebrate With Gratitude And Continuity

As the blessed month of Ramadan concludes, Muslims across the world gather to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr – a day of joy, gratitude, and spiritual renewal. Yet this celebration is not merely the end of fasting but the beginning of a transformed life. The Quran and Hadith illuminate Eid as a moment to express thanks for divine guidance and to commit to carrying Ramadan's spirit forward. The Quran links Eid directly to the completion of fasting with gratitude: "He wants you to complete the

prescribed period and to glorify Him for having guided you, and perhaps you will be grateful" (2:185). This verse establishes the purpose of Eid—not indulgence after restraint, but glorification of Allah for the gift of Ramadan. The takbir recited on the way to prayer echoes this theme: Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, la ilaha illallah – a declaration that all greatness belongs to God, who enabled us to fast and stand in prayer. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) taught that Eid is a day of

modest celebration and profound connection. Yet the greatest lesson of Eid lies in continuity. The Prophet (PBUH) warned against treating Ramadan as a seasonal obligation: "The worst people are those who only remember Allah during Ramadan" (Al-Tabarani). The Qur'anic fast was prescribed to cultivate taqwa – God-consciousness – that endures beyond the month. Eid is not permission to abandon the habits cultivated in Ramadan but a celebration of having built a foundation that will sustain

the rest of the year. This demands celebration with austerity, not as deprivation but as intentionality. The money saved on lavish feasts can reach the poor through Zakat-ul-Fitr, the charity that purifies the fast and ensures that all believers share in Eid's joy. The Prophet (PBUH) made this charity obligatory, emphasizing that no Eid is complete without ensuring that the needy are fed. The spirit of Ramadan – increased Qur'an recitation, nightly prayers, charity, and discipline – must not

vanish with the crescent moon. The believer who returns to heedlessness after Ramadan is like one who builds a house only to abandon it. Eid is the door through which the Ramadan-trained soul steps into the rest of the year, carrying its habits as provisions for the journey ahead. Let this Eid be a celebration of gratitude, not excess; of community, not consumption; of continuity, not conclusion. For the true Eid is not the day we break our fast, but the day we prove that Ramadan changed us forever.

## AI-Driven Transformation Of India's Statistical And Data Ecosystem

### Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has introduced advanced AI-based biometric deduplication and document verification platform

#### Press Information Bureau

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as one of the most transformative technologies of the 21st century, influencing the way economies, institutions, and public systems function across the world. As noted by the OECD, the adoption of AI in government opens new possibilities: for improving public service delivery, decision-making, and administrative efficiency.

India has similarly recognised AI as a critical enabler for improving productivity, accelerating innovation, and strengthening governance through better use of data and digital tools. This technological shift is increasingly visible across India's public data systems, where AI, machine learning, and advanced data analytics are being integrated into classification, access, and decision-support processes, supporting a more efficient and responsive digital ecosystem.

AI-Enabled Statistical Access and Public Data Platforms

India's official statistical platforms are increasingly moving toward AI-enabled data access systems that improve how users interact with public datasets. Recent initiatives by the NITI Aayog and Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) reflect a broader shift to AI-based interfaces that support direct querying, natural language search, and context-based information accessibility.

MCP INTEGRATION WITH E-SANKHYIKI PLATFORM

e-Sankhyiki as India's Official Statistics Data Platform

e-Sankhyiki portal was launched in 2024, with the objective to establish a comprehensive data management and sharing system for ease of dissemination of official statistics in the country.

As of date, it has 21 statistical products with more than 136 million records for better discovery and data management.

In February 2026, the National Statistics Office (NSO) introduced the beta version of Model Context Protocol (MCP) server on the e-Sankhyiki portal, India's national platform for official statistics. This initiative is part of NSO's broader effort to improve access to official statistics for citizens, researchers, and businesses. MCP is designed to enable direct interaction with statistical datasets through users' own AI-based tools and applications.

The server currently provides access to 21 statistical products, available on e-Sankhyiki. It enables users to query data directly without downloading large files, connect official datasets with their own analytical systems, automate statistical reporting, and access multiple datasets through a unified interface. This is expected to reduce time spent on data retrieval and improve efficiency in analysis and decision-making.

Steps to connect AI agent to official statistics can be accessed at <https://datainnovation.mospi.gov.in/mospi-mcp#connect>.

Semantic Search for e-Sankhyiki Datasets

A beta version of semantic search feature is developed to allow users to explore datasets on e-Sankhyiki through natural language prompts. This will improve the usability of the e-Sankhyiki dashboard through a better user experience. As per the context provided in the natural language prompt, the system can direct users to the most appropriate product page on the portal, thereby simplifying access to required statistical information.

Semantic Search for e-Sankhyiki Datasets can be accessed at <https://esankhyiki.mospi.gov.in/>.

AI Chatbot for Statistical Information Access An AI-powered chatbot has also been introduced to make the MoSPI website more interactive and user-friendly. The chatbot allows users to search datasets, reports, and statistical publications through simple natural language queries.

It is designed to provide context-based responses while maintaining conversational continuity for smoother user interaction. In addition to answering queries, the chatbot also directs users to relevant sections of the website through embedded links, helping them access required statistical information more

quickly and with minimal effort.

The AI Chatbot for statistical information can be accessed at <https://www.mospi.gov.in>. National Data & Analytics Platform (NDAP)

Launched in 2022, NDAP hosts datasets from multiple government agencies, presents them in a coherent format, and provides tools for analytics and visualisation. At present, the data available on NDAP is categorised across 52 ministries and 31 sectors.

Under NDAP 2.0, a next-generation platform with an advanced analytical layer is envisaged to improve data discoverability, utility, cross-sectoral analysis and support data-driven decision-making processes. The platform aims to enhance usability, strengthen user engagement and improve data discoverability to enable a more intuitive and efficient data exploration experience. This includes pre-curated insights through visualisations and charts, domain-specific analytical modules, harmonisation of micro-level data, improved visualisation through UI/UX enhancements, and an AI/ML-based search engine capable of providing AI-based responses to user queries.

These initiatives together, are strengthening the transition from data availability to intelligent data usability across India's public statistical systems.

AI in Statistical Classification and Survey Operations

AI is being integrated into statistical classification and survey operations to improve accuracy, reduce manual effort, and support faster field-level decision-making. Through classification tools and search solutions, official survey processes are being made more efficient, consistent, and responsive to the growing complexity of statistical data collection.

AI tool for Industrial Classification

An AI/ML-based classification tool has been introduced to ease the use of the National Industrial Classification (NIC) in the production of official statistics. The tool applies natural language processing to allow stakeholders to enter text queries and generate the three-most relevant NIC code suggestions. This initiative helps reduce manual effort in classification, improves enumerator productivity, and supports greater accuracy in statistical data collection, thereby strengthening the quality of evidence available for planning and policymaking.

AI-powered NIC Code Semantic Search Tool can be accessed at <https://nicfinder.mospi.gov.in/>

MoSPI StatsDoc AI Assistant: AI-Enabled Intelligent Search Solution for Documents

An AI-powered Intelligent Search Solution for Documents, which allows users to search uploaded documents in natural language, keeping in mind the different stakeholders including field investigators, who need to refer to manuals, reports, publications, etc. mostly available in PDFs or images. This tool has a knowledge base of all the latest documents that are published by the Ministry (from April 2025), including the Instruction Manuals for different surveys.

The chatbot can be accessed under the AI Pilots of Offerings Section of the MoSPI website as well as through <https://statsdoc.ai.mospi.gov.in/>.

AI-Based Legacy Data Extraction and Processing Tool

Legacy data of NSO India are stored in formats such as PDFs, CSVs, Excel files (with merged cells, Hindi text, etc.), and images. Extracting this data requires detailed coding. Without necessary coding knowledge or resources, the data's usability is significantly hindered, affecting efficient analysis and decision making, necessitating the need to rejuvenate legacy data for ease of access and deriving useful insights in an efficient manner. The solution is an AI-based tool that can extract legacy data from various documents and store it in a database for further processing and analysis.

The tool can be accessed under the AI Pilots of Offerings Section of the MoSPI website as well as through <https://legacydata.ai.mospi.gov.in/>.

Illustrative Sectoral Use Cases of AI Across Public Data Domains

India is increasingly applying AI across

critical public service sectors where reliability, safety, and real-time decision support are essential. The following initiatives are certain examples of how public datasets, digital infrastructure, and policy frameworks are being used to support this broader transition, are strengthening support in areas directly linked to public welfare.

Trusted AI for Healthcare Systems

Benchmarking Open Data Platform for Health AI (BODH): BODH was launched in February 2026 to enable systematic evaluation of AI models using diverse and anonymized real-world health datasets. The platform assesses AI systems for performance, robustness, bias, and generalizability before large-scale deployment, helping establish benchmarking standards that improve reliability and clinical relevance in line with national public health priorities. It strategically resolves the "AI Quality Testing Trilemma" – the traditional trade-off between reliability, openness, and coverage.

Built on the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) framework, BODH uses nationwide digital health data to support secure model testing and validation while maintaining privacy safeguards. It provides an environment where developers can train and evaluate AI systems on diverse datasets, and regulators can undertake structured third-party assessments with stronger statistical confidence. The platform is intended to build a trusted ecosystem for benchmarking health AI models and improving their consistency across healthcare settings.

ABDM: Building Digital Health Infrastructure in India

The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) aims to build the foundational digital infrastructure necessary to support the healthcare system in India. It seeks to connect different stakeholders across the healthcare ecosystem through digital highways.

Strategy for Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare for India (SAHI) : Launched alongside BODH, SAHI has been conceptualized as a comprehensive framework to support the development of secure, coordinated, and trustworthy AI solutions in healthcare. It aims to facilitate collaboration among healthcare institutions, technology developers, researchers, and policymakers so that AI solutions are assessed against rigorous standards of safety, efficacy, and ethical compliance before large-scale adoption.

It will also function as a governance and knowledge-sharing platform, encouraging best practices in health AI development and implementation while emphasizing patient data protection, responsible use of algorithms, and accountability across the healthcare system.

Meteorological Data and AI-Based Forecasting

India Meteorological Department and other institutions under the Ministry of Earth Sciences are increasingly applying AI-based tools for experimental weather and climate forecasting. These include the Advanced Dvorak Technique for cyclone intensity estimation, along with AI and machine learning-based foundation models and hybrid systems that combine artificial intelligence with dynamical forecasting methods for weather prediction.

AI-related research is also being applied across several forecasting areas, including short-range global forecasts, precipitation downscaling, fire location prediction, fog forecasting, lightning and thunderstorm alerts, and improved precipitation estimation through deep learning within numerical weather prediction systems.

AI for Farm Decision Support

Bharat-VISTAAR (Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources): The Union Budget 2026-27 has proposed Bharat-VISTAAR, a multilingual AI-enabled system that shall integrate AgriStack portals and Indian Council of Agricultural Research advisory resources. This will enhance farm productivity, improve decision making and reduce risk through customized advisory support for the farmers.

Kisan e-Mitra: Launched in 2023, the platform provides voice-enabled AI support to farmers by answering queries on major

government schemes in 11 regional languages and had responded to over 93 lakh queries as of December 2025.

National Pest Surveillance System (NPSS): Further strengthening digital agricultural support, the NPSS uses AI and machine learning to detect pest attacks and crop diseases through image-based analysis, supporting over 10,000 extension workers across 66 crops and 432 pest species as of December 2025.

Together, they reflect a growing institutional emphasis on using data-driven tools to improve reliability, strengthen service delivery, and support more informed public decision-making.

Institutional Architecture Supporting AI Integration

India's data ecosystem is increasingly being strengthened through institutional platforms that support innovation, technology adoption, and capacity building across public systems. Recent initiatives indicate how dedicated data infrastructure, collaborative research frameworks, and digital public platforms are being used to integrate artificial intelligence into official statistics.

Alongside technological deployment, emphasis is also being placed on partnerships and trainings, to ensure that emerging tools improve efficiency, expand accessibility, and support reliable decision-making across sectors.

The Data Innovation Lab: India's Statistical Sandbox

The establishment of the Data Innovation Lab (DIL) under Data Informatics and Innovation Division (DIID) represents a cornerstone in modernising India's National Statistical System. It functions as a strategic platform for promoting innovation, supporting the adoption of emerging technologies, and strengthening collaboration in the field of official statistics.

In line with the growing importance of data-driven systems, the DI Lab focuses on improving the efficiency, accuracy and accessibility of statistical processes through the use of advanced technologies such as AI, Big Data Analytics and Cloud Computing. The objective is to build a stronger and more transparent statistical ecosystem that supports evidence-based policymaking and data-centric governance.

The initiative is structured around three core pillars, Research Network, Innovation and Student Outreach, which together support the development of the country's data ecosystem through the DI Lab Portal, designed as a collaborative digital platform for research, experimentation and engagement.

As of January 2026, MoSPI has signed 17 MoUs with various institutions. It has also developed a repository of 12 new AI use cases under the Data Innovation Lab with two use cases in production.

Collaborative Ecosystem and Partnerships: The success of AI integration in official statistics depends on effective collaboration across government agencies, academic institutions, and international organizations. The DI Lab operates in partnership with entities including the NITI Aayog, academic and research institutions. This collaborative approach ensures that India's statistical modernisation continues to benefit with wider knowledge-sharing across key institutions.

Training and Capacity Building for AI-Driven Statistical Systems

Aligned with the national philosophy of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas, capacity building is being positioned to move beyond traditional methods through the adoption of technology-driven systems, including Big Data, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, to improve the accuracy, timeliness and global comparability of official statistics. Engagement with State statistical systems is being encouraged alongside expanded partnerships with universities and specialised institutes, reaffirming the commitment under Mission Karmayogi to strengthen training programmes and build a future-ready statistical workforce.

With the growing shift toward Agentic AI, where AI systems increasingly function with greater autonomy, the scope of training at the

National Statistical System Training Academy (NSSTA) is also expected to expand further. A key emphasis continues to remain on the role of human intervention in providing context to raw data and addressing the risks of embedded bias in AI systems, recognising that continuous capacity building is essential to ensure that statistical officers remain equipped to produce high-quality and unbiased data in support of governance.

BharatGen Building India's Multilingual AI Foundation

Launched in June 2025, BharatGen is India's first government-funded, sovereign, multilingual, and multimodal Large Language Model (LLM). It has been developed under the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems and advanced through the IndiaAI Mission. The model supports 22 Indian languages and integrates text, speech, and document-vision capabilities. Built on India-centric datasets and led by a consortium of academic institutions, BharatGen establishes a domestically developed AI stack for public and developmental applications.

BharatGen products can be accessed at <https://bharatgen.com/>

Advancing Aadhaar through Emerging Technologies

Invisible Shield Securing the Identities of over a Billion Indians: The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has introduced advanced AI-based biometric deduplication and document verification platform in February 2026, as part of India's evolving digital security architecture. The new platform is designed to improve enrolment and update accuracy by strengthening biometric matching across fingerprint, face, and iris modalities. With the latest AI inference technologies, UIDAI has already completed enhanced deduplication rollouts for several states and is on track to complete this exercise nationwide in the coming months.

Aadhaar Vision 2032 :Recognising the rapidly evolving technological and regulatory environment, the UIDAI has initiated a comprehensive strategic and technological review to guide the future development of Aadhaar under the Aadhaar Vision 2032 framework. It aims to integrate advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, quantum computing, advanced encryption, and next-generation data security systems to strengthen Aadhaar's resilience, improve scalability, and ensure secure adaptation to future digital requirements.

AI-Based Aadhaar Authentication Solution The AI and machine learning-based Aadhaar Face Authentication solution developed by UIDAI has seen rapid adoption. It is currently being used across numerous government services to enable smoother delivery of benefits to targeted beneficiaries.

Several flagship schemes, including PM Awas (Urban), PM E-Drive, PM-JAY, PM Ujjwala, PM Kisan, PM Internship, have integrated this system for improved service delivery.

Together, these initiatives reflect a broader effort to build long-term institutional capacity for AI-enabled data systems in India. They also highlight the importance of combining innovation, partnerships, and human capability to strengthen trusted digital public infrastructure.

Conclusion

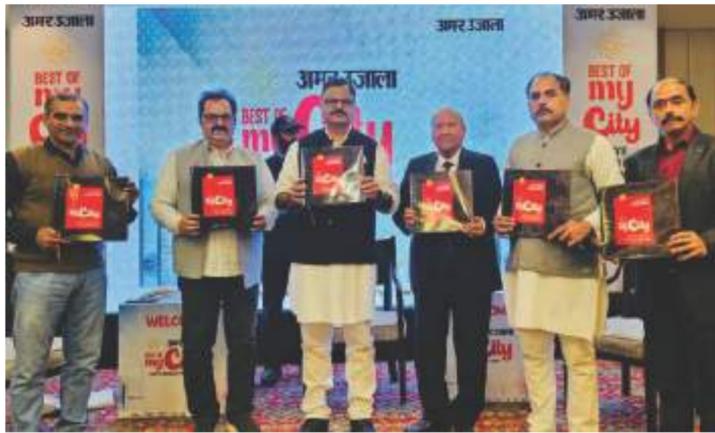
India's experience demonstrates how AI can be integrated at scale to strengthen public digital capabilities. Beyond technology, the evolving use of AI reflects India's larger effort to make data more meaningful, accessible, and responsive to the everyday needs of its people. The aim is to strengthen both the quality of data and its practical use in responsive governance and sector-specific decision-making.

Many of the solutions being developed are shaped by India's unique context, including linguistic diversity and varying levels of socio-economic development. There is a clear emphasis on ensuring that technological progress translates into inclusive and widely accessible solutions. These initiatives indicate that AI is increasingly emerging as an enabling layer across India's public data landscape, improving the way information is classified, accessed, interpreted, and applied.

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

## Govt committed towards strengthening water infrastructure across J&K: Javed Rana

Highlights urban heritage, water sustainability at 'Best of My City' Book launch in Jammu



KT News Desk

JAMMU, MARCH 20: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, Friday attended the launching ceremony of coffee table book "Best of My City" at Jammu.

Being organized by Amar Ujala, the event was attended by the prominent citizens, officials and stakeholders from diverse

sectors.

The Minister, as per an official statement, lauded the initiative, emphasizing that such publications serve as an important medium to showcase the cultural richness, historical legacy and developmental journey of cities. He commended Amar Ujala for curating a visually compelling and comprehensive portrayal of urban life, noting that the book reflects the spirit, diversity and

aspirations of the people.

While appreciating the creative effort, Rana also used the occasion to draw attention to pressing environmental concerns, particularly the alarming decline in groundwater levels. He underscored the urgent need for collective action towards water conservation and sustainable resource management.

Stressing the importance of reviving traditional water systems,

he called for renewed focus on the restoration and recharge of hand pumps, bore wells and other indigenous water sources.

Highlighting the government's proactive approach, the Minister reaffirmed its commitment towards strengthening the water infrastructure across Jammu & Kashmir.

Rana further emphasized that efficient implementation, coupled with rigorous

monitoring, will be key to enhance service delivery and ensuring long-term water security for the people.

Reiterating Omar Abdullah led government's vision, he called for collaborative efforts among all stakeholders to achieve sustainable development and responsible resource management, ensuring a balanced and resilient future for coming generations.

## Market checking in Ramban town to ensure fair trade practice



KT News Desk

RAMBAN, MARCH 20: Under the guidance of the Deputy Commissioner Ramban Mohammad Alys Khan, market checking drives have been intensified across district Ramban to ensure fair trade practices during the ongoing festival season.

The inspection team, as per an official statement, was headed by Tehsildar Ramban, Deep Kumar along with CEO MC Ramban Sudrashan Jamwal and other concerned officers and officials. The team conducted the drive in close coordination with the Police Department.

During the drive, various eateries, vegetable shops and other establishments were inspected to ensure the availability of quality food items and adherence to prescribed rates. The team also verified that shopkeepers were not increasing the prices of essential commodities in view of the festival celebrations.

During the inspection, several shop owners were fined for violating rules and regulations. The authorities reiterated that strict action will continue against violators to safeguard consumer interests.

The district administration urged all traders to maintain hygiene standards, display rate lists and follow government guidelines to avoid penalties.

## DDC Poonch reviews progress of Vibrant Village Programme-II



KT News Desk

POONCH, MARCH 20: District Development Commissioner (DDC) Poonch, Ashok Kumar Sharma Friday chaired a comprehensive review meeting to assess the progress of the Vibrant Village Programme-II, an ambitious initiative of the Ministry of Home Affairs aimed at transforming the socio-economic landscape of border areas.

During the meeting, as per an official statement, detailed discussions were held on achieving full saturation across key thematic areas identified under the programme. The DDC emphasized the need to bridge critical gaps in essential sectors, including network connectivity, road accessibility and household electrification in border villages.

Stressing accountability and timely execution, the District

Development Commissioner directed all concerned departments to upload details of on-going works on the designated portal for effective monitoring and transparency. He also underscored the importance of promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities in border villages under public livelihood initiatives.

The DDC further instructed departments to conduct comprehensive gap analyses across all thematic areas and submit detailed reports to the DC Office for necessary action.

Speaking on the occasion, the DDC said that the Vibrant Village Programme is poised to become a transformative initiative for the border district. He reiterated that the district administration remains committed to ensuring inclusive development and significantly enhancing the quality of life for residents of border villages.

## DC Kupwara reviews road safety measures, traffic management

KT News Desk

KUPWARA, MARCH 20: Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, chaired the District Road Safety Committee (DRSC) meeting here in his office chamber to review road safety measures and traffic management across the district.

On the occasion, the DC, as per an official statement, directed enforcement agencies to ramp up on-ground checks and take stringent action against violators, particularly targeting underage and teenage driving, overloading, and speeding.

Traffic police was instructed to increase surprise inspections, deploy more personnel at critical junctions and market areas, while municipal councils and the revenue department conduct frequent anti-encroachment drives to alleviate congestion.

Extensive awareness campaigns were called for in schools and colleges, aimed at students, youth, and commercial drivers, to be carried out by the ARTO, Traffic Police, and Chief Education Officer.

The meeting also covered progress on school bus audits, driving school inspections by ARTO, road safety audits on hilly roads and highways by PWD/PMGSY and BEACON,



black spot identification and rectification, curve improvements, timely road repairs, signage at blind curves, and full safety compliance.

For emergency response, the DC emphasized strategic ambulance deployment at accident-prone spots and readiness of health institutions. Detailed discussions held on proposals sent by various departments under the Road Safety Action Plan to enhance infrastructure and medical care, with a focus on iRAD portal-listed hotspots.

Discussions also held regarding PM-Road Accident Victims

Hospitalization and Assured Treatment (PM-RAHAT) Scheme, aiming to provide timely medical aid to the road accident victims. Scheme ensures cashless treatment up to Rs 1.5 lakh per victim in designated hospitals during the critical "Golden Hour", covering up to 7 days from the accident date, thereby ensuring immediate medical care and significantly improving the chances of survival.

SSP Kupwara, SSP Handwara, SE R&B, ACD, CEO, CMO, ARTO Kupwara, Executive Engineers (PWD), EO MC, and other officials attended the meeting.

## DC Kishtwar reviews UT Capex 2025-26 works

Sets March 31 deadline for completion of all pending works

KT News Desk

KISHTWAR, MARCH 20: Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar, Pankaj Kumar Sharma, on Friday chaired a comprehensive review meeting held virtually to assess the progress of various developmental works being executed under the UT Capex Plan 2025-26 across the district.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner took a detailed review of the ongoing infrastructure projects aimed at strengthening administrative functioning and improving public service delivery across the district.

The projects, as per an official statement, discussed included the construction of Tehsil Office Machail, Tehsil Office Mughal Maidan, SDM Office Marwah, Tehsil Office Drabshalla and Naibat Offices at Palmar, Dool, Dedpeth and Saroor along with several other important developmental initiatives.

While reviewing the progress of these works, the Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned Sub-Divisional Magistrates and

Tehsildars to pull up the executing agencies and ensure that all the works are completed by March 31, 2026.

The Deputy Commissioner directed all the concerned departments to achieve physical and financial targets under CAPEX works and submit the bills in respective treasuries before March 28 following the circular issued by the Finance Department UT of J&K.

He emphasized the importance of timely execution of works, adherence to quality standards and optimal utilization of allocated funds.

He also stressed that the allocated funds must be utilized properly and should not lapse under any circumstances.

The Deputy Commissioner reiterated that all projects must be implemented efficiently, with transparency and accountability, so that the people of the district receive real and timely benefits from these developmental initiatives.

The meeting was attended by all concerned SDMs, Tehsildars, Accounts Officer, DC Office Kishtwar, Satender Singh and other officers.

## J&K Ministers extend Eid, Nauroz greetings, pray for peace, prosperity

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, MARCH 20: Several ministers of the Jammu and Kashmir government, including Javid Ahmad Dar, Javed Ahmed Rana and Sakeena Itoo, on Friday extended warm greetings to the people on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr, with Rana and Itoo also conveying their wishes on the occasion of Nauroz, highlighting the values of compassion, unity and harmony associated with the festivals.

Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo extended warm greetings and heartfelt wishes to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the joyous occasions of Eid-ul-Fitr and Nauroz.

In her greetings, the Minister said that Eid-ul-Fitr symbolizes compassion, generosity and gratitude, marking the culmination of holy month of reflection, self-discipline and spiritual rejuvenation. She urged people to embrace the true spirit of the festival by strengthening bonds of brotherhood, extending support to

the underprivileged and fostering unity within society.

While extending her greetings on Nauroz, the Minister noted that the festival represents renewal, hope and the arrival of spring, inspiring optimism and collective progress. She emphasized that such occasions remind society of shared traditions and values that promote inclusiveness and mutual respect.

The Minister also prayed for peace, progress and prosperity of entire Jammu and Kashmir.

Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar as per an official statement, extended heartfelt greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, wishing them peace, prosperity, happiness and well-being.

In his message, the Minister highlighted the profound spiritual and social significance of Eid-ul-Fitr, which marks the culmination of the holy month of Ramzan a period devoted to fasting, prayer, reflection and



self-discipline. He said the festival is an occasion to express sincere gratitude to Almighty Allah for granting strength and resilience to observe the fasts and for guiding believers on the path of righteousness.

Javid Dar noted that Eid-ul-Fitr symbolizes the values of compassion, charity,

forgiveness and brotherhood, which are essential for building a harmonious and progressive society.

He urged the people to imbibe these virtues in their daily lives and extend a helping hand to the underprivileged, thereby reinforcing the spirit of inclusiveness and social

responsibility.

The Minister further said that festivals like Eid serve as a reminder of the importance of unity in diversity and provide an opportunity to strengthen the bonds of communal harmony and mutual respect among different sections of society. He called upon the

people to celebrate the occasion with joy and simplicity while upholding the rich traditions of togetherness and cultural harmony.

Expressing hope for a brighter and more prosperous future, Javid Dar said that such auspicious occasions inspire collective efforts towards peace, development and progress. He reiterated the commitment of the government towards ensuring the welfare and upliftment of all sections of society.

Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology, Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, conveyed his heartfelt greetings to the people on the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, saying that the festival inspires all to lead a peaceful life and work for the prosperity of society.

Describing Eid as a festival of gratitude and togetherness, the Minister said that it reflects the essence of patience, self-discipline and spiritual growth observed during the holy month of Ramadan.

poor and underprivileged and share happiness with them.

Highlighting the values associated with the festival, the Minister also expressed hope that the festival would bring happiness, prosperity and well-being to all and further reinforce the values of unity and brotherhood across the region.

"On this auspicious occasion, let us spread the feelings of love, kindness and compassion while working collectively for the betterment of our society," the Minister added.

While extending Nauroz greetings, Javed Rana said that Nauroz marks the arrival of the spring season and symbolizes renewal, hope and positivity. He added that the festival reflects the enduring values of peace, harmony and cultural diversity.

Rana expressed hope that the occasion would further strengthen the bonds of unity and togetherness among the people and inspire collective efforts towards building a harmonious society.

He also prayed for peace, progress and prosperity of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

## West Asia conflict: Six Indians lost their lives in 'various incidents', says MEA

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 20: Amid the escalating West Asia conflict, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Friday said six Indian nationals have lost their lives while one remains missing in "various incidents".

At an inter-ministerial briefing here, Additional Secretary (Gulf), MEA, Aseem R Mahajan, also said, "Late yesterday night, we received information regarding the tragic demise of an Indian national, during an attack in Riyadh on March 18." He, however, did not elaborate upon the circumstances of this death.

"We express our deepest condolences to the family of the deceased. Our Mission in Riyadh is in touch with the family and closely co-ordinating with local authorities for the early return of the mortal remains to India," he said.

On Friday, the Indian Embassy in Riyadh also said that an Indian national was killed in Saudi Arabia due to the "recent events of March 18". In a social media post, the Indian Mission expressed its "deepest condolences on the tragic demise of an Indian national in Riyadh due to recent events on March 18".

A day earlier, the Indian embassy said alerts were received by residents in Riyadh and some other regions on Wednesday. "The Indian community is advised to remain calm and composed," the embassy said.

Mahajan also told reporters in Delhi that "six Indian nationals have lost their lives and one is missing in various incidents". "Our missions in Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iraq, and the UAE are in regular touch with the concerned authorities regarding the missing Indian national and for the early repatriation of mortal remains of the deceased Indian nationals to India," he said.

Less than a week ago, the MEA official had told reporters in an inter-ministerial briefing on the West Asia situation that



five Indian nationals had lost their lives while one is missing in "various incidents".

The West Asia conflict began on February 28 when the US-Israel combine launched military strikes on Iran. In retaliation, Tehran has targeted Gulf countries hosting US military bases.

Energy and other civilian infrastructure in the Gulf region have also come under attack during this conflict that has stretched into three weeks, with no end to it in sight.

Since February 28, around three lakh passengers have returned from the region to India, Mahajan said.

MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday spoke to leaders of Oman, Malaysia, France, Jordan and Qatar.

"In these conversations, the prime minister put forth India's position on the ongoing conflict in West Asia. He highlighted the need to prioritise dialogue and diplomacy, for de-escalation and the subsequent restoration of peace and stability," he said.

Also, a total of 913 Indian nationals have crossed the Iranian borders with Armenia and Azerbaijan, and have started to gradually return to India via the two countries, he said. And 284 pilgrims from India who had earlier gone to Iran, have all come back to the country, the MEA said.

"Yesterday 10 calls and six emails were received at the Control Room, largely calls about merchant ships," he said.

He was also asked about UAE Minister of State for International Cooperation Reem Al Hashimy's visit to India and her talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday. He said the West Asia situation figured in their discussion.

"We have a large (Indian) community there...How they (the UAE) are taking care of them, and we also thanked them," the MEA spokesperson added.

Mahajan said the MEA continues to proactively assist seafarers, students, stranded Indian nationals and short-term visitors for visas, consular services and logistical support wherever required.

Overall the flight situation continues to improve, with flights operating from the region, he said.

From the UAE, limited non-scheduled commercial flights are operating, and about 90 flights were expected to operate to India on Friday.

Qatar airspace is partially open and 10 non-scheduled commercial flights were expected to India on Friday, he added.

Bahrain airspace remains closed, while Gulf Air continues to operate special non-scheduled commercial flights from Dammam airport in Saudi Arabia to India, Mahajan said.

And 24 rescued Indian seafarers who were onboard two vessels, 16 Indian crew members on one vessel and eight on the other, had arrived earlier from Oman, Mahajan said.

## Union min Jitendra Singh receives lifetime achievement award in medicine & diabetes

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 20: Union minister Jitendra Singh received a lifetime achievement award in medicine and diabetes at the MVCON 2026, organised by MV Diabetes Chennai, on Friday.

The minister was conferred with the award for his "outstanding contribution as a distinguished medical professional, author and advocate for advancing diabetes care and public health".

MV Diabetes Chennai, a hospital for treating diabetes, was founded in 1954 by late Professor M Viswanathan, popularly remembered as one of the founding fathers of diabetology in India.

Receiving the award, Singh said, "The recognition carries special significance as it commemorates the legacy of Professor M Viswanathan."

"It is a tribute not only to his own lifelong work but also



to the rich tradition of medical excellence shaped by the first generation of post-independence physicians and their contemporary stalwarts, whose guidance combined clinical rigour with a deep sense of compassion for patients," the Union minister added.

He also noted that he had witnessed the transition from an era when diagnosis relied

primarily on clinical examination and patient history to the present landscape of advanced technologies and artificial intelligence.

Singh is a diabetologist, academician and public representative with decades of experience in medicine and diabetes. His research on stress diabetes in Kashmiri migrants has received international recognition.

## Railway Board hikes kilometerage allowance for loco pilots by 25 pc

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 20: Meeting a long-standing demand of over two lakh train operations staff, the Railway Board on Friday announced a 25 per cent increase in the kilometerage allowance for loco running staff with retrospective effect from January 1, 2024.

The announcement comes after over two years of persistent representations and protests by various railway employee unions and federations.

An official order issued on Friday said that following a 50 per cent increase in dearness allowance (DA) effective from January 1, 2024, the Board decided to increase the kilometerage allowance for various categories of loco running staff from the same date.

The order noted that the matter was examined in consultation with the

Finance Department of the Railway Board and referred to the Ministry of Finance (Department of Expenditure) for concurrence after persistent demand by recognised federations, including the AIRF and NFIR.

The decision has brought cheers among over two lakh employees engaged in train operations who had staged protests in support of the hike.

Unlike other railway employees who receive a Travelling Allowance (TA), loco running staff are granted a kilometerage allowance (KA). While TA for other staff was enhanced on January 1, 2024, the KA had remained unchanged until now, a loco pilot said.

According to the All India Loco Running Staff Association (AILRSA), the rates for kilometerage allowance are derived from two components: 30 per cent of basic pay and 20 days of

Travelling Allowance.

The association official bearers explained that the previous rates of Rs 525 per 100 kms was based on a TA rate of Rs 800 per day. With TA rising to Rs 1000 due to dearness allowance reaching 50 per cent of basic pay, a proportional revision of the KA becomes necessary, they said.

This enhancement is in accordance with the recommendations of the 7th Central Pay Commission. "Having raised the travelling allowance from Rs 800 to Rs 1000, the rate of kilometerage allowance also needed to be enhanced," a loco pilot said, while complaining about the delay.

Running staff pointed out that similar 25 per cent hikes were implemented in 2011 and 2014 following dearness allowance thresholds, yet the current revision faced a significant delay.

## CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

### Eid-ul-Fitr today

peace, health and happiness for everyone and teach our children the importance of charity and kindness."

Religious scholars urged devotees to help those in need and spreading the true spirit of Eid throughout the community.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and others extended Eid greetings to people and prayed for peace and prosperity of the region.

**LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR MANOJ SINHA**  
Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha in his message said, "On the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, I extend my heartiest greetings and good wishes to all. The festival of Eid-ul-Fitr, which marks the auspicious culmination of the holy month of Ramadan, is an occasion of profound spiritual and social significance. The sacred festival embodies the noble spirit of sacrifice and the joy of sharing. On this auspicious day, let us recommit to humanity's service, uplifting the lives of the poor and needy.

May Eid usher in peace, prosperity and happiness for all."

**CHIEF MINISTER OMAR ABDULLAH**  
Chief Minister Omar Abdullah while extending Eid-ul-Fitr and Nauroz greetings to people said, "Eid is a divine celebration after a month of fasting, prayers and self-discipline during Ramadan. The festival is an occasion to offer gratitude to the Almighty and to celebrate the values of compassion, generosity and unity nurtured during the holy month."

"Eid is a joyous occasion that brings people together to celebrate the blessings of Ramadan. It strengthens the bonds of community and reaffirms the values of mutual respect and brotherhood. It is a time to spread happiness, extend kindness and lend a helping hand to those in need," he said.

The Chief Minister observed that the festival reflects the rich ethos of communal harmony, shared heritage and cultural inclusivity that defines Jammu and Kashmir, reinforcing the spirit of unity and peace.

The Chief Minister also extended warm greetings to the people on the auspicious occasion of Nauroz.

He said that Nauroz festival marks the arrival of spring and the beginning of the Persian New Year, symbolizes renewal, hope, harmony and prayed for peace to prevail in the world.

**DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER SURINDER CHAUDHARY**

Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary also extended warm greetings to the people on the auspicious occasions of Eid-ul-Fitr and Nauroz.

He said that both the festivals hold immense

religious and cultural significance and reflect the rich composite heritage of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Deputy Chief Minister extolled that Eid-ul-Fitr marks the culmination of holy month of Ramzan-ul-Mubarak, symbolising compassion, gratitude and generosity. He said that Nauroz, to be celebrated on March 21, heralds the arrival of spring and is observed with great religious as well as cultural fervour and joy.

**AGRICULTURE MINISTER JAVID DAR**  
Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar while extending heartfelt greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr and Nauroz said, "Eid-ul-Fitr is an occasion to express sincere gratitude to Almighty Allah for granting strength and resilience to observe the fasts and for guiding believers on the path of righteousness. The festival symbolizes the values of compassion, charity, forgiveness and brotherhood, which are essential for building a harmonious and progressive society."

He said that Nauroz festival marks the arrival of spring and the beginning of the Persian New Year, symbolizes renewal, hope, harmony and prayed for peace to prevail in the world.

**JAL SHAKTI MINISTER JAVED RANA**  
Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology, Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, while conveying his heartfelt greetings to the people on the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, said that the festival inspires all to lead a peaceful life and work for the prosperity of society.

"Eid reflects the essence of patience, self-discipline and spiritual growth observed during the holy month of Ramadan," he added.

**EDUCATION MINISTER SAKREENA ITOO**  
Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo also extended warm greetings and heartfelt wishes to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the joyous occasions of Eid-ul-Fitr and Nauroz.

In her message, the Minister said that Eid-ul-Fitr symbolizes compassion, generosity and gratitude, marking the culmination of holy month of reflection, self-discipline and spiritual rejuvenation. She urged people to embrace the true spirit of the festival by strengthening bonds of brotherhood, extending support to the underprivileged and fostering unity within society.

While extending her greetings on Nauroz, the Minister noted that the festival represents renewal, hope and the arrival of spring, inspiring optimism and collective progress. She emphasized that such occasions remind society

of shared traditions and values that promote inclusiveness and mutual respect. (KNO)

### President extends

compassion for the underprivileged. It also conveys the message of love, brotherhood, peace, and mutual harmony. This festival reminds us that we should strive for the well-being of all individuals. On this occasion, let us resolve to help those in need, promote unity and harmony in society and contribute to the nation's progress."

### Tears, faith mark

said a young worshipper. The mosque management claimed that the Mirwaiz continues to remain under house arrest, drawing concern among devotees.

Meanwhile, at Hazratbal Dargah, a sea of people queued for prayers, many seen in tears, quietly praying not just for themselves but for those suffering across the world.

"This Ramadan felt different," said a woman from Ganderbal. "Every prayer included people in war, in hardship. Today, it felt heavier."

Across districts of Kashmir and parts of the Jammu division, similar scenes unfolded, as mosques overflowed with worshippers marking the spiritual significance of the day.

Amid these emotional gatherings, National Conference president Dr Farooq Abdullah expressed concern over the ongoing Middle East conflict, urging an immediate end to hostilities.

"I pray that this war comes to an end, peace is restored, and people can live in comfort and safety," he told reporters in Srinagar.

"It will have very severe consequences. Not only our country, but the entire world will be affected. That is why this war must stop as soon as possible," Dr Farooq added.

Notably, across Jammu and Kashmir, the last Friday of Ramadan was marked by an overwhelming outpouring of faith and emotion, as mosques, shrines and Eidgahs in districts including Anantnag, Baramulla, Kupwara, Budgam, Pulwama, Bandipora, and Srinagar witnessed massive congregations. (KNO)

### PM Modi speaks

the well-being of the Indian community in Bahrain.

This was the second time Modi spoke to the king of Bahrain since the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28. The Islamic Republic also retaliated by attacking several of its Gulf neighbours.

The prime minister has also spoken to several other world leaders, including those from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the UAE, France, Malaysia,

Israel and Iran since the conflict began.

### Dry spell likely

gradually from March 21 onwards. It warned of the possibility of thunder and gusty winds with speeds reaching 40-50 kmph, along with hailstorms at isolated locations.

Farmers have been advised to resume agricultural operations from March 21, keeping in view the expected improvement in weather conditions, officials said.

The Jammu and Kashmir Disaster Management Authority on Friday issued an avalanche warning for higher reaches of north Kashmir, cautioning that areas above 2,600 metres in Baramulla and Kupwara districts are likely to face medium danger levels over the next 24 hours.

The authority advised residents, especially those in vulnerable locations, to remain alert and avoid venturing into avalanche-prone zones, stressing strict adherence to safety guidelines as conditions remain conducive for avalanche activity.

Officials also urged the public to follow regular updates and take necessary precautions to ensure safety. (KNO)

### Did parties appoint

Returning Officer. After marking their vote, MLAs belonging to political parties are required to show their ballot paper to their party's authorized agent before inserting it into the ballot box.

In the Rajya Sabha polls held on October 8, 2025, eight MLAs who had pledged support to NC-led candidates helped the BJP either by voting in its favour or by deliberately cancelling their votes. (KNO)

### Husband has

washing, everything. Today's times are different," Justice Nath observed, adding the high court was right that it might not be a ground for cruelty.

"You are not marrying a maid. You are marrying a life partner," Justice Mehta observed.

The bench was told that both of them were working in a government school.

"Call both parties physically. We would like to speak to them," the bench said.

It posted the matter for hearing on April 27 and asked both parties to remain present before it.

### Make life easier

lose that humane touch. That should be the new Income Tax Act 2025. Make taxpayers' lives easy," she said.

Quoting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, she

said, during the AI Summit, he spoke about M.A.N.A.V., a vision that he put forth to have a human-centric digital era.

M stands for Moral and Ethical Systems, A: Accountable Governance, N: National Sovereignty, A: Accessible and Inclusive AI, and V: Valid and Legitimate Systems.

"Income Tax Act, 2025 must be rooted in Moral and ethical systems. We need to strengthen and protect Fiscal National Sovereignty. And, of course, the reforms are not just data-driven; they are valid, legitimate systems that you're building in trust with the taxpayer," she said.

Sharing further details about the new law, she said the presumptive taxation scheme has been strengthened, which should provide a big relief to all the MSME units, because most often, they think it is complex, and therefore, they have to seek the assistance of a tax audit.

For home buyers, she said preconstruction interest on housing loans is now explicitly available for both self-occupied and let-out properties.

Sharing her six expectations from the tax department, Sitharaman said implement the Samwad sessions with sincerity, respect the time and effort of taxpayers and reduce litigations aggressively.

"Every case that goes to a tribunal or a court is a failure of our system...a black mark on all of us," the minister said.

Besides, she urged the department to proactively engage with the youth of this country, use technology to arrest evasion and lastly, don't let this new Act meet the same fate as the old one.

"The Income Tax Act of 1961 started as a reasonably simple one, but year after year, provision after provision, exemption after exemption, it kept growing until it became 5.12 lakh words. We have now replaced it, thankfully.

"Ensure that there are ways in which you are able to do some things without complex amendments coming into it. This should continue to remain simple. You have had stakeholders and Parliament being very convinced that excellent work has been done in getting this simpler version of the Income Tax Act... Let the people not be disappointed," she added.

During the event, she launched the new, revamped website of the Income Tax Department. She expressed her gratitude to the Select Committee of Parliament, which scrutinised the draft of the income tax legislation.

"They had done an extraordinary work, as much as you officers did, in making up this law. So, the committee recommended 196 different points, of which 184 were accepted," she said.

## LPG crunch continues, supplies rationalised for commercial users

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 20: LPG supply crunch continued for the third straight week on Friday, but there was some easing in bookings for refills, in signs of things slowly crawling towards normalcy.

However, concerns persist as supply restrictions on commercial consumers, including hotels, remain in place due to ongoing disruptions in input supplies caused by the West Asia conflict.

The war in the Middle East, triggered by the US and Israel attacks on Iran, has led to the shutdown of the Strait of Hormuz -- the critical shipping lane through which India gets 60 per cent of its imports. The overnight wiping away of such large volumes led to the government prioritising supplies to domestic household kitchens.

Supplies to commercial establishments were initially stopped, but later restored to a fifth of their requirement.

This triggered panic buying by domestic users, fearing that the availability of their gas cylinders too may be rationalised. Panic booking peaked at 87.7 lakh on March 13 but fell thereafter.

At a media briefing, Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, said on March 19, around 55 lakh bookings were made, down from 57 lakh on the previous day.

Pre-war average booking per day was 50-55 lakh.

"Panic booking is coming down,"



she said, adding that the government continues to prioritise the supply of available LPG to domestic households.

However, "LPG (supply) situation remains worrisome, but there is no dry out at any LPG distributor," she said.

She said in the last week, 11,300 tonnes of commercial LPG were given to commercial establishments.

Sharma said domestic LPG production has increased by over 40 per cent in the last two weeks, and the three public sector oil marketing companies have been making normal, pre-war levels of daily deliveries of LPG refills.

"LPG cylinder delivery continues to be normal," she said.

To curb black marketing and hoarding, raids and surprise inspections continue. As many as 4,500 raids were conducted on Friday, while oil companies conducted 1,800 surprise inspections of petrol pumps and LPG distributorships.

State governments have been asked

to set up monitoring and enforcement, she said.

"Situation is still worrisome, but we are maintaining supplies at a normal level for domestic users," she said.

Asking consumers to wait for home delivery of their refill after booking, she said they should also explore alternate fuels to ease pressure on cooking gas LPG.

In addition, customers near a city gas network are being encouraged to shift to piped natural gas - a convenient alternative to LPG as the fuel continuously travels through pipes to household kitchens without the botheration of refill bookings.

In 15 geographical areas (GAs), 13,700 connections have been given, and 7,000 consumers have shifted from LPG to piped natural gas (PNG).

Besides, alternate fuels such as kerosene are being promoted, she said, adding commercial LPG stocks have been placed with states for using them as per their priority list.

## Govt cracks down on illegal gambling, betting websites

300 such sites, apps blocked

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 20: In a massive crackdown against illegal gambling and betting websites, the government has blocked 300 such websites and applications, sources said. The blocked sites and apps are related to online sports betting platforms; online casinos offering slots, roulette, live dealer tables; betting exchanges functioning like P-2-P betting marketplaces.

Action was also taken on satta/matka gambling networks, and real-money card and casino game apps, the sources said.

The government has blocked 300 such websites and applications, as it came down heavily on illegal gambling and betting websites, they said. About 8,400 such websites have been blocked so far, and the majority (about 4,900) were blocked after passage of the Online Gaming Act, the sources added.

## CJI Surya Kant recuses from hearing on EC appointments law

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 20: Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Friday recused himself from hearing a batch of petitions challenging the constitutional validity of a 2023 law that removed the CJI from a committee responsible for appointing the chief election commissioner and the ECs to the poll panel.

"I will be accused of conflict of interest. There is a conflict of interest," the CJI, who was sitting alongside Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Panchohi, said at the outset.

The bench was hearing PILs challenging the validity of certain provisions of the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023, on the ground that it excluded the Chief Justice of India from

the selection panel responsible for appointing CEC and the ECs.

The CJI said it would be appropriate for the case to be heard by a bench where no judge is in line to become the chief justice.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for one of the petitioners, supported the CJI's view.

He suggested that the matter be placed before a bench without any prospective chief justice to avoid any perception of bias.

"I personally don't have any problem, but it can be listed before a bench not having a prospective CJI," Bhushan said.

Accepting the suggestion, the CJI directed that the matter be listed before another bench on April 7 and indicated that the new bench would comprise judges who are not in line to assume the office of the CJI.

## Jammu And Kashmir Union Territory OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER IRRIGATION DIVISION SHOPIAN.

NOTICE INVITING TENDER  
E-NIT S.NO.-(29) OF 2025-26 (e-Tendering)

For and on behalf of Lt. Governor Union Territory of J&K, e-Tenders are invited on Percentage basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K State Govt. CPWD/ Railways/ Other Governments/ Union Territory for the below-mentioned works.

S. No	Name of work	Adv. Cost (In lacs)	Cost of Tender Doc.	EMD 3% of the advertised cost	Time of completion	Class of Contract	Head of Account
01	Restoration of emergency works for Maintenance of Irrigation facilities from Tongri canal and its distributaries for the year 2026-27	2.40	100	7200/-	Up to March 2027	DEE	2701-M&R
02	Operation and Maintenance of irrigation supply of Lar canal and its branches including removal of encroachments to ensure smooth irrigation season of Irrigation Sub Division Manul Zoura for the year 2026-27	1.00	100	3000/-	Up to March 2027	DEE	2701-M&R
06	Operation and Maintenance of irrigation supply of Sanigloo canal and its branches including removal of encroachments to ensure smooth irrigation season of Irrigation Sub Division Manul Zoura for the year 2026-27	2.50	100	7500/-	Up to March 2027	DEE	2701-M&R
04	Operation and Maintenance of irrigation supply of Manul Zoura Canal and its branches including removal of encroachments to ensure smooth irrigation season of Irrigation Sub Division Manul Zoura for the year 2026-27 under 2702-M&R	1.00	100	3000/-	Up to March 2027	DEE	2702-M&R
05	Operation and Maintenance of irrigation supply of Gadder Canal and its branches including removal of encroachments to ensure smooth irrigation season of Irrigation Sub Division Manul Zoura for the year 2026-27	1.50	100	4500/-	Up to March 2027	DEE	2702-M&R
06	Operation and Maintenance of irrigation supply of Mastpora Khul and its branches including removal of encroachments to ensure smooth irrigation season of Irrigation Sub Division Manul Zoura for the year 2026-27	0.60	100	1800/-	Up to March 2027	DEE	2702-M&R
07	Operation and Maintenance of irrigation supply of Nattoo canal and its branches including removal of encroachments to ensure smooth irrigation season of Irrigation Sub Division Manul Zoura for the year 2026-27	0.50	100	1500/-	Up to March 2027	DEE	2702-M&R
08	Operation and Maintenance of irrigation supply of Town Khuls and its branches including removal of encroachments to ensure smooth irrigation season of Irrigation Sub Division Manul Zoura for the year 2026-27	0.50	100	1500/-	Up to March 2027	DEE	2702-M&R
09	Operation and Maintenance of irrigation supply of Sathoo canal and its branches including removal of encroachments to ensure smooth irrigation season of Irrigation Sub Division Manul Zoura for the year 2026-27	0.50	100	1500/-	Up to March 2027	DEE	2702-M&R
10	Restoration of emergency works for Maintenance of Irrigation facilities from Reshnagri, Rammagri and Chin ladi for the year 2026-27	2.00	100	6000/-	Up to March 2027	DEE	2702-M&R
11	Restoration of emergency works for Maintenance of Irrigation facilities from Ara ladi for the year 2026-27	1.50	100	4500/-	Up to March 2027	DEE	2702-M&R
12	Restoration of emergency works for Maintenance of Irrigation facilities from Vehiji canal, Saidladi, Keegam canal, Potterwal khul, Saller khul, Sarladi for the year 2026-27	2.00	100	6000/-	Up to March 2027	DEE	2702-M&R
13	Maintenance of irrigation supply of various Gravity Schemes/Khuls/Canals and their branches including removal of encroachments to ensure smooth irrigation season of Irrigation Sub Division Zainapora for the year 2026-27	2.50	100	7500/-	Up to March 2027	DEE	2702-M&R
14	Operation and Maintenance of irrigation supply of various Lift Irrigation Schemes/Drought Pumps to ensure smooth irrigation season of Irrigation Sub Division Zainapora for the year 2026-27	1.50	100	4500/-	Up to March 2027	DEE	2702-M&R

Position of Funds: Budgetary Provision.

1. Accord of Administrative Approval: Superintending Engineer Hydraulic circle Pulwama HQ-Shopian's AAA order No: SE/HYD/SPN/DB/04 of 03/2026-27 dated: 11-03-2026 issued vide endst. No: SE/HYD/SPN/DB/7617-18 dated: 11-03-2026 and No: SE/HYD/SPN/DB/03 of 03/2026-27 dated: 11-03-2026 issued vide endst. No: SE/HYD/SPN/DB/7615-16 dated: 11-03-2026

1. The Bidding document consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, set of terms and conditions, and other details can be seen/ downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per the schedule of dates given below:

01	Date of issue of Tender Notice	20-03-2026 (04:00 PM)
02	Date of start of downloading.	20-03-2026- (05:00 PM)
03	Bid submission start date Technical/ Financial.	20-03-2026 (06:00 PM)
04	Bid submission end date.	30-03-2026 (04:00 PM)
05	Date & Time of opening of Bids (online).	31-03-2026 (10:00 AM)

Terms and Conditions:

- Bids must be accompanied with proof of the cost of tender document in the shape of Treasury receipt in favour of Executive Engineer Irrigation Division Shopian (tender inviting authority). The name of the work shall be legible along with NIT number and item number. The date of treasury challan should be in between the date of start of Bid and bid submission end date.
- The successful bidder shall have to submit the hardcopy of EMD in the shape of CDR duly uploaded, treasury challan and other allied documents as mentioned in para-4.
- The date of CDR/FDR should be between the date of start of bid and bid submission end date. After opening of tenders online, the 1st lowest bidder shall be asked to deposit the CDR/FDR pledged to tender receiving authority and other documents in original. The CDR/ FDR and other documents in original shall be deposited within two Days positively after opening of tenders. The EMD in the shape of CDR/FDR of the successful bidder will be retained as performance security deposit till expiry of defect liability period, whereas the EMD of unsuccessful bidders will be returned latest by 30 days after award of the contract. Contractor / Bidder who fails to submit the CDR/FDR / Treasury Challans as required; there EMD will be forfeited besides they will be barred/prohibited from participating in the Tendering process for a period of Six Months (06 Months) in the first instance. Their online uploaded tenders will not be considered for the said period.
- The Bidders/Tenderers should mandatorily disclose the bank account number which is linked with their GSTIN at the time of bid submission (enclose certificate). No payments shall be released by the Government to any other Bank account except the one linked with the GST registered number. As per JK Finance Departments' Circular No. 01 ( Adm) FD of 2025 dated 08-07-2025.
- The bidders/tenderers shall have to upload an undertaking/affidavit duly authenticated by first class Judicial Magistrate to the effect that the registered card of the contractor has not been blacklisted/Debarred by any department nor the contractor has been declared insolvent by any court of Law.
- The successful bidder shall have to produce the necessary royalty clearance certificate from the concerned Geology & Mining Department for the material ( Nallah Muck, Boulders etc) utilized for the work. No payment shall be released without the certificate.
- In case the bid of the bidder is unbalanced, the bidder has to upload additional performance security deposit in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG as per the breakup given below failing which the tender shall be rejected. The date of CDR/FDR/BG should be between the date of start of bid and bid submission end date.

S. No	Percentage Below Advertised cost	Additional Performance Security (on bid price)
01	Up to and including 10% below	Nil
02	More than 10% and below 20 %	0.1% of bid price for each 1% below 10% [e.g. at (-)11% 0.1% at (-)15% 0.5% at (-)19% 0.9%]
03	20 % below or more	1.0% of bid price plus 0.2% for each (-) 20% [e.g. at (-) 21 % 1.2% at (-)25% 2.0% at (-) 30 % 3.0%]

Note: The additional performance security percentage shall be rounded off--if the decimal part is below 0.5% it shall be rounded down, and if 0.5% or more, rounded up to the next higher percentage.

8) Bidders are advised to use the (My Documents)area in their user on www.jktenders.gov.in portal to store, the required documents as given below:

- GSTIN clearance last quarter and PAN.
- Bank Certificate
- Registration card with the latest renewal.
- Treasury challan (0702)
- Scanned copy of EMD.
- Card verification letter.
- Registered mobile number and E-mail ID in the shape of Bidders address form.
- BOQ.

No: SID/ 5966-84  
Dated: 20-03-2026

DIPK-12046/25  
DATED: 20-03-2026

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer,  
Irrigation Division, Shopian.

INOX SRINAGAR

INOX CINEMA SHIVPORA SRINAGAR

Movies Schedule

SATURDAY, 21 MARCH

Eid Mubarak



DHURANDHAR THE REVENGE (A)  
HINDI - 12:30 PM, 01:30 PM, 05:00 PM, 06:00 PM  
HINDI ATMOS - 02:30 PM, 07:00 PM



BATT KOCH (U)  
KASHMIRI - 11:45 AM

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*Eid Mubarak*

عيد مبارك

May the blessings of Eid fill your lives with peace, prosperity, and the sweet fragrance of tradition. Like chinar leaves dancing in Srinagar's breeze, may joy bloom eternally in your homes.

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