



West Asia conflict has triggered serious global energy crisis, disrupted key trade routes: PM Modi

Attacks on commercial vessels, obstructing int'l waterways unacceptable | India condemns attacks on civilians, civil infra, energy, transport facilities | Any threat to human life runs against interests of humanity

Sajid Raina

New Delhi, Mar 24: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said that the ongoing conflict in West Asia has triggered a serious global energy crisis, disrupted key trade routes, and raised concerns over the safety of Indians in the region, including crew members stranded in the Strait of Hormuz.

Addressing Rajya Sabha, PM Modi, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said, "Attacks on commercial vessels and obstruction of international waterways like the Strait of Hormuz are unacceptable. India has condemned attacks on civilians, civil infrastructure, and energy and transport facilities. Any threat to human life runs against the interests of humanity."

He said more than three



weeks into the conflict, the movement of ships through the Strait of Hormuz has become challenging, with many vessels stranded and a large number of Indian crew members among them. "India is working through diplomatic channels to ensure safe passage of Indian ships despite the prevailing situation," PM Modi added.

The Prime Minister said around one crore Indians live and work in Gulf countries, making their safety and livelihoods a major concern. Since the outbreak of hostilities, over 3.75 lakh Indians have been brought back to the country, including more than 1,000 from Iran, among them over 700 medical students.

He said countries in the region have assured security for Indians on their soil, while noting that there have been casualties and injuries among Indian nationals, with assistance being extended to affected families.

PM Modi said he has held two rounds of phone conversations with heads of state of most countries in West Asia and that India remains in constant contact with Gulf nations, as well as Iran, Israel and the United States. Discussions have focused on de-escalation, restoration of peace through dialogue, and re-opening of the Strait of Hormuz.

He said the conflict has affected the supply of essential commodities such as petrol, diesel, gas, and fertilisers. The government is making efforts to ensure that oil and gas supplies continue to reach India from multiple sources. | More on P6

Making J&K TB-free collective responsibility: LG Sinha

UT should emerge as leader in national drive against disease

Creating awareness most powerful medicine

No patient should be left behind

KNO Desk

Jammu, Mar 24: Asserting that pledge for a 'TB-free Jammu Kashmir' is not just the Health Department's duty but it is a collective responsibility, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday called upon the officials to ramp up testing, help in identifying TB-sensitive areas, and spread awareness



door-to-door. Speaking at the launch of 'TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyan-100 Days campaign', on World Tuberculosis Day at Convention Centre in Jammu, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said, "Every family must be informed that testing for TB symptoms and treatment are free, and full recovery is possible."

"Awareness, I believe, will be our most powerful medicine. Leave no patient behind. Detecting TB is only

half the battle. Walking beside a patient through the entire course of treatment and recovery is the real challenge. The Ni-Kshay Mitra programme is precisely that answer. I expect everyone involved to bring their full commitment to it," the Lieutenant Governor said.

Pertinently, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Jagat Prakash Nadda today launched the nation-wide campaign to further accelerate progress towards TB elimination through | More on P6

2018 Kashmir Seccession Conspiracy Case

NIA court awards life imprisonment to Asiya Andrabi

Separatist leader's two aides get 30 years in prison

KNO Desk

Srinagar, Mar 24: A special court of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in New Delhi on Tuesday awarded life imprisonment to Duktaran-e-Millat chief, Asiya Andrabi while two of her aides, Sofi Fehmeeda and Nahida Nasreen, were sentenced to 30 years in prison each.

The quantum of sentence was announced after her conviction on January 14, 2026 under several sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

In a statement issued to the news agency—Kashmir News

Observer (KNO), a NIA spokesman said, "The special NIA court has sentenced three operatives of the proscribed Duktaran-e-Millat (DeM) terrorist organisation to imprisonment in connection with a 2018 Kashmir seccession conspiracy case."

"The DeM is an all-women outfit with the declared objective of achieving seccession of Kashmir from India. Aasiya Andrabi @ Aasiyeh Andrabi @ Syedah Aasiya, the founder and Chairperson of Duktaran-E-Millat, has been sentenced to life imprisonment, while her accomplices, Sofi Fehmeeda and Nahida Nasreen, have been awarded 30 years in jail, along with fine. The three women were arrested in July 2018 by NIA, which had | More on P6

Govt mulling legislation to establish private universities in J&K

Bill likely to be tabled in second leg of budget session

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Mar 24: In a significant move to expand the higher education landscape in Jammu & Kashmir, the government is likely to bring legislation for the establishment of private universities in the Union Territory, sources disclosed.

Sources told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the NC-led government is expected to introduce the legislation during the second leg of the budget session starting on March 27. The proposed law would pave the way for setting up self-financed private universities in Jammu & Kashmir.



Minister for Education, Sakina Masood Ittoo, confirmed the development. "We will try our best to introduce the bill during the budget session," she said.

In February this year,

the minister informed the Legislative Assembly that there are currently no private universities in the Union Territory.

She, however, emphasised that the establishment of private | More on P6

Trump dials Modi to discuss West Asia conflict

Focus on Strait of Hormuz

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 24: India backs the swift restoration of peace in West Asia and keeping the Strait of Hormuz open for global shipping, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday when US President Donald Trump dialled him to discuss the crisis.

It was the first conversation between the two leaders since the West Asia conflict began on February 28.

In the conversation, PM Modi underlined the importance of ensuring that the Strait of Hormuz remains open, secure and accessible, noting that it is vital for global peace, stability and economic well-being.

The phone call came a day

after President Trump extended Washington's deadline by five days for Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

"Received a call from President Trump and had a useful exchange of views on the situation in West Asia," Modi said on social media.

"India supports de-escalation and restoration of peace at the earliest. Ensuring that the Strait of Hormuz remains open, secure and accessible is essential for the whole world. We agreed to stay in touch regarding efforts towards peace and stability," he said.

Global oil and gas prices have surged after Iran virtually blocked the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow | More on P6

Art 370 kept J&K away from peace, dev: Sat Sharma

Says provision blocked region's growth

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Mar 24: Asserting that Article 370 deprived Jammu and Kashmir of peace and development, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Member Parliament Satpal Sharma on Tuesday said that the Centre's economic and welfare roadmap has put the region on the path of peace and prosperity.

While backing the Appropriation (No. 2) Bill, 2026 in Rajya Sabha, Sharma, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), outlined the Centre's economic and welfare roadmap in a detailed speech.

He said, "While the rest of



India attained independence on August 15, 1947, Article 370 was imposed on Jammu and Kashmir, holding back its integration and growth."

He said the removal of Article 370 has transformed the region.

"Earlier, peace and development were missing. Today, a new environment has been created," he said.

Sharma said for 2026-27, Rs 43,290 crore has been allocated for Jammu and Kashmir, while Rs 10,000 crore additional provisions have been made under Home Affairs.

Expressing full support for the Appropriation Bill, Sharma said it reflects a stable governance model, fiscal prudence and inclusive development.

"This budget lays the foundation for long-term growth, welfare expansion and a strong, self-reliant India," he said.

He said the Appropriation Bill is a crucial | More on P6

Chief Secy reiterates zero tolerance policy against black marketing, hoarding

KNO Desk

Jammu, Mar 24: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, on Tuesday reiterated zero-tolerance policy, against hoarding, black marketing, overcharging, or diversion of petroleum products.

Chairing a comprehensive review meeting here to assess the availability and distribution of petroleum products across Jammu and Kashmir, the Chief Secretary, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) directed strict legal action against any person who at any level creates artificial scarcity of any essential commodity.

The meeting was attended by the Commissioner



Secretary, Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs; Divisional Commissioner, Jammu/Kashmir; Deputy Commissioners; senior officers of the Legal Metrology and Food Supply Departments along with the representatives of Oil

Marketing Companies.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary was apprised about the present stock position of all major petroleum products including Motor Spirit (MS), High Speed Diesel (HSD), aviation turbine fuel, and LPG available

across the Union Territory.

While reviewing district-wise supply, he asked the Deputy Commissioners to furnish detailed reports on availability and distribution. He noted that overall situation remains satisfactory but stressed that all eligible domestic and commercial consumers must receive LPG supplies without delay, with priority accorded to genuine beneficiaries.

The Chief Secretary further underscored the importance of doorstep delivery of LPG and directed Oil Marketing Companies to maintain adequate stock levels at retail outlets, dealer points, and buffer depots to ensure uninterrupted supply. | More on P6

Ovarian cancer emerging as 'silent killer' in J&K

Doctors say ignoring symptoms result in late detection

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Mar 24: Ovarian cancer, often referred to as the "silent killer," is emerging as a serious health concern among women in Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaking to news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) doctors said that ovarian cancer is a disease in which abnormal cells grow in the ovaries—the organs responsible for producing eggs and

female hormones. These cancer cells multiply rapidly and can spread to other parts of the body if not detected early. "Late diagnosis continues to claim lives due to low awareness and subtle symptoms," they said.

Dr Maimoona Akhter a gynaecologist said that exact cause is not always known, but several factors increase the risk that includes increasing age (especially after menopause), Family history or inherited



genes like BRCA1/BRCA2, Obesity and hormonal therapy, late childbirth or not having children, Lifestyle changes and reproductive patterns

Studies also highlight that changing lifestyles, delayed marriages, and reduced childbirth rates may be contributing factors.

Dr Shabeena an oncologist said: "We are seeing ovarian cancer increasingly among younger women in the Valley, which is a worrying trend and

calls for urgent awareness."

She said that one of the biggest challenges is that symptoms are vague and easily mistaken for common problems.

She said that the symptoms that shouldn't be ignored include the persistent abdominal bloating, Pelvic or abdominal pain, feeling full quickly, frequent urination and back pain and fatigue.

She added that because these signs resemble digestive or menstrual issues, many women

delay seeking medical help.

"Most women dismiss early symptoms as routine discomfort, which leads to diagnosis at advanced stages." Doctors said.

They said that if not detected early, ovarian cancer can: spread to abdomen and other organs (metastasis), cause fluid accumulation (ascites), lead to severe weight loss and weakness and reduce survival chances significantly

They said that over 70% of patients | More on P6

3-day Mobile Passport Van Service Camp inaugurated in Rajouri

KT NEWS DESK

RAJOURI, MARCH 24: As part of the ongoing Public Outreach Programme aimed at improving citizen service delivery, the Regional Passport Office (RPO) Jammu under the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, on Tuesday launched a three-day Mobile Passport Van Service Camp at the DC Office Complex, Rajouri. Deputy Commissioner Rajouri Abhishek Sharma formally inaugurated the camp.

Interacting with media persons on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, urged the residents of Rajouri district to avail themselves of the facility by booking appointments through the official website, www.passportindia.gov.in. He informed that applicants are required to select the slot for the Mobile Passport Van service which will remain stationed at the DC Office Complex Rajouri from March 24 to March 26, 2026.

The Deputy Commissioner appreciated the initiative taken by RPO Jammu, led by Rajesh

Kumar and his team for extending the facility to the people of the district. He called upon the public, especially those from hilly and far-flung areas to make full use of the camp. He added that such initiatives play a crucial role in bringing government services closer to the people and strengthening citizen-centric governance.

He also expressed gratitude to the Regional Passport Office Jammu and the Ministry of External Affairs for organizing the Mobile Passport Van Service Camp in Rajouri and lauded their efforts towards promoting doorstep service delivery. The outreach initiative has been undertaken in collaboration with the District Administration Rajouri.

Speaking on the occasion, Section Officer/OSD, RPO Jammu Sunil K. Khar informed that the Mobile Passport Van Camp has been organized to ease the heavy rush of applicants at the Post Office Passport Seva Kendra (POPSK) Rajouri. He highlighted that there has been a significant increase in the number of applicants from the

twin districts of Rajouri and Poonch and in view of the existing appointment cycle at POPSK Rajouri, this special initiative has been introduced.

He further informed that considering the growing demand, the RPO Jammu is planning to establish an additional counter at POPSK Rajouri from April 2026 to further streamline passport services in the district.

The Mobile Passport Van is fully equipped with facilities for biometric enrolment and on-site document verification, ensuring convenience, transparency and efficiency for applicants.

The citizen-friendly initiative is expected to significantly enhance accessibility, save time and make passport services more efficient, particularly for residents living in remote and underserved areas.

Among others present on the occasion were Chief Planning Officer Maqsood Ahmad; Deputy District Election Officer, Qadeer-Ul-Rehman; Naib Tehsildar, DSEO, Sandeep Sharma; Election NT, Surjeet Singh and Section Officer/OSD, MEA, Government of India Sunil K. Khar.

Green J&K Drive

Over 78 lakh saplings planted during current financial year: Javed Rana

Calls for collective action to push, promote forest conservation in J&K on International Day of Forests

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, MARCH 24: Minister for Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, on Tuesday called for collective and sustained efforts to protect forests across Jammu & Kashmir, underscoring their indispensable role in sustaining life, preserving biodiversity and ensuring a secure future.

The Minister, as per an official statement, was speaking as the chief guest at a function held at the FRMC Building, Narwal, to mark the International Day of Forests.

Commissioner Secretary Forests, Sheetal Nanda, PCCF Sarvesh Rai, Chairman PCC, Vasu Yadav along with senior officers of the Forest Department, awardees and trainees were present on the occasion.

Emphasizing the ecological significance of forests, he noted that Jammu & Kashmir possesses a rich and diverse forest resource base that plays a critical role in climate regulation, water conservation, soil protection and biodiversity preservation.

Highlighting the importance of community participation, Rana stressed the need for strengthening



community-driven conservation and biodiversity management while maintaining harmony with nature alongside sustainable development.

He reiterated the government's commitment to protecting the region's natural wealth through scientific research, inter-departmental coordination and community-based initiatives.

Drawing attention to the role of forests in regulating the water cycle, the Minister said that forests act as natural reservoirs and filters, ensuring clean water, sustaining rivers and groundwater, and supporting food security. He called for greater public involvement in safeguarding these vital ecosystems.

Referring to ongoing initiatives, he said that under the Green J&K Drive, over 78 lakh saplings have been planted during the current financial year, covering thousands of hectares, with a target of one crore saplings set for the coming year.

He also highlighted efforts to expand eco-tourism through the development of eco-parks, trekking routes and forest infrastructure, aimed at generating livelihood opportunities while ensuring conservation.

The Minister further informed that J&K has a recorded forest cover of over 20,194 square kilometres, accounting for nearly 48 percent of its geographical area and expressed satisfaction over the increase in forest cover over the past decade. He reaffirmed Omar Abdullah-led government's resolve to further expand green cover through large-scale afforestation drives.

Highlighting welfare measures, Rana said that the department has supported local communities by providing timber and forest produce in a sustainable manner.

During the current year,

9.09 lakh cubic feet of timber was sanctioned to 7,149 beneficiaries, while 95,655 quintals of firewood and 2.77 lakh quintals of green fodder were distributed among thousands of beneficiaries across J&K.

He also spoke about the implementation of national programmes such as the National Forest Policy, Green India Mission and Nagar Van Yojana, which aim to restore degraded landscapes and enhance green cover through active public participation.

While acknowledging the progress made, the Minister stressed the need to address challenges such as forest degradation, encroachments and climate change through coordinated and sustained efforts.

He reiterated that forest conservation is a shared responsibility requiring stronger collaboration among government departments, civil society and local communities.

The Minister also congratulated the UT-level Forestry Award winners for their contributions towards conservation and lauded the trainees passing out from Forest Training Institutes, describing them as the backbone of forest protection efforts.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (R&B) DIVISION TANGMARG.

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER (CIVIL WORKS)

NIT No: 150/R&B of 2025-26

Dated:-23-03-2026

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:-

S. No	Name of Work	Adv. Cost (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (In Rupees)	Earnest money (In Rupees)	Time of completion	M. H of Account	Class of Contractor	Project Authority	Tender call
1	Construction of Girls Toilets at Middle School Aatipora.	1.74	200/-	3480/-	30 days	PAB (S.A-MAGRA)	DEE	Directorate of SAMAGRA SHIKSHA J&K	1"
2	Construction of Girls Toilets at Middle School Awalawa.	1.74	200/-	3480/-	30 days	PAB (S.A-MAGRA)	DEE	Directorate of SAMAGRA SHIKSHA J&K	1"
3	Construction of Girls Toilets at Primary School Bongund.	1.74	200/-	3480/-	30 days	PAB (S.A-MAGRA)	DEE	Directorate of SAMAGRA SHIKSHA J&K	1"
4	Construction of Girls Toilets at Middle School Haripora.	1.74	200/-	3480/-	30 days	PAB (S.A-MAGRA)	DEE	Directorate of SAMAGRA SHIKSHA J&K	1"
5	Construction of Girls Toilets at Middle School Hayatpora.	1.74	200/-	3480/-	30 days	PAB (S.A-MAGRA)	DEE	Directorate of SAMAGRA SHIKSHA J&K	1"
6	Construction of Girls Toilets at Middle School Ogmuna.	1.74	200/-	3480/-	30 days	PAB (S.A-MAGRA)	DEE	Directorate of SAMAGRA SHIKSHA J&K	1"
7	Construction of Girls Toilets at Middle School Rawathpora.	1.74	200/-	3480/-	30 days	PAB (S.A-MAGRA)	DEE	Directorate of SAMAGRA SHIKSHA J&K	1"
8	Construction of Girls Toilets at Primary School Sheikhpura.	1.74	200/-	3480/-	30 days	PAB (S.A-MAGRA)	DEE	Directorate of SAMAGRA SHIKSHA J&K	1"

Position of AAA: Accorded
Position of T.S: Accorded
Position of funds: Assured

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 viewed/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:-

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	23-03-2026
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	24-03-2026
3	Bid submission Start Date	24-03-2026
4	Bid Submission End Date	02-04-2026 4:00 PM
5	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	03-04-2026 11:00 AM

Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of Treasury Challan (Dated between bid submission start date

and bid submission end date) with NIT No. , Serial No. and name of work to be deposited in M.H. 0059 in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Tangmarg (tender inviting authority).

2. All the bidders must upload Earnest money /Bid security equal to 2% of advertised cost in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Tangmarg (tender receiving authority) (The Date of earnest money/Bid security should be between the Bid Submission start date and Bid submission End date, otherwise bids shall be rejected).

3. The Successful bidder will have to provide performance security @ 5% of contract value in the form of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Tangmarg (tender receiving authority) as per rule-171 (I) of GFR 2017. The earnest money/ Bid security @2% shall be released to the successful bidder only on receipt of Performance Security @ 5% of Contract value which shall be released after successful completion of DLP /maintenance period.

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 Executive Engineer R&B Division Tangmarg (tender receiving authority).

5. The earnest money/ Bid security in favour of unsuccessful bidder shall be released only after submission of original Treasury Challan.

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

The earnest money shall be forfeited, if:-

6. Any bidder/ tenderer withdraw his bid/ tender during the period of bid validity or make any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid.

Failure of Successful bidder to furnish the required performance security within the specified time limit.

Failure of Successful bidder to execute the agreement within 28 days after fixation of contract.

Failure of successfully bidder to submit the performance security within the time period (as per JKPWD Engineering Manual 2020) i.e 21 Days from the issuance of latter of acceptance, after that the work will be put to fresh tenders without any notice to the contractor and the EMD will be forfeited.

38. All other terms conditions are as per PWD Form 25(Double agreement Form), NIT, GFR 2017 & JK PWD Engineering Manual 2020.

39. As per the Circular No. 01 (Adm) FD of 2025 Dated: 08-07-2025 issued by Finance Department of UT J&K "Every participating supplier/contractor to mandatorily disclose the bank account number which is linked with their GSTIN at the time of bid submission. No payments shall be released by the Government Department/Agency to any other bank account except the one linked with the GST registered number of the successful bidder".

No: R&B / Divn./ Tang/9136-46
Dated: 23 -03-2026

Sd/-
Technical Officer

Executive Engineer
R&B Division Tangmarg.

DIPK-12096/25
DATED: 24-03-2026

HEALTH & MEDICAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, GOVT. OF J&K GOVERNMENT MEDICAL COLLEGE, ANANTNAG

College Campus, Dalgam Anantnag J&K-192210
Email ID: principal-gmca@jk.gov.in

Subject: Engagement of Senior Resident in the Department of General Medicine, Government Medical College Anantnag.

- Advertisement Notice No. 09 GMCA of 2025 dated 24.11.2025
- Selection Notification No. 12 GMCA of 2025 dated 27.12.2025
- CID Verification Report vide Form No. 145146 dated 16.03.2026

ORDER NO: 198 GMCA OF 2026
DATED: 24-03-2026

Pursuant to the selection notification issued vide No. 12 GMCA of 2025 dated 27.12.2025, below mentioned candidate is provisionally engaged as Senior Resident under S.O 364 of 2020 dated 27.11.2020, in the Department of General Medicine, Government Medical College Anantnag initially for a period of one year which is extendable upto (03) years only on the basis of good performance to be certified by the concerned Head of Department.

Name	Parentage	Address	Whether In-Service
Dr Sajad Rashid	Late Abdul Rashid Sofi	Guree, Anantnag	No

The above candidate is directed to join in the office of the Principal, Govt. Medical College Anantnag within 21 days from the date of publication of this order and shall be allowed to join on production of following documents in original for verification.

- Essential Qualification Certificate(s).
- Registration Certificate(s) of Essential Qualification.
- Date of Birth Certificate.
- Domicile Certificate.

Terms and Conditions:

- The above candidate shall have to execute an agreement with the institution on a prescribed format (Form A of S.O 364) with regard to the various terms and conditions applicable during academic arrangement. The candidate shall strictly ensure that he/she shall not leave the post (College) before the completion of tenure of six months, however abandoning/terminating after six months of the engagement in the specialty will require one-month prior notice on either side falling which the salary shall not be paid for one month to the incumbent which shall be released on completion of stipulated sanctioned term.
- Before joining the Department, the selected candidate shall submit an affidavit in the office of the Administrative Officer, Govt. Medical College Anantnag duly attested by the Judicial Magistrate (1st Class) to the effect that:
 - I understand all the terms and conditions set out in the agreement (Form A of S.O 364 of 2020) and I shall be bound by all such terms and conditions (Form A of S.O 364) duly executed by me.
 - If any of the information furnished by me to the college is found wrong at any point of time, I shall be liable to be punished under rules including confiscation of the Registration of the Doctor.
 - I will not participate in any kind of strike during the period of my tenure engagement. In the event I proceeded on strike, my tenure engagement shall be terminated without any notice as this service is covered under ESMA Act.
 - I shall remain disciplined during the tenure period; any kind of misconduct shall make me liable for termination without any prior notice.
 - I am not involved in any criminal activity nor is there is any FIR/Court case pending/registered against me in any criminal department or police station/Hon'ble Court.
 - My engagement is strictly provisional till the recipient of verification of documents/ testimonials and verification report for character and antecedents from CID. In case adverse report is received from CID, J&K, I shall have no claim for Senior Residency benefits i.e., experience certificate and salary/remuneration and my engagement shall be deemed to have been cancelled ab-initio.
 - I shall not claim any Experience Certificate in case I leave Senior Resident-ship before completion of first six months.
 - I will not indulge in any private practice. In case I am found doing private practice my appointment shall be liable for termination without any notice.
- Those candidates who are not in-service shall be engaged under S.O 364 of 2020 dated 27.11.2020 (Academic Arrangement Basis).
- The Senior Residents (Non-PSC) appointed on Academic Arrangement Basis shall be paid as per S.O 364 of 2020 dated 27-11-2020. However, In-service (PSC confirmed) candidates shall be paid salary as per their LPC. The PSC confirmed appointees are required to furnish the NOC from Director Health Services concerned before their joining, failing which they will not be allowed to join and their selection will be cancelled.
- The salary of the appointed candidate(s) shall be drawn/distributed only after recipient satisfactory report of verification of character & antecedents and documents/ testimonials from the concerned quarters.

DIPK-12062/25
DATED: 24-03-2026

No: GMCA/Estt/2026/2650-56

Dated: 24-03-2026

Principal/Dean, Govt Medical College, Anantnag.

MeT predicts wet spell from March 26



SAJID RAINA

Srinagar, Mar 24: The Meteorological Centre Srinagar on Tuesday predicted that Jammu and Kashmir will witness another wet spell from March 26 onwards.

Pertinently, the Union Territory has witnessed multiple spells of snow and rain during the ongoing month.

A MeT official said, "From March 26 to 28 the region is expected to witness generally cloudy conditions, with light rain or snow at a few places towards the afternoon."

"From March 29 to 31 generally cloudy conditions will prevail with the possibility of light to moderate rain and snow in higher reaches at several places. Thunder and gusty

winds with speeds of 40-50 kmph are also expected during this period," the official said, adding, "The weather is expected to remain partly to generally cloudy from April 1 to 4."

The MeT department has also issued an advisory warning of moderate snowfall over a few higher reaches and thunder, lightning and gusty winds at many places between the night of March 28 and the forenoon of March 31.

Farmers have been advised to suspend farm operations on March 26 and between March 29 and 31 in view of the expected weather conditions.

Travellers have also been asked to follow traffic advisories and plan their movement accordingly during the same period, officials added—(KNO)

Panchayat polls on cards: Javed Dar



WARIS FAYAZ

Srinagar, Mar 24: Minister Javed Ahmad Dar on Tuesday said the government is preparing to hold panchayat elections, with necessary formalities currently underway.

Speaking during his Rafiabad visit, the Minister said the administration is putting required mechanisms in place before announcing the election schedule. "We are ready for panchayat elections. Some formalities need to be completed. Once that is done, elections will be held," he said. On the OBC reservation issue, the Minister said the matter is being evaluated. He said discussions are ongoing and the policy will be implemented after completion of the required process.

Highlighting development works in Zaingeer Rafiabad, Dar said several projects have been initiated over the past year, adding that efforts are underway to revive tourism potential in the region, particularly in Zalloora, which was once a popular trekking destination linked to Lolab Valley.

The Minister said the more projects are in the pipeline including a Dak Bungalow at Bomai village, with focus remains on improving infrastructure over the next two to three years. He also acknowledged gaps in health-care and education, including demands for a secondary school and a primary health centre, and said these will be addressed in a phased manner.

The Minister further said a Rs 22 crore proposal for Zaingeer has been submitted under the Central Road Fund. The plan includes development of around 30 kilometres of roads covering multiple villages, including Brath, Shankergund, Harwan, Zalloora, Bomai, Yedipora and Yamran. He said visible improvements will be seen in the coming years as efforts continue to strengthen infrastructure and public services in the region—(KNO)

LG Ladakh honors martyrs in Leh

KNO

Leh, Mar 24: Lieutenant Governor Ladakh Vinai Kumar Saxena on Tuesday visited the Hall of Fame and laid a wreath at the war memorial, paying homage to the brave soldiers who laid down their lives in the service of the nation.

The Lieutenant Governor was received by General Officer Commanding (GOC) 14 Corps Lt Gen Hitesh Bhalla.

On the occasion, Saxena saluted the supreme sacrifice of the bravehearts who guarded the nation's borders under extremely harsh and hostile conditions. "The sacrifices made by the soldiers while defending the country against enemy forces must always be remembered with gratitude and respect," he said. "My heartfelt tributes to the martyrs of the armed forces who laid their lives for the freedom, pride and dignity of



our nation. We, as Indians, owe a debt of gratitude to the fallen martyrs and their families. Hall of Fame, Leh, truly glorifies the supreme sacrifice of our soldiers," the LG added.

Commending the courage and valour of the Indian Army, the Lieutenant Governor observed that soldiers continue to protect the nation's frontiers in sub-zero

temperatures and challenging terrain, setting an unparalleled example of dedication and patriotism.

Saxena visited the museum at the Hall of Fame, which showcases the bravery and gallantry of the Indian Army during major operations such as Operation Meghdoot and Operation Vijay—(KNO)

Viksit Bharat youth parliament UT round held at J&K Assembly

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Mar 24: Mera Yuva Bharat (MY Bharat) J&K, under the Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports successfully hosted the Viksit Bharat Youth Parliament UT Round at the J&K Legislative Assembly. This prestigious event brought together young minds to discuss and shape the nation's future. The event brought together winners of the district round to discuss the theme "Union Budget 2026: Strengthening the Indian Youth's Path Towards Viksit Bharat 2047".

The event was chaired by Javed Rana, Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest and Tribal Affairs, J&K, who emphasized the importance of youth engagement in nation-building. "The youth of

J&K are the architects of a developed India. Their ideas and perspectives are crucial in shaping the country's future," he said.

A distinguished jury comprising Dr. Devinder Kumar Manyal (MLA Ramgarh), Sunaina Mehta (Principal, Revenue Training Institute, Jammu), Prof Mushtaq Ahmad Wani (Former member of JKPSC and HOD Geography, Amar Singh College, Srinagar), Prof Tariq Ahmad Shah (Ex Prof and Head, Plant Pathology, SKUAST Srinagar), and Simranjeet Singh (Reputed Journalist and Writer) evaluated the participants' performances.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

From The Parliament

Low incidence of dowry deaths in J&K: Centre

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Mar 24: The Centre on Tuesday said that cases of dowry deaths in Jammu and Kashmir remain relatively low, while ruling out any proposal to extend the legal time limit under the relevant law.

The information was provided in response to an unstarred question raised by MP Dr Byreddy Shabari in the Lok Sabha.

Replying to the query, Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar said that as per data compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), a total of 9 cases of dowry deaths were registered in Jammu and Kashmir in 2023, while 9 cases were also reported in 2022.

He said that during 2023, trials were completed in 9 cases in J&K, out of which only one resulted in a conviction, reflecting a conviction rate of around 11 per cent.

The minister further informed that the NCRB collects and publishes



such data under its annual report "Crime in India," with the latest report pertaining to 2023.

Highlighting legal provisions, he said that Section 80 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (earlier Section 304B of IPC) applies to dowry deaths occurring within seven years

of marriage, while other provisions continue to address cruelty and harassment related to dowry without any time limit. The government, however, clarified that there is no proposal under consideration to review or extend this seven-year time limit. He added that 'Police' and

'Public Order' are State subjects, and the responsibility of investigation and prosecution of such crimes rests with respective State governments and UT administrations, while the Centre continues to support them through advisories and capacity-building measures—(KNO)

GoI reports spike in cyber-crimes against women in J&K

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Mar 24: The Government of India informed the Lok Sabha that a total of 68 cases of cybercrimes against women were registered in Jammu and Kashmir in 2023.

The information was provided in response to an unstarred question raised by MPs Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar and Bapi Halder.

Replying to the query, Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar, as reported by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said that as per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, J&K recorded 39 such cases in 2021, 39 in 2022 and 68 cases in 2023, showing an increase in reported

incidents. He said that cybercrimes fall under the jurisdiction of States and Union Territories, as 'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects under the Constitution.

The minister further informed that the Centre supplements the efforts of States and UTs through advisories and financial assistance for strengthening law enforcement agencies and cyber infrastructure.

As per official data, Jammu and Kashmir currently has two cyber police stations, while forensic support is being strengthened through laboratories and mobile forensic units.

The government also said that NCRB compiles and publishes data on such crimes in its annual "Crime in India" report, with the latest edition pertaining to 2023—(KNO)

'Cyber shield strengthened for J&K in national push'

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Mar 24: The Government of India Tuesday said that multiple measures have been put in place to strengthen cyber security across the country including in Jammu & Kashmir, as part of efforts to build a 'Cyber Secure Bharat'.

Replying to a question in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar said that the Reserve

Bank of India was reviewing cyber threats continuously and has directed the banks to adopt robust security systems, like 'security by design' in mobile and UPI applications.

He said banks have been advised to use advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning for real-time monitoring of transactions and detection of suspicious activities, particularly the mule accounts used

by cyber criminals. The Minister further informed that the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre has been set up by the Ministry of Home Affairs to tackle cybercrimes in a coordinated manner. He added that the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal and helpline number 1930 have been made operational to assist citizens in reporting cyber frauds.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

Cabinet panel formed for J&K reservation review: GoI

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Mar 24: The Government of India (GoI) on Tuesday informed the Lok Sabha that a Cabinet Sub-Committee has been constituted in Jammu and Kashmir to examine and review issues related to the rationalisation of reservation policy in the Union Territory.

The information was provided in response to an unstarred question raised by Member of Parliament Syed Agha Ruhullah Mehdi.

Replying to the query, Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment, Ramdas Athawale said that the UT government has already set up a panel to look into various aspects of the reservation framework. He added that the committee has submitted its report to the Council of Ministers.

Regarding concerns over the disproportionate impact of the existing reservation structure on the open category, the minister said that no such representation has been received by the department so far.

The query had also sought details on whether reservation policies in J&K are subject to periodic review in line with constitutional principles laid down by the Supreme Court, and the steps taken to ensure that reservation remains a tool for social justice without causing long-term imbalance in education and employment—(KNO)

GoI highlights implementation of NLM in J&K

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Mar 24: The Government of India on Tuesday said that the National Livestock Mission (NLM) is being implemented across the country, including Jammu and Kashmir, with a focus on employment generation, entrepreneurship development and enhancement of livestock productivity.

Replying to an unstarred question in Lok Sabha, the Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying said that the re-aligned NLM, launched in 2021-22, aims at promoting sheep, goat,

pig and poultry farming, besides strengthening fodder development and supporting value-added livestock enterprises.

As per official data, Jammu and Kashmir has received financial assistance under the Mission over the past few years. In 2022-23, funds amounting to Rs 675.35 lakh were utilised against a release of Rs 675.35 lakh. However, no funds were released during 2023-24, while in 2024-25, Rs 250 lakh have been allocated and fully utilised so far.

For the current financial year 2025-26 (till March 16), Jammu and Kashmir has

been allocated Rs 950 lakh, out of which Rs 775.18 lakh have been utilised, indicating steady progress in implementation of the scheme in the Union Territory.

The minister said that under the entrepreneurship development component of NLM, projects related to sheep and goat farming, piggy, poultry and fodder development are being supported with capital subsidy, which is expected to generate employment and enhance the income of livestock rearers.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

Thousands of MGNREGA works executed in J&K

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Mar 24: The Lok Sabha was informed on Tuesday that thousands of works under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme are being executed across Jammu and Kashmir, with substantial expenditure recorded during the ongoing and previous financial years.

Replying to an unstarred question, Minister of State in the Ministry of Rural Development Kamlesh Paswan said that in Jammu and Kashmir, a total of 1,81,828 works were completed in 2024-25 with an expenditure of Rs 33,058.18 lakh, while 3,89,873 works remained

ongoing involving Rs 92,209.66 lakh. For the current financial year 2025-26 (till March 20, 2026), the House was informed that 46,178 works have been completed with an expenditure of Rs 7,361.56 lakh, while 4,80,135 works are ongoing with an outlay of Rs 1,25,056.86 lakh.

The minister further stated that in Nowshera block of Rajouri district, 655 works were completed during 2024-25, while 2,032 works remained ongoing. In 2025-26 so far, 229 works have been completed, and 2,873 works are under execution, reflecting continued implementation of the scheme at the grassroots level.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

EDITORIAL

Govt's Proactive Stance Amid Geopolitical Crises

As the West Asia conflict disrupts global energy supply chains, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's high-level review of the energy situation demonstrates the government's unwavering commitment to protecting Indian consumers and industry. With 20% of the world's energy passing through the Strait of Hormuz, now largely blocked, the stakes could not be higher. Yet the message emerging from this meeting is one of preparedness, coordination, and resolve. The breadth of the meeting reflects the interconnected nature of this crisis. Defence, Home, External Affairs, Finance,

Petroleum, Power, and Commerce—all were at the table. This whole-of-government approach ensures that no sector operates in isolation. The presence of National Security Advisor Ajit Doval further underscores the strategic dimension of energy security, linking diplomatic engagement to supply chain resilience. Since the conflict erupted on February 28, the government has moved swiftly on multiple fronts. Diplomatic channels have been activated, with the Prime Minister engaging leaders across the Gulf, the region, and beyond. On the domestic front, the Petroleum and Explosives Safety

Organisation has been directed to fast-track City Gas Distribution applications within 10 days, accelerating the rollout of piped natural gas to reduce dependence on imported LPG. The calibrated restoration of commercial LPG supply—progressively increased from an initial cap to 50%—reflects a careful balancing act. Priority has been rightly given to essential institutions: hospitals, educational establishments, and community kitchens. The additional allocations for restaurants, hotels, food processing units, and migrant workers acknowledge that economic activity cannot be paralysed even as

conservation is practised. Domestic LPG supply remains stable, with no dry-outs reported and normal delivery patterns maintained. The shift toward PNG in urban areas represents a structural solution, reducing vulnerability to imported LPG shocks. The government's push to transition commercial consumers to PNG will build long-term resilience even as temporary measures address immediate shortages. India's response to this energy crisis mirrors its handling of the pandemic—calm, coordinated, and citizen-centric. The message to the public has been consistent: there is no need for panic;

the government is on top of the situation. This reassurance, backed by concrete action, has prevented the kind of hoarding and black-marketing that often accompanies such crises. Amid global uncertainties, the government's proactive stance offers a model for navigating geopolitical shocks. By combining diplomatic outreach, domestic supply management, structural reforms, and transparent communication, India is ensuring that its citizens do not bear the brunt of conflicts they did not create. This is governance that protects, and it deserves full recognition.

India Speeding Towards TB Elimination

Press Information Bureau

World Tuberculosis Day

World TB Day is commemorated on March 24 to raise public awareness about the devastating health, social and economic consequences of TB. It reminds us to step up efforts to end the global TB epidemic. The date marks the day in 1882 when Dr. Robert Koch announced that he had discovered the bacterium that causes TB, which opened the way towards diagnosing and curing this disease. India is on track towards tuberculosis elimination. New cases of tuberculosis emerging yearly in India reduced by 21% from 2015-2024, according to the World Health Organisation's Global Tuberculosis Report 2025. This marks one of the most significant declines in TB incidence globally, exceeding the pace of reduction recorded in other high-burden nations. Deaths due to TB reduced by 28% during the same period. The Government of India's targeted, multi-pronged approach towards detecting, screening and treating tuberculosis has contributed significantly to this progressive trend. Advanced technology expanded local health services, community engagement, and affordable treatment have put India on track to eliminate this prevalent and potentially fatal disease.

What is Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by a bacterium called Mycobacterium tuberculosis, usually impacting the lungs. TB can also affect other parts of the body, such as the brain, kidneys or the spine. A person infected by the bacterium may become sick, but some do not. Inactive TB cases or latent TB infections also exist. People with inactive TB may not spread the disease to others like those with an active TB infection—yet they may develop active TB anytime and become sick. Babies and children, and people with weaker immune systems are more likely to get sick when infected. Without proper treatment, active TB can be fatal.

TB Symptoms

Symptoms of active TB are usually specific to the site affected by the bacteria, though there are some symptoms common to all types of TB. People with active or symptomatic TB can spread the TB bacteria to others. When they cough, sneeze or speak, tiny droplets containing the bacteria can be released into the air and inhaled by people nearby—especially in spaces with poor ventilation. Although tuberculosis spreads through the air, it does not transmit through: Handshakes, Using public toilets, Sharing food and utensils, Everyday social interactions. Patients with lung TB generally stop being contagious after they have been on appropriate TB medicines for at least two weeks. People with TB in parts of the body other than the lungs usually cannot spread the disease.

Strategic Plan to End TB in India

The Government of India's goal to end TB by 2025, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 3, is one of the world's most ambitious health missions. The National Strategic Plan to End TB in India 2020-25, announced in June 2020, aims to eliminate tuberculosis through four pillars: Build, Prevent, Detect, and Treat. The plan focuses on early diagnosis, reducing transmission, treating patients with appropriate drugs and regimens, and creating patient support systems.

National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme

In 2020, the Government of India renamed the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program (RNTCP) to the National TB Elimination Program (NTEP). This reflects India's goal to eliminate tuberculosis before the global target of 2030. The NTEP builds on the four pillars of the NSP: Detect – Treat



– Prevent – Build. The key activities of the programme are: Early diagnosis of individuals with TB through high quality testing, and proactive community outreach to find missing cases in vulnerable population. Prompt treatment with quality assured drugs and treatment regimens, including drug resistant TB. Engaging with patients seeking care in the private sector. Patient-centric treatment support and nutrition interventions through direct benefit transfer and Ni-kshay Mitras initiative. Contact tracing and TB preventive treatment among household contacts, children, PLHIV and in high risk/vulnerable populations. **Airborne infection control measures.** Multi-sectoral response for addressing social determinants. The government runs various programmes under NTEP. **Pradhan Mantri TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan** The Pradhan Mantri-TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan (TB-Free India Campaign) was launched on September 9, 2022, as an additional key component of the NTEP. This initiative was launched to unite people from all walks of life in a 'Jan Andolan' (people's movement) and accelerate the nation's progress towards eliminating TB. Its objectives are: Provide Additional Support to TB Patients to improve treatment outcomes Augment Community Involvement Leverage Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) **Nikshay Poshan Yojana and the Ni-kshay Mitra Programme** TB patients must eat a high-protein diet to counteract the adverse side-effects of the treatment drugs. The Nikshay Poshan Yojana, launched in 2018, provides financial assistance of Rs. 1,000 per month to each notified tuberculosis patient. Since its launch in April 2018, Rs.4,454.68 crores have been disbursed directly into the bank accounts of 1.38 crore beneficiaries. TB treatment is long, lasting at least 6

months, and sometimes even longer. A Ni-kshay Mitra is a "TB Friend" or supporter who provides TB patients with help during this treatment period. A person, an NGO, corporations, religious and community groups, government officials and public figures can volunteer to be Ni-kshay Mitras. The TB Friend provides regular food baskets to help patients reduce out-of-pocket expenditures. They can also provide psychosocial support by checking in regularly, and vocational support to help patients rebuild their lives after recovery. As on November 12, 2025: 6,77,541 individuals and organisations have enrolled as Ni-kshay Mitras and distributed over 45 lakh food baskets to TB patients. Over 2 lakh My Bharat volunteers have come forward to serve as Ni-kshay Mitras. My Bharat is an initiative by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports which connects 15-29-year-old people to various government departments, private organisations and civil-society partnerships to address real-world challenges and issues. **100-Day TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan** The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched one of India's most intensive TB elimination drives called the 100-Day TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan on 7th December 2024 in 347 high-priority districts across 33 States/UTs. To achieve early diagnosis of TB, vulnerability mapping and systematic screening of high-risk population for TB were undertaken. The Jan Andolan also led to active involvement of over 30,000 elected representatives and 24-line ministries and support of Ni-kshay Mitras exhibiting a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach to TB elimination. The strategies of TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan have now been scaled up and expanded nationwide across all districts. Under TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan, since 7th December 2024, over 20 crore vulnerable population is screened for TB, more than 28 lakh TB patients are diagnosed including 9 lakh asymptomatic cases, which could have missed otherwise. As a result of all-round targeted and collaborative efforts, over 46,118 Gram Panchayats have been awarded TB-free certification for the year 2024. The treatment success rate under the TB

Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan has risen to 90%, surpassing the global average of 88%. **New Initiatives** New shorter, safer and highly effective BPaLM regimen having Bedaquiline, Pretomanid, Linezolid and Moxifloxacin has been introduced under the programme for drug-resistant TB patients, which will reduce the duration of treatment to 6 months. More than 15,000 MDR/RR-TB patients have been initiated on this regimen. TB Preventive treatment: Recognising that prevention is as critical as cure, TB Preventive Treatment (TPT) is provided to eligible beneficiaries to prevent the progression of TB infection to active disease. Through targeted and innovative approach, the programme has successfully protected household contacts and people living with HIV (PLHIV) over the years by administering TPT. The intervention has also been integrated with active and intensive case-finding campaigns and expansion to other vulnerable groups. **Ayushman Arogya Mandirs** Ayushman Arogya Mandirs are community health centres under the larger Ayushman Bharat scheme providing universal and affordable healthcare to all. There are 1,84,726 mandirs in India (as on March 24, 2026) – including sub-health centres, primary health centres, urban primary health centres, AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) centres and Urban Health and Wellness Centres. People showing TB symptoms can go to these centres to get diagnosed. **Technological Infrastructure** More than 9800 rapid molecular testing facilities and 107 culture and drug susceptibility testing laboratories exist – the world's largest network – for early TB detection and care. Other tools are: Over 500 AI-enabled hand-held chest X-ray units for community screening, with 1,500 being delivered to the states and union territories Ni-kshay digital platform facilitates direct benefit transfer of nutritional support **Finding TB Cases in Remote Kashmir**

Key Takeaways

- New cases of tuberculosis emerging yearly in India dipped by 21% from 2015-2024; mortality due to TB dropped by 28% during the same period.
- Under TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan, since 7th December 2024, over 20 crore vulnerable population is screened for TB, more than 28 lakh TB patients diagnosed.
- Over 46,118 Gram Panchayats have been awarded TB-free certification for the year 2024.
- New shorter, safer and highly effective BPaLM regimen having Bedaquiline, Pretomanid, Linezolid and Moxifloxacin has been introduced under the programme for drug-resistant TB patients.
- India's AI-driven TB programme uses AI to screen coughs, radiology AI to read chest X-rays, and predictive analytics to flag high-risk patients.

In the isolated Gurez valley of Bandipora District, Kashmir—located 2,400 metres high in the Himalayas and cut off during winter—the NTEP Kashmir team conducted an intensive TB screening campaign. Using mobile testing vans equipped with advanced diagnostic machines and portable X-ray equipment, the team screened 1,250 people over three days and identified over 250 potential TB cases for further testing. They also conducted awareness sessions with the Indian Army, local health workers, village representatives, and religious leaders. This effort reflects Jammu and Kashmir's commitment to achieving a "TB Free Kashmir" by 2025.

AI-Led Initiatives

The government is using AI systems for the detection, diagnosis, and treatment of tuberculosis in its push to integrate the technology into healthcare delivery to improve access and speed of care. These are:

Health Focus

- AI Solution / Initiative Process, Technology & "Treatment" Experience Clinical / Operational Impact **TB Screening** Cough Against TB (CATB) Acoustic AI: A 3-second recording of a patient's cough via smartphone app analyses frequency patterns for TB signatures.[1] 1.62+ Lakh screened; 12–16% extra yield in cases over conventional methods.[2]

TB Management

- Adverse Outcome Prediction Predictive Analytics: AI flags patients at high risk of treatment failure, once flagged treatment is initiated. Reported 27% decline in adverse outcomes after nationwide deployment.[3]

TB Triage

- DeepCXR (Chest X-ray) Radiology AI: Automated reading of digital X-rays to identify nodules/cavities for presumptive TB cases. Deployed in 8 State/UTs; available free of cost to the Govt to bypass specialist shortages.[4]

Conclusion

India's steady decline in TB incidence is a powerful reminder that sustained commitment, community participation, and strong public health initiatives truly make a difference. With continued vigilance, expanded access to care, and collective responsibility, the country is moving closer to a future where TB-free India is not just a goal, but an achievable reality.

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

Research must drive governance reform, strengthen institutions, address local challenges: Babila Rakwal

Inaugurates 2-day R&D workshop at IIT Jammu

KT News Desk

JAMMU, MARCH 24:

Emphasising a decisive shift towards outcome-driven research and transparent scientific governance, Commissioner Secretary, Science and Technology Department, Babila Rakwal, on Tuesday said that science in Jammu and Kashmir is being consciously repositioned as a tool of public service delivery rather than remaining confined to academic institutions.

The Commissioner Secretary, as per an official statement, was speaking at the inauguration of a two day Workshop-cum-Interaction Programme on Research and Development (R&D) projects at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Jammu. The initiative is an exercise that brings together nearly 187 Principal Investigators from across the universities, technical institutions and research bodies of the Union Territory for a structured review of public funded research.

The programme marks one of the most extensive institutional efforts undertaken by the Department to evaluate, streamline and reorient its research support framework, covering a wide spectrum of disciplines. These included agriculture, biotechnology, health sciences, engineering, renewable energy, environmental sciences, climate change and emerging digital technologies.

The inaugural session was followed by a structured sequence, beginning with a documentary showcasing the Department's interventions in research promotion, scientific outreach,



innovation and clean energy across urban, rural and remote regions of Jammu and Kashmir. The session also included release of the Mid-Term Appraisal Report of R&D Projects, launch of online R&D Management portal and distribution of certificates among the beneficiaries under the Science Talent Promotion Scholarship Programme.

Releasing the Mid-Term Appraisal Report, Babila Rakwal said that public funded research must be subject to periodic and rigorous evaluation to ensure that it remains aligned with its objectives and delivers tangible outcomes. She noted that the Department is moving towards a system where monitoring is not treated as a procedural requirement but as an integral component of research governance, ensuring accountability, quality and relevance.

Highlighting the launch of the end-to-end online R&D Project Management Portal, the Commissioner Secretary described it as a major administrative reform that will transform the way research proposals are handled. The portal enables digital submission, structured evaluation, real-time tracking and continuous monitoring of projects, thereby reducing delays, minimising manual intervention

and ensuring greater transparency in decision-making.

In her address, Babila Rakwal outlined a comprehensive vision for the future of science and technology in Jammu and Kashmir, stating that research must directly contribute towards improving the governance, strengthening public institutions and addressing the local challenges. She observed that science is increasingly becoming embedded in everyday life, whether through reliable energy access, improved agricultural practices, efficient public infrastructure or enhanced service delivery.

The Commissioner Secretary stressed that the Department's approach is guided by the principle that research must be relevant, collaborative and outcome-oriented. "The value of research lies not in the number of projects sanctioned but in the impact they create on the ground," she said, calling upon the researchers to focus on practical applications, interdisciplinary collaboration and policy relevance.

Underscoring the importance of skill development, the Commissioner Secretary said that building a capable and future ready talent base is essential for sustaining innovation. She emphasised that the Department

is committed towards nurturing scientific aptitude at multiple levels, from school education to advanced research and to linking knowledge with employability, entrepreneurship and community engagement.

The Commissioner Secretary also reiterated the Department's commitment to sustainable and environmental responsibility. She noted that scientific interventions must contribute to cleaner energy systems, efficient resource utilisation and ecological balance, particularly in a region with fragile ecosystems and diverse geographical challenges.

Referring to the Department's renewable energy initiatives, she said that large-scale solarisation of Government buildings, promotion of solar agricultural pumps, expansion of solar lighting in rural areas and development of Small Hydro Power projects are not only contributing to energy security but also reducing expenditure and supporting environmental conservation.

On the research and innovation front, she highlighted that institutional support is being strengthened through funding of R&D projects, development of scientific infrastructure and expansion of outreach activities. Facilities such as Regional Science Centres, Innovation

and Dissemination Centres and Biotechnology Parks are being developed as platforms to support innovation, incubation and dissemination of knowledge.

Importantly, she emphasised the need for transparency and a structured roadmap in the selection and monitoring of research projects. She stated that objective criteria, peer review mechanisms and alignment with priority sectors will guide project approvals, ensuring that public funds are utilised efficiently and yield measurable outcomes. She added that this approach will strengthen confidence among researchers and institutions while enhancing the credibility of the system.

Describing the workshop as both an academic and administrative milestone, the Commissioner Secretary said that it provides a unique platform for direct interaction between researchers, experts and policymakers. Unlike conventional file-based reviews, the programme enables investigators to present their work, engage with expert panels and receive constructive feedback, thereby improving the quality of evaluation and strengthening accountability.

The workshop draws upon a large and diverse portfolio of Department-supported research projects, many of which address practical challenges in areas such as agriculture, health, environment, energy, water management, digital systems and climate resilience. These projects, officials said, are increasingly focused on generating solutions that can be translated into field-level applications and policy interventions.

The inaugural session concluded with a vote of thanks after the felicitation of experts associated with third-party evaluation of R&D projects and distribution of scholarship certificates.

DC Srinagar inspects Zewan transit housing, Panthachowk Complex works

Emphasises timely completion of projects with quality & safety standards



KT News Desk

SRINAGAR MARCH 24: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo Tuesday undertook a visit to Zewan area of District to oversee the progress of ongoing works being executed on construction of Migrant Transit Accommodation for PM Package employees at Zewan, Srinagar.

He also inspected construction works on the new Revenue Complex for housing Tehsil Office Panthachowk.

During the visit, the DC, as per an official statement, was accompanied by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Imtiaz Ul Aziz, Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Superintending Engineer R&B, Tatheer Manzoor, SE PDD, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Umar Gulzar, SDPO Panthachowk, Executive Engineer R&B, Executive Engineer PDD, Executive Engineer PHE, Tehsildar Panthachowk, Chief Sanitation Officer and other concerned Officers.

While reviewing the progress of works at Migrant Transit Accommodation Zewan, the Deputy Commissioner took a round of the various under construction Blocks and completed Blocks of the project. He was apprised that the work on the project for construction of 39 accommodation blocks comprising 936 flats is going on in full swing and as on date 26 Blocks comprising 624 flats stands ready.

He was further informed

that out of the remaining 13 accommodation Blocks 6 blocks are also ready while remaining 7 accommodation blocks will be completed by April, 2026.

The Deputy Commissioner was further apprised that the boundary wall and approach road for the project are nearing completion, while macadamization works are set to commence in the first week of April.

The DC was informed that the process of installation of electricity transformers (DTs) has been completed and power related setup will be in place within a week. While water supply facilities have already been made functional at the transit accommodation facility.

On the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner emphasized timely completion of the prestigious project which is being monitored at the higher level. He directed the concerned Officers and executing agencies to expedite the pace of internal finishing and allied works while ensuring strict adherence to quality and safety standards. He was informed that the installation of lifts has begun in the blocks of Transit Accommodation.

The DC instructed that installation of lifts in accommodation blocks be completed swiftly in a time bound manner. The DC directed concerned Departments and executing agencies to work in a coordinated approach to expedite the accommodation project in committed timelines.

TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan DC Baramulla calls for intensified awareness, community participation



KT News Desk

BARAMULLA, MARCH 24: Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, S.F. Hamid, along with the Chief Medical Officer and other senior officers on Tuesday virtually participated from Sherwani Hall, Baramulla, in the launch of the "TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan-100 Days Campaign 2.0".

The campaign, as per an official statement, launched on the occasion of the TB Day under the theme "Yes We Can End TB", aims to intensify efforts across the country towards elimination of tuberculosis through enhanced awareness, early detection, and timely treatment.

On the occasion, the DC directed the CMO to organize intensive awareness camps

across the district to ensure that people are well-informed about the causes, symptoms, prevention, and treatment of tuberculosis.

He emphasized the need for mass awareness to eliminate stigma and promote early testing and strict adherence to treatment protocols.

The DC further instructed all Block Medical Officers (BMOs) to focus on vulnerable and high-risk sections of society during the period for the effectiveness of the campaign.

Highlighting the importance of collective responsibility, the DC stated that eradication of tuberculosis is not only the duty of the administration and urged people to come forward, get tested, and support efforts to make the district TB-free.

DC Ganderbal chairs monthly NCORD meeting

KT News Desk

GANDERBAL, MARCH 24: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore Tuesday chaired the monthly District Level NCORD meeting to review the progress of ongoing anti-drug initiatives and measures aimed at curbing drug trafficking and substance abuse in the district.

At the outset, the DC, as per an official statement, assessed the status of enforcement and preventive measures and emphasized strengthening inter-departmental coordination to effectively tackle the drug menace. The meeting also reviewed progress under the Nasha Mukht Bharat campaign and sought action taken reports from concerned departments.

Reviewing enforcement efforts, it was informed that drug testing has been intensified through test kits across the district. The DC directed for further strengthening tracing mechanisms to identify supply chains in the district.

Drug Control Department was instructed to ensure close monitoring of chemist shops and conduct routine inspections



to prevent misuse and illegal sale of substances.

The DC further directed for expediting suspension of driving licenses of all those involved in drug-related offences.

On awareness and prevention, the DC instructed the Education Department to conduct regular awareness programmes in schools and colleges.

Reviewing health interventions, the Health Department was directed to enhance counselling and rehabilitation services. The DC also reviewed the status of training of counsellors to ensure effective de-addiction support.

The Assistant Commissioner Development was directed to

get wall paintings done at strategic locations across the district to raise awareness against drug abuse and promote a strong anti-drug message among the public.

Among others, the meeting was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner, Additional Superintendent of Police, Sub-Divisional Magistrate Kangan, Assistant Commissioner Development, Deputy Director Prosecution, Chief Medical Officer, Chief Education Officer, Chief Agriculture Officer, Assistant Regional Transport Officer, Assistant Director Drugs Control department and other officers and officials from concerned departments.

DC Budgam launches TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyan Phase-II

283 Panchayats declared TB-Free in district

KT News Desk

BUDGAM, MARCH 24: On the occasion of World TB Day 2026, a grand function was organized at Sheikh-ul-Alam Hall, DC Office Budgam by the District Administration Budgam in collaboration with District Tuberculosis Centre (DTC) Budgam, marking a significant step towards the elimination of tuberculosis in the district.

The event, as per an official statement, also witnessed the formal launch of the TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyan Phase-II (100 Days



Campaign) under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan.

The programme commenced with the official launch of the campaign by the DC Budgam, aimed at intensifying efforts for early detection, effective treatment, and

community awareness to eradicate tuberculosis.

On the occasion, an awareness rally was flagged off by the DC from the DC Office Budgam to the Old Bus Adda Budgam.

Students, youth and locals participated enthusiastically, spreading awareness messages

on TB prevention, timely diagnosis, and adherence to treatment among the general public.

The event witnessed the participation of senior health officials and district officers, including the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Budgam, District Tuberculosis Officer (DTO), all Block Medical Officers (BMOs), Deputy CMO, District Immunization Officer (DIO), District Health Officer (DHO), Assistant Commissioner Panchayat, members of Panchayati Raj Institutions, and other concerned staff.

Addressing the gathering, the DC Budgam emphasised the importance of sustained community engagement, inter-departmental coordination, and grassroots-level participation in achieving the goal of a TB-free district.

MLA Pulwama inaugurates one-day Job fair

KT News Desk

PULWAMA, MARCH 24: District Administration Pulwama, in collaboration with the District Employment and Counselling Centre Pulwama, Tuesday organised a one-day job fair at Government Degree College (Boys) Pulwama, aimed at promoting employment opportunities, entrepreneurship, and self-employment among the youth of the district.

The programme, as per an official statement, was attended by the Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Pulwama, Waheed Ur Rehman Para. The job fair witnessed an enthusiastic response from the youth, with more than a hundred participants shortlisted by around



16 companies that participated in the event.

Addressing the gathering, the MLA encouraged the youth to explore opportunities in the self-employment sector and strive to become job providers. He urged them to focus on skill development to bridge the gap between industry requirements and the available workforce.

On the occasion, the MLA also inspected stalls set up by various departments, including

Agriculture, Horticulture, Sheep Husbandry, Handicrafts, Handloom, Fisheries, NRLM, and Industries, showcasing different self-employment schemes.

These stalls provided detailed information on scheme benefits, financial assistance, and application procedures to facilitate and encourage aspiring entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the MLA distributed sanction letters among beneficiaries under Mission YUVA.

Development momentum picks up in Nowshera as Dy CM inaugurates projects

KT News Service

Rajouri, Mar 24: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary on Tuesday inaugurated a series of developmental projects in Nowshera, reaffirming the Government's commitment towards strengthening the infrastructure and ensuring holistic development of the region.

Upon his arrival in Nowshera, Deputy Chief Minister paid obeisance at Gari Mata Mandir and sought blessings for peace and prosperity of the Union Territory.

He, later, inaugurated a Mega Job Fair at Dak Bungalow Nowshera, providing a significant platform for local youth to explore employment opportunities and engage with potential employers.

During his visit, the Deputy Chief Minister paid obeisance at Thakurdawara Mandir and prayed for peace, prosperity and well-being of the people.

Further strengthening infrastructure, the Deputy Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for a Receiving Station at



Hastanagurah, Gagrote. This was followed by a Public Outreach Programme where he listened to the grievances and demands of the local residents and assured their timely redressal.

Continuing the developmental push, he inaugurated the road from Gagrote to Shamshan Ghat, which is expected to significantly improve connectivity and facilitate ease of movement for the local population.

was also held near Ram Mandir, where the people projected various issues pertaining to civic amenities and development.

Later, Surinder Choudhary laid the foundation stone for a 3.15 MVA, 33/11 KV Receiving Station at Kuldabi, aimed at strengthening the power infrastructure and ensuring reliable electricity supply to the area. A Public Outreach Programme was also conducted at Behanigala, Kuldabi, where the Deputy Chief Minister reiterated the Government's commitment towards inclusive development and responsive governance.

The Deputy Chief Minister also laid the foundation stone for upgradation of road from Main Road Sehla (Tutani Galla) to Guard Mohalla, Ward No. 4 Sehla, to be executed by PWD (R&B) at an estimated cost of Rs 228.00 lakh.

Surinder Choudhary emphasized that such initiatives reflect the Government's resolve to boost employment opportunities, improve basic infrastructure and maintain close engagement with the public to address their concerns effectively.

DC Sgr kicks off 'TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan 2.0' with 100-day special campaign

Flags off TB Testing Van from DC Office for specialised early detection

KT News Service

Srinagar, Mar 24: As a part of World Tuberculosis (TB) Day 2026 under the National TB Elimination Programme, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo on Tuesday kicked off the TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan 2.0 programme with the 100-day intensified campaign here at DC Office Complex.

The Deputy Commissioner also flagged off TB testing Van which would tour different parts of the District during the next 100 days to create public awareness regarding the campaign. The Van, equipped with a pre-installed CBNAAT facility, is capable of providing results within two hours. The van proceeded directly to Urban Primary Health Centre (UPHC) Batamalo area of the District for conducting screening, diagnosis and awareness generation.

On the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner, interacted with the senior Health functionaries



and was apprised about the ongoing campaign preparations and micro-plan. He lauded the dedicated efforts of the health department and appreciated their contributions towards TB control and elimination in the district.

Emphasizing the significance of the initiative, the Deputy Commissioner stated that the primary objective of the 100-day campaign is to accelerate efforts towards tuberculosis elimination by ensuring outreach to every section

of society, focused testing and screening, increasing presumptive testing, enhancing awareness about the disease, and guaranteeing access to free and quality TB care services.

The DC called upon all stakeholders to work in close coordination to ensure the success of the campaign. He further highlighted that Tuberculosis continues to remain a public health concern, particularly affecting vulnerable and high-risk populations.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

West Asia conflict

In recent days, ships carrying crude oil and LPG have arrived from various countries, he said, adding that such efforts will continue.

The Prime Minister said India has expanded its energy sourcing from 27 countries earlier to 41 countries now, covering crude oil, LNG and LPG. Strategic petroleum reserves exceeding 53 lakh metric tonnes have been developed, with work underway to increase this to over 65 lakh metric tonnes. Oil companies are maintaining adequate stocks of petrol and diesel, he said.

He said the government is also focusing on increasing the use of piped natural gas alongside LPG and boosting domestic production. Steps are being taken to reduce dependence on foreign-flagged vessels, noting that over 90 per cent of India's oil is transported on such ships. A mission worth about Rs 70,000 crore has been launched to build ships domestically and strengthen shipbuilding and maintenance capacity.

PM Modi said India is working to build self-reliance across sectors, including defence manufacturing, life-saving medicines, and critical minerals.

He said an Inter-Ministerial Group is reviewing the evolving situation regularly, while seven empowered groups have been set up to deal with supply chains, fuel, fertilisers, gas, and inflation, similar to arrangements made during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On agriculture, he said adequate preparations have been made to ensure fertiliser availability during the sowing season and that farmers will not bear the burden of the crisis. He said the government remains committed to supporting farmers in addressing challenges arising from global disruptions.

The Prime Minister called on state governments to ensure uninterrupted supply of essential commodities and timely distribution under welfare schemes such as the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana. He also asked states to remain vigilant against hoarding and black marketing and to take proactive measures to support migrant workers and vulnerable sections.

He said the situation requires coordinated action between the Centre and states, recalling cooperation during the COVID-19 period. The evolving crisis, he said, demands preparedness, restraint, and a unified approach.

Making J&K

intensified, targeted and technology-driven interventions.

In the 100-day campaign, AI-enabled portable X-ray tools will bring testing directly to tribal hamlets, migrant camps, urban slums, and high-risk spots. Mobile units—Ni-Kshay vans—will deliver on-the-go care. Ayushman health camps will offer chest X-rays, NAAT tests, blood sugar, haemoglobin, blood pressure, and BMI checks.

The Lieutenant Governor urged all stakeholders to position the UT of Jammu Kashmir, not just as a participant, but as a leader in this national drive.

"It is our resolve to transform this campaign into people's movement in Jammu Kashmir. This year's campaign must intensify, more focused, deeply rooted in communities across the Union Territory," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor observed that public health is not just the Health Department's duty but it is also our shared responsibility. "Our pledge for a 'TB-Free Jammu Kashmir' rests on this conviction. Health teams and people from the community in every district should work tirelessly with one goal—reach the last person, detect the last case, stand firmly by every patient until full recovery, and provide every support they need," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasised on transforming the next 100-days campaign as a mass movement in every vulnerable district where a health worker trekking rugged

mountain paths to a remote home becomes our campaign's greatest champion, where a Ni-Kshay Mitra delivering nutrition aid transforms a patient's life. "We should build a 100 Days movement where every citizen feels ownership and contributes wholeheartedly," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor directed the health department and district administration to rope in self-help groups, students, schools, industries, NGOs, and public enterprises to amplify 100-days campaign. He also directed for a comprehensive review of testing equipment and medicine availability, emphasizing the need for a dedicated portal where citizens can report the related grievances.

"Today, we pledge that no man, woman, or child in Jammu Kashmir will lose their future to TB. Every breath is precious; every life is unique. No case will go unnoticed and no patient will be unsupported," the Lieutenant Governor said.

During the UT level programme, the Lieutenant Governor flagged off the Ni-Kshay vaahan and distributed Poshan kits. District Doda and District Srinagar received the awards for TB Mukht Panchayats.

Ni-Kshay Pledge was administered and Ni-Kshay Mitras were also felicitated on the occasion.

Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Dr Mandeep K Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor; M. Raju, Commissioner Secretary, Health and Medical Education; Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; Akriti Sagar, Mission Director, National Health Mission, J&K; Dr Rakesh Minhas, Deputy Commissioner Jammu; senior officials, medical professional, members of social organisations and youth in large number attended the launch ceremony. (KNO)

NIA court awards

registered a suo moto case (RC-17/2018/NIA/DLI) in April 2018," the statement said, adding,

"The accused, all hailing from Kashmir, were earlier, in January 2026, convicted by the trial court at Karkardooma, Delhi, under Sections 18, 38 and 39 of the UA(P) Act and Sections 153A, 153B, 120B, 121A and 505 IPC. The Court had found the three accused guilty of actively operating DeM to promote the separation of Jammu & Kashmir from the Union of India."

"As per the judgement pronounced today, Aasiya had been sentenced concurrently under various sections of IPC and UA(P) Act to the maximum sentence of Life Imprisonment and a total fine of Rs. 8 lakh. She was married to Ashiq Hussain Faktto, a terrorist of the proscribed Hizbul Mujahideen organisation, who is serving life imprisonment in connection with the killing of H.N. Wanchoo, a prominent human rights activist. She is additionally named in 32 other FIRs registered at various police stations in Jammu & Kashmir," the NIA spokesman said, adding, "Nahida Nasreen, General Secretary of DeM, and Sofi Fehmeeda, the outfit's Press Secretary, have each been convicted and sentenced concurrently under different provisions of IPC and UA(P) Act, with a maximum of 30 years of Simple Imprisonment and a total fine of Rs. 7 lakh each. While Sofi Fehmeeda has eight other cases registered against her, Nahida Nasreen has four."

"All three had been chargesheeted by NIA in November 2018 on the basis of extensive examination of various incriminating materials, including social media chats, videos and media interviews of the accused. The investigation had clearly established the accused's active role in supporting and furthering DeM's terrorist and secessionist activities," the spokesman said, adding, "NIA's investigation had further revealed that the accused had used various social media and public platforms to spread hate, and incite violence and jihad, with the aim of seceding J&K from India, thereby threatening the integrity, security, and sovereignty of the nation." (KNO)

Govt mulling

universities is the need of the hour and that demands have been received for their creation.

Unlike many states where private universities have become a major part of the higher education system, Jammu & Kashmir continues to rely on government-run institutions.

Every year, thousands of students from J&K go to other states and Union Territories to pursue higher education due to the absence of private universities in the region. (KNO)

Trump dials

shipping lane between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, that handles roughly 20 per cent of global oil and LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas).

West Asia has been a major source of India's energy procurement.

US envoy to India Sergio Gor also said that PM Modi and President Trump deliberated on the importance of keeping the key shipping lane open.

"They discussed the ongoing situation in the Middle East, including the importance of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open," Gor said on social media.

Trump said on Monday that he has extended the deadline for Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, and that he will hold off strikes against Iranian energy sites for five days.

The US president, without sharing any details, also said that there have been "productive conversations" between the US and Iran for "complete and total resolution" to the conflict in West Asia.

In the last few days, PM Modi has held phone conversations with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and the leadership of the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states - Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). He also spoke to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

In his phone call with Pezeshkian on Saturday, Prime Minister Modi condemned attacks on critical infrastructure in West Asia and called for keeping the critical shipping lanes "open and secure".

"Condemned attacks on critical infrastructure in the region, which threaten regional stability and disrupt global supply chains. Reiterated the importance of safeguarding freedom of navigation and ensuring that shipping lanes remain open and secure," the prime minister had said after his conversation with the Iranian leader.

Significantly, the Iranian president proposed setting up a regional security framework comprising West Asian countries to bring peace and stability in the region "without foreign interference," according to an Iranian readout of the talks.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar also held phone conversations with several of his counterparts from GCC countries. Jaishankar met Iranian ambassador Mohammad Fathali on Tuesday.

Following his meeting with the Iranian envoy, Jaishankar said in a social media post that they discussed the conflict in West Asia but didn't share details.

"Appreciate the support provided to Indians in Iran in these challenging times," he said.

The phone call between Modi and Trump has to be seen in the context of India's outreach, which has focused on efforts aimed at ending the hostilities as soon as possible and ensuring the unimpeded flow of energy through the Strait of Hormuz, people familiar with the matter said while explaining the ramifications for the country's food, fuel and fertiliser security if the blockade of the shipping lane continues.

India wants an end to the conflict as soon as possible, they said, adding the consequences of the hostilities are going to be significant as it could soon impact food security in Africa as well as fertiliser supplies.

There could be another round of fuel and food insecurity as was witnessed after the start of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2022, the people said.

At the same time, the Indian side has ruled out any possibility of getting involved in the situation in West Asia, they said.

The Indian Navy is focused on ensuring the security of Indian-flagged merchant vessels in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, they said.

Art 370 kept

legislative exercise that authorises government expenditure in line with the Union Budget.

"This bill enables the government to spend funds across departments and sectors where allocations have been made. It reflects governance priorities and ensures implementation on the ground," he said.

Sharma said sustained reforms and policy continuity have placed India on a strong economic footing despite global uncertainties.

He said the nominal GDP has reached Rs 357.14 lakh crore, while foreign exchange reserves stand at 686 billion USD and the country continues to grow at around 7 per cent annually.

He added that these indicators demonstrate resilience and position India strongly on the path towards becoming a developed nation.

Referring to fiscal discipline, Sharma said the debt-to-GDP ratio for 2026-27 is estimated at 55.6 per cent.

"The government aims to bring it down to 50 per cent by 2031 and the fiscal deficit has been reduced to 4.3 per cent, improving upon earlier projections," he said.

"This reflects a stable, long-term economic framework and responsible fiscal management," he added.

Sharma stressed the government's long-term goal of transforming India into a developed country by 2047, marking 100 years of independence.

"This is not just the vision of the Prime Minister but of every Indian. Development must be inclusive and capable of withstanding global shocks," he said, stressing decentralisation and self-reliance through initiatives like "Vocal for Local."

Highlighting social sector gains, he claimed that around 25 crore people have been lifted out of poverty due to government policies.

He also contrasted the present system with earlier welfare leakages.

"Today, through Direct Benefit Transfer, the entire amount reaches the intended beneficiary Rs 100 sent is Rs 100 received," he said, adding that Rs 43.45 lakh crore has been transferred directly so far.

He also pointed to financial inclusion through widespread opening of Jan Dhan accounts, particularly benefiting women and rural households.

Listing flagship programmes, Sharma said under Jal Jeevan Mission, over 13 crore households have been provided tap water connections. Under Swachh Bharat Mission, more than 12 crore toilets have been constructed, improving dignity and sanitation. Under PM Awas Yojana, around 4 crore houses have been built for the poor.

Recalling his experience in Jammu and Kashmir, he said water scarcity in hilly areas was a major issue that is now being addressed through such schemes.

Sharma said the government has transferred Rs 14.27 lakh crore to the agriculture sector to strengthen farmers' income and ensure rural stability.

He added that fertiliser stocks have been increased by 26 per cent to 163 lakh metric tonnes, ensuring food security and insulating the country from global supply disruptions.

He stressed that strengthening MSMEs is key to employment generation and economic expansion.

On national security, Sharma said Rs 26,236 crore has been allocated for defence requirements and Rs 6,144 crore for the Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS).

He highlighted the government's focus on "Make in India" in defence manufacturing to reduce import dependence and strengthen strategic autonomy.

Referring to financial relations with states, Sharma said 41 per cent vertical devolution has been maintained as per Finance Commission recommendations.

"This ensures that states have adequate resources for development and reflects cooperative federalism," he said. (KNO)

Chief Secy reiterates

He also instructed the Commissioner Secretary, Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, to conduct regular reviews with district administrations, maintain close coordination, and keep the higher authorities informed. He emphasized the need for officers to remain

accessible to the public and ensure prompt redressal of grievances.

On infrastructure development, the Chief Secretary directed the Divisional Commissioner and concerned Deputy Commissioners to resolve land acquisition and other bottlenecks to facilitate the early operationalisation of the under-construction gas pipeline. He also asked Urban Local Bodies to prioritise domestic connections once the trunk pipeline becomes operational in the districts of Kathua, Samba, Jammu, and Udhampur.

A detailed presentation by Commissioner Secretary, FCS&CA, Saurabh Bhaghat, highlighted that the overall stock position across the Union Territory remains stable. Petrol stocks are sufficient for approximately 9-10 days, diesel for 16-17 days, and LPG for around 12-13 days, including transit stock, ensuring uninterrupted availability.

On LPG supply, it was informed that 100 per cent domestic LPG demand is being met across J&K, with seamless distribution and no major complaints reported. Supply coverage stands at about 24 days in urban areas and 35 days in rural areas, with OTP-based delivery systems ensuring transparency.

The Chief Secretary was also informed that a robust monitoring mechanism has been put in place, including real-time tracking and daily reporting of stock positions. District administrations have been directed to closely monitor supply and distribution, supported by district-level committees and task forces to ensure fair and transparent allocation.

Highlighting enforcement efforts, it was reported that 1,418 inspections and raids were conducted across districts between March 17 and 23, resulting in action against violators and seizure of commodities in several cases. Additionally, over 1,000 public grievances were addressed promptly, reflecting an efficient grievance redressal mechanism.

As part of alternate fuel arrangements, all Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) families are being provided 2 litres of kerosene oil per month through Aadhaar-seeded ration cards under the RCMS system.

The meeting also noted significant progress in streamlining LPG distribution through large-scale e-KYC verification, with nearly 20 lakh consumers already verified. The process is continuing at a rapid pace to enhance transparency and prevent misuse.

It was further informed that under the commercial category, the Government of India has enhanced allocation from 20 percent to 50 percent of assessed supply, including a general increase and a special incentive component.

Regarding the pipeline project, it was apprised that the Union Territory is compliant with all incentive conditions. The pipeline is currently being laid in Kathua, Samba, and Jammu districts and is expected to become operational within the next two to three months. (KNO)

Ovarian cancer

are diagnosed in advanced stages, where survival rates are much lower.

They added that ovarian cancer constitutes a notable proportion of female cancers in Kashmir and the majority of patients are from rural areas while most cases present late (Stage III & IV).

They attributed this to lack of awareness, limited screening, and delayed referrals.

They said that there is no guaranteed way to prevent ovarian cancer, however doctors recommend: regular gynaecological check-ups, awareness of family history, maintaining healthy weight and timely evaluation of persistent symptoms

"Awareness is the strongest weapon. Women must not ignore persistent bloating or pelvic discomfort," they said.

Doctors said that treatment depends on the stage and type of cancer and usually includes surgery - to remove tumor and affected organs, chemotherapy - standard treatment after surgery, targeted therapy - newer drugs for specific cancer types and advanced treatments - like HIPEC and PARP inhibitors (in specialized centers)

They said that early-stage detection can push survival rates above 80%, but late-stage cases have significantly poorer outcomes. (KNO)

RSS chief raises concern over illegal immigration, reiterates push for three-child policy

PTI

Mathura (UP), Mar 24: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Tuesday raised concerns over illegal immigration in India, asking people to keep a close watch to identify intruders and report them to authorities.

He also reiterated his push for a three-child policy, stressing the need for higher birth rates, while also discouraging "forced" religious conversions.

Speaking after inaugurating an ashram here, Bhagwat highlighted the issue of illegal immigration and said, "People need to keep a closer watch to identify foreigners and ensure that they do not receive employment here."

He, however, said that there should be no discrimination against Indian citizens.

Bhagwat's remarks on intruders come at a time when assembly elections are due in multiple states -- including Assam and West Bengal, where the issue of illegal immigrants has garnered a lot of traction of late. The BJP has also been talking about it frequently.

On family health and population, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief said doctors recommend three children for sound family health, as childhood interactions help individuals develop social skills and the ability to adjust within a group.

He said population studies warn that a fertility rate below three



poses long-term risks.

"Countries with low birth rates have actively sought to increase their population above three," he said. Bhagwat urged reconsideration of India's population policy, stressing that while legal measures can be applied, public understanding is crucial first.

A humanitarian approach requires families to aim for three children rather than two, he said, asserting that this is essential for the welfare of society.

Bhagwat also called for an end to forced religious conversions.

"The government may legislate, but society must stop this on its own. Many who converted to other religions are descendants of Hindus and may wish to return. Those willing should be welcomed back," he said.

The RSS chief also cited the "aggressive" nature of countries

like the US and China, and hailed India as more accommodating of others' viewpoints.

"The US may come around and say that our economic model is the best, and everyone should follow it. China may say our model is best suited for everyone. However, India's approach is not about imposing on others; it believes everyone's viewpoint is correct. It is about living according to dharma, truth and cultural pride. The world may be aggressive, but our model emphasises ethical conduct, which the global community can learn from," he said.

Bhagwat said he had come to inaugurate the ashram out of "affection", as ashrams play a crucial role in shaping life perspective, promoting pride in one's religion and culture while discouraging aggression.

They are necessary in today's

times, he said, pointing out that the term "ashram" is unique to Indian culture, without an equivalent translation in any other language.

"An ashram is first a school where life knowledge is taught. Those who stay disciplined and study here can serve society effectively for decades while nurturing their own character," he said.

Bhagwat highlighted that the ultimate human pursuit is moksha, or liberation. He explained the four types of human endeavours, with the fourth being dharma, which is imparted through ashram education and holds immense importance.

He also compared traditional Indian education with global systems, noting that even Finland's acclaimed education model mirrors the Gurukul-ashram approach.

"Here, real knowledge is gained, not just the ability to fill one's stomach," he said, adding that the ashram system instils perseverance and makes life more meaningful through education.

He asserted that India's ancient cultural values and Sanatan Dharma have relevance in today's "turbulent world", and ashrams will remain central in preparing society to uphold these values.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak and several seers were among those present at the event.

Centre's plans to implement reservation law a 'welcome step': Women MPs

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 24: Women MPs on Tuesday welcomed the Centre's plans to bring legislations to implement the women's reservation law during the ongoing Budget session of Parliament, saying the move will further strengthen women's participation in governance.

JD(U) MP Lovely Anand termed it a "welcome step" and said greater participation of women in politics will accelerate the country's progress.

"This is a very welcome and commendable step. Only when women come forward, will the country progress. Men and women are like the two wheels of a vehicle. Both the prime minister and the Bihar chief minister have worked towards empowering women," she told reporters inside Parliament House complex.

"Today, women are working in every field -- from space to aviation to defence. When women enter mainstream politics in large numbers, the country will progress even faster. Both of them have done justice to half the population, and for this I thank them," she said.

BJP MP Kamaljeet Sehrawat said the passage of the women's reservation law fulfilled a long-standing promise made to "half the population" of the country by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Many people in this country have spoken about women, but the effort to bring the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam and the success in doing so goes to the prime minister," Sehrawat said. "Bringing the reservation bill is a promise made by the prime minister to half the



population of the country, and that half of the population trusts him.

"The steps taken over the past 11 years have been aimed at empowering this half of the population socially and economically. This is the prime minister's effort, and I thank him for it," she said, adding that the move will boost women's role in policymaking.

Samajwadi Party MP Iqra Hasan also welcomed the initiative but said clarity is needed on how the reservation will be implemented.

The government has already taken credit for the women's reservation bill earlier. Now, it is important to see how they bring arrangements for its implementation, Hasan said.

"It is very important that there is reservation for women in our country, but how it will be implemented, what the criteria for reservation will be -- all this needs to be seen, she said. "However, we are happy with this initiative of the government," the SP MP told reporters.

The government is "willing" to bring two bills in the ongoing Budget session of

Parliament to ensure that the women's reservation law is implemented before the completion of the delimitation exercise for Lok Sabha and assembly constituencies, sources said on Monday.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah held separate meetings with NDA and non-Congress opposition parties' floor leaders to arrive at a consensus. If the consensus is reached, the two bills could be brought as early as this week, the sources said.

The provision to provide 33 per cent reservation to women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies was brought by amending the Constitution, but it will come into effect after the completion of the delimitation exercise.

According to the broad contours available, the number of Lok Sabha seats would be increased from the present 543 to 816, with 273 seats reserved for women.

In September 2023, President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent to the Nari Shakti Vandan Bill. The law is officially known as the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act.

Midcap, smallcap MFs rally as experts advise to remain cautious amid global tensions

IASNS

New Delhi, March 24: When it comes to returns, mid-cap and small-cap mutual funds have remained among the preferred choices for investors. Both categories have witnessed substantial growth over the past five years, with assets under management (AUM) rising sharply on the back of strong investor participation and sustained inflows, a report said on Tuesday.

A report by ICRA Analytics pointed out data from Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI), which showed that mid-cap funds posted a five-year CAGR of 32.41 per cent, with AUM increasing to Rs 4.62 lakh crore in February 2026 from Rs 1.13 lakh crore in February 2021. Small-cap



funds outpaced this growth, registering a CAGR of 39.93 per cent, with AUM climbing to Rs 3.64 lakh crore from Rs 67,764 crore during the same period. The segment has also seen a turnaround in investor flows. Mid-cap funds recorded net inflows of Rs 4,003 crore in February 2026, compared to a marginal outflow of Rs 99 crore in February 2021. Similarly, small-cap funds saw inflows of Rs 3,881 crore, reversing

outflows of Rs 452 crore five years ago.

The report cautioned that near-term performance may remain volatile amid global uncertainties and foreign fund outflows from Indian equity markets.

"Ongoing geopolitical tensions are also expected to weigh on investor sentiment, prompting a more cautious approach towards mid- and small-cap investments," according to the rating agency.

UCC Bill tabled in Gujarat assembly

Proposes common framework for marriage, succession, live-in ties

PTI

Gandhinagar, Mar 24: The Gujarat government on Tuesday tabled the Gujarat Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill, 2026 in the legislative assembly, proposing a common legal framework to govern marriage, divorce, succession and live-in relationships irrespective of religion.

The Bill was tabled by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel a week after a state-appointed panel submitted its final report on implementation of the UCC.

If the bill is cleared, Gujarat will become the second state in the country after Uttarakhand to pass a UCC bill. Uttarakhand in February 2024 passed a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill.

Titled the 'Gujarat Uniform Civil Code, 2026', the proposed law will extend to the entire state and also apply to residents of Gujarat living outside its territorial limits.

But it will not apply to members of Scheduled Tribes and certain groups whose customary rights are protected under the Constitution.

The Bill aims to create a uniform legal framework, as per its "Objects and Reasons" statement.

Among other things, it provides for registration of live-in relationships, as well as their termination through a formal declaration.

The bill also prohibits bigamy. A marriage will be considered valid under the Code only if neither party has a living spouse at the time of marriage, it says.

No central data on racial bias against people from Northeast: govt in LS

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 24: No centralised data is maintained on incidents of "hate speech, racial slurs, harassment and discrimination" against people from the Northeast, the government said on Tuesday while stressing that policing and public order fall under the domain of state governments.

Responding to a question by Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said states are responsible for prevention, detection, registration and investigation of crimes, and prosecution of offenders.

"Police" and "Public Order" are state subjects as per the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. The state governments are responsible for prevention, detection, registration and investigation of crime and for prosecuting the criminals through their law enforcement agencies," Rai said.

He said the National Crime Records Bureau compiles and publishes crime data received from states and union territories in its "Crime in India" reports, which are available till 2023. However,

"data on incidents of hate speech, racial slurs, harassment and discrimination against persons from the North-Eastern States is not maintained centrally", the minister said.

He added that existing legal provisions enable action against hate comments, gestures and racial acts, including those targeting people from the Northeast.

Rai also outlined steps taken by the Ministry of Home Affairs to address concerns related to safety and discrimination. These include advisories to states and UTs, appointment of nodal officers to handle grievances, and sensitisation of law enforcement agencies.

He said initiatives such as the Special Police Unit for North East Region (SPUNER) in Delhi Police, along with dedicated helplines and email IDs, have been introduced to facilitate complaint registration and support for victims.

Rai also said a three-member monitoring committee, set up following a Supreme Court judgment, regularly reviews issues of racial discrimination and grievance redressal concerning people from the Northeast living in different parts of the country.

Over 18K Jan Aushadhi Kendras opened in last 11 yrs to provide generic medicines at lower rate

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 24: Chemicals and Fertilizers Minister J P Nadda on Tuesday highlighted there are 18,646 Jan Aushadhi Kendras across the country that provide generic medicines to people at affordable prices.

Replying to supplementary queries during Question Hour in Rajya Sabha, the minister said that Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana was launched in 2008 by the UPA government but rued that only 80 Jan Aushadhi Kendras were opened till 2014.

Nadda said the scheme has taken off in a big way under the Modi-government.

As on February 28, 2026, he said there are 18,646 Jan Aushadhi Kendras across the country.

Out of these, as many as 2,370 Jan Aushadhi Kendras have been opened in government hospitals to provide medicines at rates that are about 50-80 per cent cheaper than those of branded medicines.

"The product basket under the



Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana has 2,110 medicines and 315 surgical, medical consumables and devices, covering all major therapeutic groups, such as cardiovascular, anti-cancer, anti-diabetic, anti-infectives, anti-allergic and gastro-intestinal medicines and nutraceuticals," Nadda said in a written reply.

Almost all generic medicines included in the National List of Essential Medicines, except lab reagents and vaccines, are part of the product basket, he added.

To ensure accessibility and

availability of medicines at Jan Aushadhi Kendras, Nadda informed that there is an end-to-end information-technology-enabled supply chain system, consisting of five warehouses and 41 distributors across the country.

As per information provided by Ministry of Health, the government has rolled out the Free Drugs Service Initiative (FDSI) under National Health Mission (NHM) to ensure availability of essential drugs and reduce the Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) of the patients visiting the public health facilities.

CM Rekha Gupta presents Delhi govt's Rs 1,03,700-crore budget for 2026-27

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 24: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday presented Rs 1.03 lakh crore Budget for FY27, announcing several welfare schemes, including free diagnostic tests for newborn babies, free bicycles to 1.3 lakh girl students and laptops for meritorious students, and a new semiconductor policy, besides 'emergency operation centre' for disaster management.

Presenting the budget for the second time in the Delhi Assembly, Gupta, who also holds the finance portfolio, called it a "Green Budget", pointing out that 21 per cent of the total allocations for initiatives for environmental protection.

The chief minister said the national capital has been progressing rapidly with a triple-engine government as she highlighted that the city's per capita income is third-highest in the country. The government has



earmarked Rs 19,326 crore for the education sector -- 18 per cent share of the total budget, followed by the health sector (Rs 13,034 crore), transport (Rs 12,613 crore), urban development (Rs 11,572 crore), social welfare (Rs 10,537 crore) and water supply (Rs 9,000 crore).

The chief minister also announced a slew of measures for women and assured that 'Mahila Samridhi Yojna', a pre-poll promise of the ruling BJP, will soon be implemented with an outlay

of Rs 5,110 crore. Under the scheme, eligible women will be given Rs 2,500 per month, the CM said, adding that a portal for registration will be launched soon.

Opposition AAP MLAs boycotted the budget presentation over suspension of four party legislators, prompting Speaker Vijender Gupta to criticise their decision.

Gupta announced Rs 1,352 crore for developing dust-free roads, including end-to-end

recarpeting of 750 km of roads across the city.

Highlighting road infrastructure, Gupta said an allocation of Rs 1,352 crore has been allocated for developing dust-free roads, including end-to-end recarpeting of 750 km of roads across the city.

She said her government will set up 'Emergency Operation Centre' to deal with any disaster.

The budget estimates tax revenue of Rs 74,000 crore, while an allocation of Rs 11,666 crore has been made for the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD).

Pointing out the problem faced by girls in commuting to schools, Gupta announced an allocation of Rs 90 crore in the budget for gifting bicycles to 1.30 lakh Class IX girl students of Delhi government schools.

Highlighting the benefits of Ayushman Bharat Health Scheme, she announced that now, it will also cover transgender and announced Rs 202 crore for the scheme.

Global shares rebound after Trump hints at possible end to Iran war

AP

Tokyo, Mar 24: Global benchmarks mostly rebounded Tuesday, in a mood of cautious relief after President Donald Trump said the United States has talked with Iran about a possible end to their war.

France's CAC 40 gained 0.4 per cent in early trading to 7,759.97, while the German DAX edged up 0.2 per cent to 22,695.54. Britain's FTSE 100 inched up less than 0.1 per cent to 9,899.12.

US shares were set to be little changed, with Dow futures up less than 0.1 per cent at 46,536.00. S&P 500 futures were also virtually unchanged, declining less than 0.1 per cent to 6,634.50.

In Asia, Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 added 1.4 per cent to finish at 52,252.28, recovering some of the losses it suffered the previous day.

Toyota Motor Corp.'s stock price gained 0.6 per cent after it announced overnight that it



was investing USD 1 billion in its Kentucky and Indiana auto plants. That's part of a plan to invest up to USD 10 billion in the US over the next five years that the Japanese automaker announced in November.

Japanese manufacturers have been eager to show their contribution to American jobs and economic growth.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 rose 0.2 per cent to 8,379.40. South Korea's KOSPI edged up 2.7 per cent to 5,553.92. Hong Kong's Hang Seng jumped 2.8 per cent

to 25,063.71, while the Shanghai Composite added 1.8 per cent to 3,881.28.

Global markets have been on a roller-coaster ride over worries about the war in Iran, which began in late February, especially nations in Asia, which are severely affected by any lack of access to the Strait of Hormuz, crucial for energy shipments from the Middle East.

In energy trading, benchmark US crude gained USD 1.34 to USD 89.47 a barrel.

Brent crude the international standard, added USD 1.00 to USD 100.94 a barrel, reversing course after easing overnight on Wall Street. That came after Trump said the US and Iran held productive talks "regarding a complete and total resolution of our hostilities in the Middle East" over the last two days.

Iran denied such talks took place and Iranian parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf said in a post on X that "fakenews is used to manipulate the financial and oil markets".

"Still, while there's clearly a long way to go until some sort of ceasefire is agreed and peace restored, we do at least seem to have taken the first step towards those ends," said Michael Brown, senior research strategist at Pepperstone.

In currency trading, the US dollar edged up to 158.55 Japanese yen from 158.35 yen. The euro cost USD 1.15941, down from USD 1.1610.

Airlines cancel more flights as Middle East conflict escalates

REUTERS

Dubai, Mar 24: Global air travel remains severely disrupted after the war in Iran forced the closure of major Middle Eastern hubs, including Dubai, Doha and Abu Dhabi, stranding tens of thousands of passengers.

Below is the latest on flights: Aegean Airlines Greece's largest carrier has canceled flights to Tel Aviv, Beirut and Amman until April 22, and to Irbil and Baghdad until May 24. Flights to Dubai have been canceled until April 19 and to Riyadh until April 18.

Air Baltic Latvia's airBaltic said all flights to Tel Aviv had been canceled until April 29. All flights to Dubai stand canceled until October 24.

Air Canada The Canadian carrier has canceled all flights to Tel Aviv until May 2 and to Dubai until March 28.

Air Europa The Spanish airline has canceled all flights to Tel Aviv until April 10.

Air France KLM Air France has canceled Tel Aviv and Beirut flights until March 28 and Dubai and Riyadh flights until March 24, including the March 25 departure from Dubai.

KLM suspended flights to Riyadh, Dammam and Dubai until May 17 and to Tel Aviv until April 11.

Cathay Pacific The Hong Kong airline has extended the cancellation of all passenger flights to and from Dubai and Riyadh until May 31. It has, however, added extra flights to London between March 21 and March 28 due to increased demand. It will also operate three extra pairs of passenger flights for Paris and Zurich, respectively.

Delta The US carrier has canceled its New York-Tel Aviv flights until May 31 and Tel Aviv-New York flights until June 1. The restart of its Atlanta-Tel Aviv route has been delayed, with flights to Tel Aviv paused until August 4 and from Tel Aviv until August 5.

El Al Israel Airlines The Israeli carrier said operational constraints are preventing regular flights from Israel, except in rare, exceptional cases, and that it is continuing efforts to bring passengers home. The airline has also urged authorities to open Ramon Airport near Eilat.

Emirates The UAE airline said it was operating a reduced flight schedule following a partial reopening of



regional airspace.

Etihad Airways

The UAE carrier said it was operating a limited commercial flight schedule between Abu Dhabi and select destinations.

Finnair

The Finnish carrier has canceled its Dubai flights until March 29 and Doha flights until July 2, while continuing to avoid the airspace of Iraq, Iran, Syria and Israel.

Flynas

Saudi budget airline Flynas has extended its suspension of flights to Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Doha, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq and Syria until March 31.

IAG

IAG-owned British Airways has extended cancellations of flights to Amman, Bahrain, Dubai and Tel Aviv until May 31 and to Doha until April 30, while adding flights to Bangkok and Singapore. Flights to Abu Dhabi remain suspended until later this year.

Indigo

The Indian airline has suspended operations to Doha, Kuwait, Bahrain, Dammam, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah and Sharjah until March 28.

Japan Airlines

Japan Airlines has suspended scheduled Tokyo-Doha flights until March 31 and Doha-Tokyo flights until April 1.

LOT

The Polish airline said all its flights to Dubai stand canceled until March 28 and to Tel Aviv until May 31. It has also canceled flights to Riyadh until April 30 and to Beirut from March 31 to April 30.

Lufthansa Group

The German airline group, which includes Lufthansa, Austrian Airlines, Swiss, Brussels Airlines and ITA Airways, has suspended flights to Tel Aviv through April 9, and to Beirut, Dubai, Amman, Irbil and Abu Dhabi until March 28. Flights to Tehran are suspended

through April 30 and to Riyadh until April 5.

Malaysia Airlines

The Malaysian carrier has suspended all flights to Doha until March 28.

Norwegian Air

The low-cost airline has pushed back planned launches of its Tel Aviv and Beirut services to June 15, from April 1 and April 4, respectively. It has canceled all Dubai flights through April 8.

Pegasus

Turkiye's Pegasus Airlines has canceled its Iran, Iraq, Amman, Beirut, Kuwait, Bahrain, Doha, Dammam, Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah flights until April 13. Flights to Riyadh have been canceled until March 24.

Qatar Airways

The carrier said it would operate a revised limited number of flights until March 28.

Singapore Airlines

Singapore Airlines said it will extend the suspension of its Singapore-Dubai flights until April 30, and add services between Singapore and London Gatwick from March 31 to October 24, and on the Singapore-Melbourne route from March 29 to October 24 to meet higher demand.

Turkish Airlines

Turkish Airlines has canceled most Middle East flights until the end of March. SunExpress, its joint venture with Lufthansa, has canceled flights to Dubai and Bahrain until March 23.

Vietnam Airlines

Vietnam's flag carrier has planned to cancel 23 flights per week across several domestic routes from April.

Wizz Air

The low-cost airline has suspended flights to Israel until March 29, and to Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Amman and Jeddah from mainland European destinations until mid-September.

Asian CL matches postponed due to Mideast war rescheduled for April as single legs



AP

Kuala Lumpur, Mar 24: Four Asian Champions League Elite series that were postponed due to the war in the Middle East will be moved to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and played on a single-leg basis next month, the Asian Football Confederation said Tuesday. The last-16

matches had originally been scheduled to be played in Qatar, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates on a home-and-away basis in the first two weeks of March. Those matches will now be held on April 13 and 14 as single legs ahead of the tournament's finals stage.

Defending champions Al-Ahli are scheduled to

take on Al-Duhail from Qatar while four-time champions Al-Hilal face Al-Sadd. Shabab Al-Ahli from the UAE plays Iran's Tractor FC and Al-Wahda meets Saudi Pro League champions Al-Ittihad.

Jeddah had already been scheduled to host the quarterfinals, semifinals and final with matches running from April 16-25.

Last-16 matches on the Eastern side of the draw have already been played, with Japanese sides Vissel Kobe and Machida Zelvia joined in the quarterfinals by Thailand's Buriram United and Johor Darul Ta'zim from Malaysia.

Pentagon tightens press restrictions after court ruling

AFP

Washington, Mar 24: The Pentagon beefed up restrictions on journalists covering the US military on Monday, days after a court ruled that its earlier overhaul to press access was unconstitutional.

The clampdown is the latest in a string of measures by President Donald Trump and top officials against journalists and news outlets often derided as "fake news" when their reporting displeases the administration.

A federal judge ruled on Friday that the Defense Department's changes to press access last year, which saw accreditations from a host of prominent media outlets withdrawn, violated the constitution.

But the Pentagon responded with even tighter restrictions, announcing Monday that it would close a press area called the Correspondents' Corridor and that "all journalist access to the Pentagon will require escort by authorized Department personnel." Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell cited security risks for the change, and said the department would appeal Friday's court ruling.

"Effective immediately, the Correspondents' Corridor is closed," Parnell posted on X.

To honour stampede victims, RCB players to wear jersey No. 11 for practice



PTI

Bengaluru, Mar 24: Royal Challengers Bangalore players will train wearing jersey No.11 on match days during the upcoming IPL and the franchise also plans to keep 11 seats empty in honour of the fans who died in a stampede outside the M Chinnaswamy Stadium here last year.

The fans had lost their lives here on June 4 in a stampede that was triggered by chaos during RCB's celebratory events after the team's maiden IPL trophy win.

The franchise had copped massive criticism for its handling of the celebrations which drew lakhs to

the streets without requisite security clearances.

"The players will be wearing jersey No.11 for the practice on the game day -- the practice time before the match," RCB CEO Rajesh Menon told reporters here on Tuesday.

"All the players will have jersey No.11 on their back; not for the game, but for the practice. This is a tribute to our fans, who will always remain a part of our journey," he said.

"Apart from that, they will be also wearing black armbands on that day. We are also looking at having 11 permanent seats empty in Chinnaswamy Stadium.

This is for the 11 fans who will be with us forever," he added.

The defending champions will be playing their season-opener here on March 28 against Sunrisers Hyderabad in what will be the first of their five home matches at this venue.

RCB are set to play their remaining two home matches at Raipur's Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Cricket Stadium this IPL.

Menon also revealed that ticket-holders will be entitled to metro access on match days. Parking can be pre-booked, and all stadium gates will open four hours prior to the match.

THE REVENGE

DHURANDHAR

19.03.26

IN CINEMAS WORLDWIDE

INOX SRINAGAR

Movies Timings for Wednesday, 25th March

DHURANDHAR THE REVENGE (A)

HINDI - 12:30 PM, 01:30 PM, 05:00 PM, 06:00 PM

HINDI ATMOS - 10:00 AM, 02:30 PM, 07:00 PM