



# Draw inspiration from PM Modi's resolve to build strong, prosperous India: LG Sinha tells citizens

Says despite global turmoil, crisis, India under Modi's leadership resilient

Praises J&K for setting new benchmarks in dev, showcasing profound patriotism

Hails pivotal events like Vande Mataram, Har Ghar Tiranga campaign

Yogesh

Jammu, Mar 30: Jammu: Asserting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi works tirelessly round-the-clock for the nation's welfare, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday urged citizens to draw inspiration from the Prime Minister's unwavering resolve and march shoulder-to-shoulder in building a strong and prosperous India.

Speaking at the closing ceremony of special phase marking the 150 years of Vande Mataram, here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "PM Modi works tirelessly, round-the-clock, for the nation's welfare. Let us draw strength from his resolve and stride shoulder-to-shoulder toward a strong, prosperous India."

The Lieutenant Governor said



that the past decade brought global turmoil and crisis from Ukraine to West Asia plagued most nations, yet, under the able leadership and guidance of PM Modi, India has emerged resilient, sustaining its position as the world's fastest-growing

major economy. LG Sinha said that under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Jammu Kashmir has been integrated into the national mainstream. "The Union Territory has set new benchmarks in development.

It is showcasing profound patriotism through pivotal events like Vande Mataram and Har Ghar Tiranga," the Lieutenant Governor said.

Terming Vande Mataram is India's identity, strength, and vow, LG Sinha said, "It is not just verses but a profound experience woven into our civilization's fabric. Vande Mataram singing and related events revives memories of immortal martyrs, honors their sacrifices, and renews our commitment to India's glory."

He called upon every section of society to share one dream: making India the world's greatest nation.

"We must unite to realize it. When every citizen of J&K UT dedicates themselves to building a developed India, I believe that collective spirit will become an unstoppable force," the

Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasised that the devotion and fervor in Jammu Kashmir towards Vande Mataram, reflects how this Union Territory has shed painful chapters, embracing the ideals we have toiled for over the last five-six years.

The nation witnessed Jammu Kashmir's stellar contribution during the previous phases of Vande Mataram @150 years commemorative event. In the first phase (November 7-14, 2025), 9 of India's top 10 performing districts were from UT, with Kishtwar at Number 1. In the second (January 19-26, 2026), 6 were from Jammu Kashmir, led by Poonch.

The Lieutenant Governor said the overwhelming participation of people of Jammu Kashmir in the previous two phases of Vande | More on P6

# Mission YUVA to become national benchmark for self-emp schemes: CM

Disburses ₹100 Cr in 3,003 cases, marks ₹1,000 Cr milestone; launches Credit Guarantee Fund, inaugurates 20 SBDUs

KT News Desk

Jammu, Mar 30: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday expressed hope that Mission YUVA would emerge as a model for self-employment schemes across the country, asserting that Jammu and Kashmir aims to set a national benchmark in entrepreneurship-led development.

The Chief Minister made these remarks while addressing the Yuva Mahotsav—Mission YUVA programme held at the Convention Centre here, where he interacted with entrepreneurs and beneficiaries of the scheme.

"In the future, not only should I believe this, but we have taken it as a mission that in the whole country, in all the states, if any self-employment or entrepreneurship scheme is used as an example, it should be the Jammu & Kashmir Mission Yuva Scheme. And from my side, and from the side of my colleagues, we will



continue to help you as much as we can," he said.

He urged beneficiaries to stay connected with the scheme and continue to bring forward new ideas and expansion plans.

Highlighting the importance of the initiative, the Chief Minister said unemployment remains the biggest and most complex issue | More on P6

# LG, CM greet people on Mahavir Jayanti

KT News Desk

Jammu, Mar 30: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah have greeted the people on the auspicious occasion of Mahavir Jayanti, which will be celebrated on Tuesday.

In a message, the Lieutenant Governor said, "On the auspicious occasion of Mahavir Jayanti, I extend my hearty greetings and best wishes to all. Bhagwan Mahavir's profound teachings of Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truth), compassion, and humility serve as a guiding light for humanity. Let us, on this auspicious day, rededicate ourselves to the ideals of Bhagwan Mahavir and resolve to work | More on P6

# Omar urges immediate ceasefire in West Asia

Says PM Modi best positioned to help end conflict

Yogesh

Jammu, Mar 30: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday called for an immediate end to the ongoing West Asia conflict, stressing that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi is uniquely positioned to facilitate peace.

Talking to reporters outside the Assembly complex in Jammu, CM Omar, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "I had mentioned in the House,



that we want the war to end as soon as possible. The role that PM Modi can play, perhaps no

one else can, because he has good relations with all these countries. Even knowing the challenges involved, a ceasefire should be declared and the conflict should be brought to an end here itself," Omar said.

He highlighted the complexities of international diplomacy, citing Iran, Israel and the United States. "Even after knowing that reckless steps could be taken, no one has ruled Iran effectively for many years. Ending this conflict won't be | More on P6

# Nine Private Member bills introduced in LA

Six withdrawn, two rejected

KT News Desk

Jammu, Mar 30: Nine Members introduced Private Member bills in the Legislative Assembly (LA) on Monday, of which six bills were withdrawn by Legislators after assurances from the Government and two were rejected by voice voting.

Legislator, Qaysar Jamshaid Lone introduced a bill in House which read, "A Bill to amend the Cooperative Societies Act, 1989 (LA Private Members Bill No. 1 of 2025)".

Similarly, Legislator Mir Saifullah introduced a bill in House which reads, "A Bill to make it obligatory on the part of Private Educational

institutions to provide reservation to Children of Below poverty Line and Antyodaya Anna Yojana Families in Agriculture Colleges, Para Medical Colleges, Law Colleges and Skill Development Institutions (LA Private Members Bill No. 6 of 2025)".

Likewise, MLA Nizam-ud-Din Bhat introduced Bill which reads, "A bill to provide for equitable opportunities of employment in the Civil Services in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir keeping in view its complex, socio-economical, geographical, ethnic, linguistic concerns and matters connected therewith and identical thereto (LA Private Members | More on P6

# LG assents to three Bills passed by LA: Secy

KT News Desk

Jammu, Mar 30: Secretary, Legislative Assembly, Manoj Kumar Pandit on Monday informed the House that the Lieutenant Governor has assented to three Bills passed by Legislative Assembly (LA).

Informing the House, the Secretary read, "The House is informed that the bills namely Jammu and Kashmir Appropriation Bill 2026 (LA Bill No. 4 of 2026), Jammu and Kashmir Appropriation Bill 2026 (LA Bill No. 5 of 2026) and Jammu and Kashmir Appropriation Bill 2026 (LA Bill No. 6 of 2026), passed by Legislative Assembly have been assented to by the Lieutenant Governor on 27th of March 2026". | More on P6

# J&K Lok Bhavan celebrates Rajasthan & Odisha Day

KT News Desk

Jammu, Mar 30: Jammu Kashmir Lok Bhavan on Monday celebrated the Rajasthan Foundation Day, at Jammu. The cultural evening also commemorates the celebrations of Odisha Day 'Utkala Dibasa' which will be observed on 1st April.

Addressing the gathering, Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha extended his heartiest greetings and best wishes to the people of Rajasthan and Odisha.

"Rajasthan, land of enlightened giants, has offered humanity's highest guidance and upliftment for society's weakest.



Likewise, Odisha's rich heritage has shaped India's consciousness and philosophy.

I believe diversity and ancient values of these two states have inspired people, gave them strength and a vision to unite all humanity," the Lieutenant

Governor said. Highlighting the linguistic and cultural diversity of Rajasthan, the Lieutenant Governor said that a glimpse of this blessed land reveals how languages like Hindi, Marwari, Hadoti, Mewari, Mewati, | More on P6

# Snowfall, rain disrupt life across Kashmir, temps dip

Gurez, Uri roads shut, avalanche warning issued; wet weather likely till April 10

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Mar 30: Upper reaches of Kashmir Valley, including Gurez and Tulail, received fresh snowfall on Monday, while plains were lashed by intermittent rainfall, leading to a further dip in temperatures and disruption to normal life.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) the ongoing wet spell affected several parts of the Valley, with moderate snowfall reported in upper reaches of North and Central Kashmir



and steady rain in plains, accompanied by gusty winds.

The inclement weather triggered landslides and snow

accumulation along the Bandipora-Gurez road, particularly near Razdan Top, resulting in the stranding of several vehicles.

In a coordinated rescue operation, the district administration of Bandipora, along with teams from the Mechanical Engineering Department (MED) and the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), safely evacuated 22 vehicles carrying tourists and other passengers.

Officials said the vehicles were stranded at multiple locations due to snow, mudslides and falling rocks, while strong winds | More on P6

# Govt examining private universities bill, case-to-case approach planned: Itoo

Assembly rejects Para's bill, MLAs questions govt's intent

Waris Fayaz

Jammu, Mar 30: Minister for Education, Sakina Masood Itoo on Monday said the government is examining a proposal on private universities.

Replying to the discussion, the minister, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the Minister said a framework for private universities is already under

consideration by the Higher Education Department.

She said currently there is no private university in Kashmir but added that multiple representations for setting up such institutions have been received. "Once the proposal is finalised, the government will come up with a policy. All applications for establishing universities will be assessed on a case-to-case basis," she said.

The minister urged the member to withdraw the bill in view of the ongoing process.

Talking to reporters later, Peoples | More on P6

# J&K example of brotherhood, religious sites fully protected: Govt

Warns strict action against illegal occupation of religious land

Waris Fayaz

Jammu, Mar 30: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Monday said it is committed to protect every religious place, including temples, gurdwaras, mosques and churches and does not require additional legislation for the purpose.

Responding in the House, Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said

successive governments led by Omar Abdullah have introduced measures from time to time to preserve the sanctity of religious institutions and ensure their proper management.

"There are already well-defined rules and regulations in place to protect religious properties. Whenever violations have been reported, strict action has been taken," he said.

Dy CM made these remarks while opposing a private member's bill moved by a BJP legislator Balwant Singh Mankotia, seeking protection of temples and removal of alleged illegal encroachments | More on P6

# Govt orders reshuffle, new postings across key depts

Shreya Singhal gets additional charge as Director Information

KNO Correspondent

Srinagar, Mar 30: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Monday ordered a reshuffle in the administration, transferring and assigning new postings to several IAS and JKAS officers with immediate effect, including key changes in Food, Civil Supplies, Agriculture, Tourism and Information departments.

In an order issued to the General Administration Department (GAD) of the Jammu and Kashmir government, a copy of which was accessed by the news



agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), reads in the interest of administration, the following transfers and postings are hereby ordered with

immediate effect. Nazim Zai Khan, IAS (AGMUT: 2013), Mission Director, Mission Vatsalya/Shakti (ICPS), J&K, is transferred and posted as Director, Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Kashmir. Dr. Sagar Doifode Dattatray, IAS (AGMUT: 2014), Director, Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Kashmir, is transferred and posted as Special Secretary to the Government, Agriculture Production Department vice Sandeep Kumar, IFS (AGMUT: 2011), Secretary in the Agriculture | More on P6

## Budget Session 2026

# Jammu-Akhnoor 4-lane project nears completion, to be finished by mid 2026: Deputy CM

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, MARCH 30: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary on Monday said that the Jammu-Akhnoor four lane Project on NH-144A is at an advanced stage while the remaining works are targeted for phased completion by mid-2026.

The Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, was replying to a question raised by Legislator Mohan Lal in the Legislative Assembly today. Regarding the timeline for completion, the Deputy Chief Minister informed that the Package-I is likely to be completed by 31.03.2026 while Package-II has already been completed. Besides, package-III is expected to be completed by 30.04.2026, and Package-IIB by 31.07.2026.

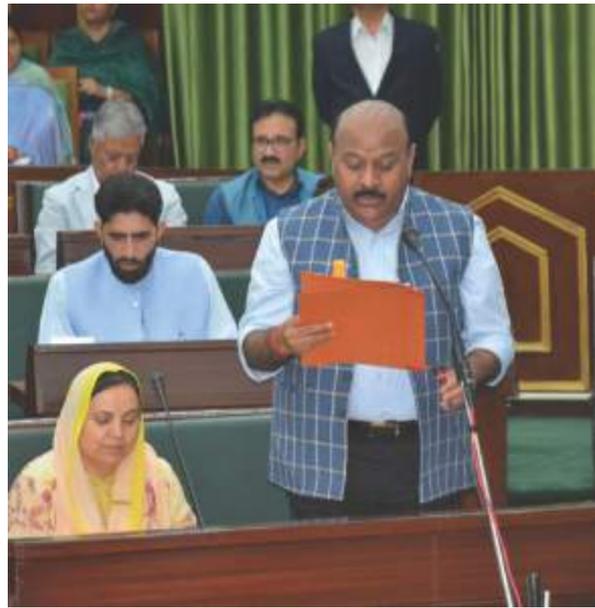
He said that the delay in completion of certain packages also included project

alignment traverses densely populated urban areas of Jammu city, which has led to traffic congestion, restricted working hours and frequent interruptions arising from traffic regulation measures and canal diversion works.

In addition, he said there have been issues related to slow progress and inadequate resource mobilization along with certain technical constraints.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that labour shortages, disruptions for land acquisitions, deployment of men and machinery have also impacted the pace of execution, for various reasons.

He further said that the unseasonal rainfall has also adversely affected the construction activities. He added, delays in disbursement of compensation, removal of encroachments and shifting of utilities have added to the overall timeline slippages.



# DC Srinagar inspects newly constructed hostel for wards of ex-servicemen/martyrs at Peerbagh

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR MARCH 30: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo on Monday conducted an inspection visit to the newly constructed hostel for wards of ex-servicemen and martyrs at Peerbagh, Srinagar.

During the visit, the DC, as per an official statement was accompanied by several senior officials, including Director Sainik Welfare Pankaj Chib, Additional Deputy Commissioner Mir Imtiaz Ul Aziz, Chief Planning Officer Fayaz Ahmad Dar, District Social Welfare Officer Dr Mukhtar Ahmad, Executive Engineer R&B Khalid Mehmood, Tehsildar Chanpora Kifayat Hussain and Zila Sainik Welfare Officer Farooq Fareed, Rashid War among others.

On the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed the overall facilities at the hostel and inspected key components such as the building structure, accommodation rooms, power and water supply facilities and other essential amenities.

While interacting with the Officers, Engineers and Sainik Welfare Officials, the DC observed that most of the construction work has been completed and the hostel is nearly ready for use. He directed the concerned departments to expedite the remaining works in a time-bound manner.

The DC stated that the inspection was aimed at ensuring completion of the



hostel facility for safe and comfortable accommodation for students who are wards of ex-servicemen and martyrs. He highlighted that the hostel is a significant initiative funded by the Union Ministry of Defence. On the occasion,

the DC appreciated the efforts of executing agency i.e. Exen R&B Rajbagh and all stakeholder departments along with Zila Sainik Welfare Board for accelerating the project in recent months and bringing it close to completion.

# Deputy CM extends Mahavir Jayanti greetings

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, MARCH 30: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary on Monday extended his warm greetings to the people on the auspicious occasion of Mahavir Jayanti.

He said that the festival holds immense religious and cultural significance, especially for the Jain community, and is celebrated with deep devotion to mark the birth anniversary of Lord Mahavira. The Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, highlighted the timeless teachings of Lord Mahavira, emphasizing non-violence, compassion, truth, and peaceful coexistence as guiding principles for a harmonious society.

He urged people to seek blessings on this sacred day and reaffirm their commitment to strengthening brotherhood, harmony, and mutual respect among all communities.

He further said that Jammu and Kashmir has always stood as a shining example of communal harmony, where people actively participate in



each other's festivals with great fervour and unity. The Deputy Chief Minister expressed hope that the occasion would inspire everyone to work collectively towards peace, prosperity, and inclusive development.

## Kashmir Thunder

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### PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Wamik Mushtaq Misger, S/o Wamik Mushtaq Misger, R/o Shah Mohalla, Nawabazar, hereby declare that I have changed my name from Wamik Mushtaq Misger to Wamik Mushtaq with effect from 30-03-2026.

Henceforth, I shall be known as Wamik Mushtaq for all purposes.

Wamik Mushtaq  
(formerly known as Wamik Mushtaq Misger)

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

## JAMMU & KASHMIR SERVICES SELECTION BOARD

Muthi, Akhnoor Road, Jammu/Zamzam Complex Rambagh Srinagar.  
[www.jkssb.nic.in](http://www.jkssb.nic.in)

### Notice

Subject: Provisional Answer Key for the OMR Based Written Examination for the post of FPF Guard, Forest, Ecology and Environment Department, J&K held on 29.03.2026.

The Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) conducted the OMR Based Written Examination for the post of FPF Guard, Forest, Ecology and Environment Department, AK advertised vide Advertisement Notification No. 04 of 2022 under Item No's 86 to 92 on 29th March, 2026.

The Provisional Answer Key of the question paper (Series A, B, C, D) for the above said examination is provided at Annexure "A" to this notice for the information of the candidates.

Any candidate having objection(s) to the answer key, may submit his/her objection(s)/representation(s) in respect of such question(s) on prescribed format/proforma annexed herewith as Annexure "B" along with the documentary proof/evidence substantiating the claim (hard copies only) and a fee of '200/-' (in the form of demand draft) per question (refundable in case of genuine/correct representation/objection) in favour of the Accounts Officer, J&K Services Selection Board.

In case, the objection is found correct, the Answer Key will be revised accordingly in respect of all candidates. No candidate will be informed about the acceptance/non-acceptance of his/her objection individually.

The objections/representations can be submitted in offline mode only, in the office of JKSSB, Muthi, Akhnoor Road Jammu/ JKSSB, Zamzam Building Rambagh, Srinagar on three working days starting from 30.03.2026 from 11:00 am to 05:00 PM only. The Board shall not entertain any such representations/objections after the expiry of the stipulated period or through any other mode.

Reyaz Ahmad Malik JKAS  
Controller of Examination J&K Services Selection Board

No: JKSSB-C0E0EXAM(UT)/14/2026-03(7842028) Dated: 28.03.2026

ANNEXURE - "A"  
Provisional Answer Key of the Written Examination for the post of FPF Guard conducted on 29.03.2026.

Text Booklet Question No.	Series A	Series B	Series C	Series D
Q1	D	C	B	A
Q2	B	D	C	D
Q3	B	A	B	D
Q4	B	A	D	D
Q5	C	A	D	D
Q6	B	B	A	C
Q7	D	D	D	C
Q8	B	B	A	D
Q9	B	A	B	D
Q10	C	D	C	B
Q11	B	A	B	C
Q12	B	A	B	A
Q13	A	A	C	B
Q14	B	C	B	D
Q15	D	B	C	A
Q16	C	C	C	A
Q17	D	B	D	C
Q18	A	C	B	C
Q19	B	B	A	A
Q20	B	A	C	C
Q21	B	C	A	C
Q22	A	C	B	C
Q23	A	B	A	D
Q24	D	B	A	A
Q25	B	A	C	A
Q26	B	A	B	A
Q27	C	C	D	D
Q28	A	B	D	C
Q29	A	D	A	B
Q30	A	A	A	D
Q31	C	B	A	D
Q32	D	C	D	B
Q33	A	B	D	B
Q34	A	D	A	D
Q35	A	D	D	C
Q36	B	A	C	B
Q37	D	D	C	D
Q38	B	A	D	B
Q39	A	B	D	B
Q40	D	C	B	C
Q41	A	B	C	B
Q42	A	B	A	B
Q43	A	C	B	A
Q44	C	B	D	B
Q45	B	C	A	D
Q46	C	C	A	C
Q47	B	D	C	D
Q48	C	B	C	A
Q49	A	C	A	B
Q50	A	C	C	B
Q51	C	A	C	B
Q52	C	B	C	A
Q53	B	A	D	A
Q54	B	A	A	D
Q55	A	C	C	B
Q56	A	B	A	B
Q57	C	D	D	C
Q58	D	D	C	A
Q59	D	A	B	A
Q60	A	A	D	A
Q61	B	A	D	C
Q62	C	D	B	D
Q63	B	D	B	A
Q64	D	D	B	A
Q65	D	D	C	A
Q66	A	C	B	B
Q67	D	C	D	B
Q68	A	D	B	A
Q69	B	A	B	A
Q70	C	B	C	D
Q71	B	C	B	A
Q72	B	A	B	A
Q73	C	B	A	A
Q74	B	D	B	C
Q75	C	A	D	B
Q76	A	C	C	C
Q77	D	C	A	C
Q78	B	C	A	B
Q79	A	A	B	B
Q80	C	C	B	A
Q81	A	C	B	C
Q82	B	C	A	C
Q83	A	D	A	B
Q84	A	A	D	B
Q85	C	A	B	A
Q86	B	A	B	A
Q87	D	D	C	B
Q88	D	C	A	C
Q89	A	B	A	D
Q90	A	D	A	B
Q91	A	D	C	A
Q92	D	B	D	C
Q93	D	B	A	B
Q94	D	A	A	D
Q95	D	C	A	D
Q96	C	B	B	A
Q97	C	D	D	D
Q98	D	B	B	A
Q99	D	B	A	B
Q100	B	C	D	C
Q101	C	A	A	B
Q102	A	B	A	B
Q103	A	B	A	C
Q104	D	B	C	C
Q105	A	D	B	B
Q106	A	C	C	C
Q107	C	D	B	D
Q108	C	A	C	B
Q109	A	B	B	A
Q110	C	A	C	C
Q111	C	B	C	A
Q112	C	A	C	B
Q113	D	A	B	A
Q114	A	D	B	A
Q115	C	B	A	C
Q116	A	B	A	B
Q117	D	C	C	D
Q118	C	A	B	D
Q119	B	A	D	A
Q120	D	A	A	A

ANNEXURE - "B"  
Representation regarding objection(s) to Answer key pertaining to Written Examination for the post of FPF Guard on 29.03.2026.  
(NOTE: USE SEPARATE FORMS FOR SEPARATE QUESTIONS)

Name of the Applicant \_\_\_\_\_  
Exam Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Advertisement No(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
Application No(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
Roll No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Exam \_\_\_\_\_  
Exam Centre Division (Jammu/Kashmir) \_\_\_\_\_  
Correspondence Address Contact /Mobile No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Demand Draft No. date \_\_\_\_\_  
Candidates Account No. (16 digit) & IFSC Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Question No. & Series	Details of the Objection	Resource Material (copy to be enclosed)	Remarks
Correct Answer/Option as per candidate:			

Date of Application: --2026  
Signature of the Candidate \_\_\_\_\_  
Note: Application for each question/answer shall be made on separate page in the given format, otherwise the first question entered in the format shall only be considered.  
DIPK-12241/25 DATED: 30-03-2026

## CS reviews promotion of homestays

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, Mar 30: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo on Monday while chairing a meeting to review and strengthen the implementation of the Homestay Policy of the Tourism Department, emphasized upon the need to facilitate easier access to institutional credit for promoting homestays across all districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting besides ACS, PDD and ACS, Tourism was attended by Managing Director, J & K Bank, Commissioner Secretary, Law; Managing Director, Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation (JKTDC), Director Tourism, Jammu/Kashmir; Convenor UTLBC, and other senior officers.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary undertook a comprehensive review of measures initiated by the Tourism Department to promote homestays, including policy refinements carried out in line with directions issued in previous meetings. He stressed that the registration process must be made simpler, more transparent, and fully accessible, while ensuring seamless availability of credit for aspiring entrepreneurs.

Highlighting the potential of homestays as a key driver of sustainable tourism and local employment, the Chief Secretary called for a series of policy interventions and deregulations to scale up the sector. He underscored the importance of developing an end-to-end digital ecosystem integrating registration,



bookings, credit facilitation, and other services on a single unified platform to enhance ease of doing business.

He further directed that flagship schemes such as Mission YUVA and Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme be effectively leveraged to enable easier access to finance for homestay operators. He also emphasized exploring interest subvention mechanisms to ensure long-term sustainability and viability of such ventures.

Administrative Secretary Tourism, Dr Ashish Chandra Verma, presented a detailed overview of the policy reforms undertaken to promote the growth of homestays across the Union Territory. He informed that the registration process has been fully digitized, making it more user-friendly and accessible. He also highlighted several stakeholder-friendly amendments introduced in the guidelines to remove bottlenecks and encourage wider participation. He further

informed that the department has taken up the issue of categorizing homestays under the domestic tariff category with the Power Development and Jal Shakti Departments, along with granting them essential service status as per stakeholder demands. Additionally, the permissible number of rooms per homestay unit has been increased from four to six, and the inspection committees have been reconstituted to streamline the registration process. Managing Director, J&K

Bank, Amitava Chatterjee, informed the meeting about a dedicated loan product launched by the bank in line with earlier directions. He stated that the scheme offers financing up to Rs 30 lakh, with a provision of Rs 5 lakh per room, at an attractive interest rate of 8.2 percent. He also indicated that the bank is exploring the introduction of a "Tourism Credit Card" tailored for stakeholders in the tourism sector.

On this occasion the Managing Director, JKTC, Shreya Singhal, apprised the meeting that more than 2,600 homestays comprising over 19,300 rooms have been registered across the Union Territory so far. She highlighted several initiatives being undertaken to strengthen the homestay ecosystem, including the formulation of an updated homestay policy. She also emphasized the need to bring secondary properties under a structured Bed & Breakfast (B&B) framework, in line with best practices followed in other states. Furthermore, she informed that a dedicated portal has been developed on the official tourism website to facilitate onboarding of homestay owners, along with capacity building and marketing support through popular digital platforms such as OYO and others.

The Chief Secretary reiterated the commitment to developing homestays as a cornerstone of community-based tourism in Jammu and Kashmir, aimed at generating employment, promoting local culture, and enhancing visitor experience across the region.

## 6,000 transit homes for PM package employees under construction: Dy CM

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Mar 30: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary on Monday informed the House that a Detailed Project Report (DPR) of Rs. 8490.15 lakh for repair and renovation of migrant camps in Jammu has been prepared and taken up with the Finance Department for work execution.

The Deputy Chief Minister was replying to a question raised by Legislator Devyani Rana in the Legislative Assembly.

He said that prefabricated transit accommodations with basic amenities have been established at Vessu (Kulgam), Hawal (Pulwama), Natnusa (Kupwara) and Veerwan (Baramulla) Division to provide immediate and secure housing to migrant employees appointed under the Prime Minister's Package. He added that to augment capacity, around 6,000 additional transit accommodations are under construction in a phased manner.

He said that the Government is providing all basic facilities including housing, drinking water, electricity, sanitation, healthcare, education, ration and security to the camps and migrants residing in accommodations across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Deputy Chief Minister



also informed the house that at residential quarters in Mini Township Jagti, facilities including drinking water supply, electricity, Sanitation, ration, education, healthcare and security arrangements are in place.

He added that at TRT Nagrota, Muthi Camp and Purkhoo Camp, all basic facilities like housing, drinking water, electricity, sanitation, healthcare, education, ration and security are being provided and maintained by the concerned departments.

He said that the departments including Public Works (R&B) Department, Jal Shakti Department and Power Development

Department have been entrusted with the upkeep and operation of core facilities in transit migrant camps.

Similarly, Housing & Urban Development Department, Department of Youth Services & Sports, Department of Floriculture, UEED, JAKEDA and the Rural Development & Panchayati Raj Department have been ordered for providing services within their respective domains.

He said that grievances regarding maintenance and repair/renovation, drinking water supply and electrical faults are being received from time to time and are addressed promptly. The Deputy Chief

Minister said that a Detailed Project Report (DPR) for repair and renovation of migrant camps in Jammu, amounting Rs 8490.15 lakh, has been prepared. He said that for annual renovation and upkeep of all accommodations, complaints received from time to time are addressed on priority basis through the concerned departments.

He said that necessary repair and maintenance works are undertaken through ongoing stage contracts besides immediate corrective measures are taken by the concerned departments to address deficiencies like water supply disruptions, sanitation issues and infrastructure damage, ensuring minimum inconvenience to the residents. The Deputy Chief Minister also said that a comprehensive and time-bound plan has been formulated to improve the living conditions in all migrant camps.

He added that as advised by the Finance Department, asset inventory has been completed, the process for handing over maintenance to PW(R&B) Department has been initiated, and provisioning under CAPEX 2026-27 along with annual maintenance has been requested. Similar action has been initiated for transit accommodations in the Kashmir Division.

## Div Com holds interaction with industries, trade bodies representatives

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, Mar 30: The Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg on Monday held an interactive meeting with representatives from various Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and the service sector in Kashmir to listen to their grievances, demands, and concerns in view of the Middle East war.

The meeting was attended by representatives from leading industries and trade bodies, including the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDC-CI), Federation of Chambers of Industries Kashmir (FCIK), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), and the Hoteliers Association.

Besides, the Director of Industries and Commerce, the Labour Commissioner J&K, and the Deputy Labour Commissioner participated in detailed deliberations on the issues raised. The Assistant Commissioner Central and Officer on Special Duty (OSD) to the Divisional Commissioner were also present at the meeting.

During the interaction, the delegation apprised the administration of various issues, including the availability of officers at District Industries Centres (DICs), delays in payments, pendency in Change of Land Use (CLU) approvals, banking-related constraints, labour-related concerns, and the



need for further improvements in the ease of doing business ecosystem.

The delegation also emphasized the importance of effective implementation of the MSME Development Act and the organization of capacity-building workshops for entrepreneurs.

Also, the representatives expressed concern over the accumulation of unsold inventory, potential disruptions in the supply of raw materials, rising freight costs, and the impact of these factors on business continuity. They highlighted the need for

skilling and upskilling initiatives for the local workforce to enhance productivity, competitiveness, and the availability of local labour.

The Director of Industries and Commerce provided an overview of the current status and ongoing measures related to the issues raised, assuring the delegation of continued departmental support.

The Divisional Commissioner Kashmir gave a patient and detailed hearing to the concerns presented and assured the delegation that all genuine issues would be taken up with the appropriate authorities for timely resolution.

## Govt steps up wetland protection measures

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Mar 30: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmad Rana on Monday informed the House that Rs 14,647.00 lakh under UT Capex have been sanctioned over the last five years for conservation and management of Wular Lake. The Minister also said that 1,073.69 lakh have been expended under UT Capex for works related to Soil & Water Conservation.

The Minister said this while replying to a question raised by MLA Ali Muhammad Sagar, regarding water conservation measures undertaken by the government in the Union Territory.

Elaborating, the Minister said that substantial financial allocations have been made for conservation and restoration of water bodies across the Union Territory.

He said that during the last five years, 900.00 lakh under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme "National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA)" have been

sanctioned during the last five years for the conservation and management of Wular Lake. He said that several measures are being undertaken for the conservation and management of notified wetlands and water bodies, including five sites designated as Ramsar Sites of international importance.

He informed the House that there are 1810 identified existing water bodies in the Union Territory, including Dal Lake, Anchar Lake, Wular Lake, Khushal Sar and Hoker Sar.

The Minister elaborated that key conservation interventions included de-weeding of wetlands, strengthening and construction of embankments, restoration of hydrological channels, development of patrolling infrastructure, installation of trash barriers and regular clearance of excessive aquatic vegetation.

To address solid waste dumping in and around Wular Lake and improve its ecological health, the department has taken multiple measures. These included closure of dumping sites near the lake, implementation of solid

waste management initiatives, awareness campaigns, boundary demarcation, dredging for lake restoration, willow removal and regular water quality monitoring.

He further informed that the Ecology, Environment & Remote Sensing wing has undertaken detailed survey and mapping of wetlands (above one hectare) using remote sensing data, followed by ground-truthing and boundary demarcation in coordination with Revenue, Wildlife and Forest Departments.

During this exercise, 170 wetlands have been GIS-corrected and uploaded in KML format on the National Wetland Portal, enhancing transparency and legal protection. Brief documents for six priority wetlands have been prepared, of which, four have been submitted for notification to the J&K Wetland Authority, while two are under technical examination. The Minister added that this scientific mapping and documentation will facilitate formal notification, regulation and long-term management of wetlands across Jammu & Kashmir.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

## Jammu sees 1,600 MW summer peak, Kashmir 2,035 MW in winter

RIYAZ BHAT

Srinagar, Mar 30: The government Monday said that it has managed a peak load of over 1600 Megawatts (MWs) in Jammu division during the previous summers and 2035 MWs in Kashmir division in the current winter.

The government informed the Legislative Assembly that the hydro power generation during the winters plummets due to the less water discharge in the rivers. "UT of J&K being hydro rich state is surplus in power during summers as hydro generation is at its peak but during winters the hydro generation plummets due to lesser water discharge in rivers owing to onset of winter season," the in-charge Minister of Power Development Department (PDD) informed the house.

The house was further informed that during the previous summer season, the transmission system successfully handled a peak load of more than 1600 MW in Jammu division and the peak load of 2035 MW in Kashmir

division in the current winter.

PDD said that meeting that much of load successfully is demonstrating the adequate capacity and operational headroom within the existing infrastructure, supported by local generation, indicating there in the realistic load-handling capability of the system under prevailing conditions.

It also said that the present transmission system is capable of meeting the current demand levels of the UT of J&K with sufficient operational margins, besides accommodating local generation support. "In addition to imported power, the system is supported by local hydroelectric generation, which together contribute an average of approximately 90-100 MW during peak summer hours in Jammu region & local hydro generation from LJHP, USHP-I and USHP-II, which collectively contribute an average of approximately 70 MW during peak winter hours in Kashmir region," the government said.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

## Migration, demographics throw PTR norms of SSA schools lopsided Govt assures periodic reviews, rationalization measures to maintain balance

RIYAZ BHAT

Srinagar, Mar 30: Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) in schools set up under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) have fluctuated widely owing to demographic shifts and migration patterns—disrupting the norms and guidelines of the erstwhile scheme.

The government informed the Legislative Assembly that the Primary and Middle Schools established under the SSA were opened in accordance with the prescribed distance norms and guidelines with the objective of ensuring universal access to elementary education, particularly in remote and underserved areas.

The minister-in-charge replied this to the query as to whether it is a fact that during the implementation of SSA, a large number of primary and middle schools were opened without proper rationalization resulting in a lot of variation in the student-teacher ratio particularly in Uri constituency. "However, variations in the student-teacher ratio arise from time to time due to demographic changes, migration of population, and fluctuations in student enrolment," the government informed the house.

However, the government also clarified that the School Education

Department periodically reviews such situations and takes appropriate measures, including rationalization of staff and resources, to maintain a balanced student-teacher ratio in schools. "The department periodically reviews the student-teacher ratio in schools," the government said.

About the PTR in Uri constituency, the government informed the house that, "As per available records, schools in the district, including Uri constituency, are presently functioning with an approximate student-teacher ratio of 1:17 at Primary level and 1:20 at Upper Primary level, which is broadly within the prescribed norms."

"The position is monitored from time to time and necessary adjustments are made, wherever required, in accordance with established guidelines," the government said. It also said that the schools in the district, including in Uri constituency are presently functioning with an approximate student-teacher ratio of 1:17 at the Primary level and 1:20 at the Upper Primary level, which are broadly within the prescribed norms.

"The department periodically reviews such situations and takes appropriate measures, including rationalization of staff and resources, to maintain a balanced student-teacher ratio in schools," the government said—(KNO)

## EDITORIAL

### Toward A More Equitable & Accountable Educational Ecosystem

The rising cost of private education has long been a source of anxiety for parents across Jammu and Kashmir. For years, families have struggled under the weight of arbitrary fee hikes, often imposed without justification or transparency. In a welcome move, Education Minister Sakeena Itoo has now directed the JKBOSE authorities to take firm action against private schools indulging in such practices, reaffirming the government's commitment to protecting parents

from unjustified financial exploitation. During a comprehensive review meeting at the Civil Secretariat in Jammu, the minister made it clear that schools must function with responsibility and transparency. Any attempt to exploit students or parents through unauthorised fee structures will not be tolerated. The strict enforcement of existing regulations to safeguard public trust deeply resonates with countless families who have long felt helpless in the face of unilateral fee

decisions. Private schools, whether affiliated with JKBOSE or CBSE, must operate within the framework of prescribed norms. Regular inspections and monitoring committees will help ensure that schools do not impose undue financial burdens on parents. Equally important is the establishment of a robust grievance redressal mechanism, which will give parents a voice and a channel to seek justice when they feel wronged. Education should be a bridge to opportunity, not a

source of financial distress. The government must not stand by while families are exploited under the guise of quality education. The government has to keep its vision broader for education reform by streamlining examinations, digitising processes, and strengthening curriculum implementation under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. These efforts, combined with strict oversight of private schools, point toward a more equitable and accountable educational

ecosystem. In a society where education is rightly valued as the key to a better future, no parent should have to choose between their child's schooling and their financial stability. The minister's directive is a timely step in the right direction. What matters now is its implementation—swift, consistent, and without exception. Only then will the promise of fairness and transparency translate into real relief for the people who need it most.

## Union Budget 2026-27: Strengthening SEZs for Global Competitiveness & Growth

Press Information Bureau

Special Economic Zones: Pillars of India's Trade & Investment Ecosystem

SEZ is a specifically delineated duty-free enclave and deemed to be a territory outside the customs territory of India for authorized operations. SEZ units are set up for the manufacture of goods, for rendering of services and providing warehousing services through Free Trade Warehousing Zones.

Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are designated areas within a country that operate under a distinct regulatory and fiscal framework to promote trade and investment. Established with the objectives of generating additional economic activity, boosting exports, attracting domestic and foreign investment, creating employment opportunities, and developing world-class infrastructure, SEZs serve as engines of export-led growth.

In India, SEZs have played a transformative role in strengthening the economic landscape. Since the enactment of the SEZ Act in May 2005, these zones have significantly accelerated export growth while fostering industrial expansion across sectors. Beyond earning foreign exchange and building infrastructure, SEZs have contributed to the holistic development of local economies through direct and indirect employment generation, the emergence of new business ecosystems, and improved socio-economic outcomes.

Currently, there are 368 notified SEZs across India as of 28th February, 2026. By offering fiscal incentives, streamlined regulatory processes, and modern infrastructure, SEZs have enhanced India's global competitiveness. They have facilitated the growth of specialized industrial clusters, encouraged innovation and technological advancement, and positioned India as an attractive and reliable investment destination in the global market.

Union Budget 2026-27 Focus on SEZ [6] Recognizing exports as a key driver of employment generation, industrial advancement, foreign exchange earnings, and integration into global value chains, the Budget has announced a comprehensive set of measures, including targeted reforms for SEZs affected by global trade disruptions.

One-Time Concessional DTA Sales: A Strategic Boost to SEZ Manufacturing Units

Domestic Tariff Area (DTA) means the whole of India (including the territorial waters and continental shelf) but does not include the areas of the SEZs. Section 30 of the SEZ Act, 2005 stipulates that goods and services cleared from SEZ to DTA are treated as imports into the country and attracts all applicable duties and levies. Moreover, as per Section 2(m) of SEZ Act, 2005, supplies from DTA to SEZ are treated



as exports to SEZ and are eligible for applicable export benefits.

As a special one-time measure, it has been proposed that eligible SEZ manufacturing units will be permitted to sell a prescribed proportion of their output in the Domestic Tariff Area (DTA) at concessional duty rates instead of standard customs duties. The quantity of such sales will be limited to a prescribed proportion of their exports. Necessary regulatory amendments will be undertaken to operationalize this provision while ensuring a level playing field for units operating in the DTA.

These reforms are aimed at improving capacity utilisation and achieving economies of scale without diluting the export-oriented character of SEZs, reduce export costs, and enhance the overall resilience of the SEZ ecosystem and boost global investor confidence. Additionally, the extension of tax incentives for cloud and data-centre operations within SEZs is poised to attract global manufacturers and technology firms, further strengthening India's investment

ecosystem. India's SEZ Performance Snapshot India's SEZs continue to demonstrate strong performance as key drivers of exports, investment, and employment generation.

Employment has been on rise, with SEZs employing over 31.73 lakh people as of December 2025.

Total investment amounted to 7.86 lakh crores (as of December 2025).

Exports from the operational SEZs totaled over 11.70 lakh crores in 2025-26 (till December, 2025), a 32.02% increase from the corresponding period in 2024-25.

Evolution & Policy Framework of SEZs in India

India was among the first Asian countries to adopt the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) model to promote exports, establishing Asia's first EPZ at Kandla in 1965. However, challenges such as multiple regulatory controls, procedural delays, inadequate infrastructure, and an unstable fiscal regime limited its effectiveness.

To address these shortcomings and attract greater foreign investment, the Government announced the SEZ Policy in April 2000.

The SEZ policy aimed to transform these zones into engines of economic growth by providing world-class infrastructure, an attractive fiscal framework at both Central and State levels, and a simplified regulatory environment. SEZs operated under the provisions of the Foreign Trade Policy from November 2000 to February 2006, with fiscal incentives implemented through relevant statutory provisions. To build investor confidence and demonstrate the Government's commitment to a stable SEZ policy framework, the SEZ Act, 2005 and SEZ Rules, 2006 were brought into force.

SEZ Act, 2005 and SEZ Rules, 2006 came into effect in 2005. Following extensive consultations, the Act, along with the SEZ Rules, 2006, came into force on 10 February 2006. This ushered a simplified regulatory framework with single-window clearances for matters relating to both Central and State Governments.

The Act lays down clear guiding principles for SEZs- generation of economic activity, infrastructure development, and employment creation. It also incorporates specific provisions and guidelines to ensure environmental compliance by all SEZ developers and units.

The performance and impact of SEZs are regularly monitored under the framework of the SEZ Act and Rules, with the Government evaluating outcomes based on monthly reports submitted by Development Commissioners, who are appointed by the Government to oversee the functioning, approval, and compliance of SEZ units. Further strengthening the policy framework, the SEZ Rules, 2006 were amended in June 2025 to facilitate the establishment of SEZs exclusively for the manufacturing of semiconductors and electronic components.

SEZ for Manufacturing of Semiconductors & Electronic Components

In June 2025, the Government notified two new SEZs- one at Sanand, Gujarat, and another at Dharwad, Karnataka- for the manufacturing of semiconductors and electronic components, respectively.

Semiconductors & Electronic Component sectors are capital-intensive in nature and often witness longer gestation periods before achieving profitability. To this accord, necessary amendments of setting up SEZs exclusively for manufacturing of semiconductors and electronics components have been introduced to encourage pioneering investments and strengthen policy support.

The amendments of the SEZ Rules have been made with respect to minimum land requirement to set up an SEZ exclusively for

manufacturing of semiconductors and electronics components, relaxation in encumbrance norms allowing area mortgaged or leased to Government entity to be eligible for establishment of an SEZ, to enable DTA supply of semiconductor products and inclusion of value of goods received free of cost in Net Foreign Exchange (NFE) calculations, respectively.

Collectively, these measures aim to generate high-skilled employment, expand domestic manufacturing capacity in critical high-technology sectors, and reduce India's dependence on semiconductor and electronic component imports.

Key SEZ Incentives & Facilities to Attract Domestic & Foreign Investment

SEZs offer a competitive and investor-friendly policy framework designed to promote exports, attract domestic and foreign investment, and enhance ease of doing business. Through a combination of fiscal incentives, tax benefits, and streamlined regulatory approvals, SEZs provide a conducive environment for businesses to scale operations efficiently while maintaining global competitiveness.

The incentives and facilities offered to the units in SEZs for attracting investments include-

Duty free import/domestic procurement of goods for development, operation and maintenance of SEZ units.

Exemption from Central Sales Tax, Service Tax and State sales tax. These have now subsumed into GST and supplies to SEZs are zero rated under IGST Act, 2017.

Other levies, if exempted by the respective State Governments.

Single window clearance for Central and State level approvals.

SEZs: Gateways to India's Next Wave of Growth

Over the decades, SEZs in India have evolved into powerful gateways to one of the world's fastest-growing and opportunity-rich economies. From port-led hubs such as Mundra Port and Kandla Port to sector-focused ecosystems like Sri City and GIFT City, each SEZ offers a distinct value proposition for global and domestic investors alike.

With world-class infrastructure, stable policy support, and seamless access to domestic and international markets, SEZs create a strong foundation for sustainable, long-term growth. They ease market entry, accelerate operationalization, and integrate businesses into India's expanding trade and industrial networks.

As India sharpens its focus on exports, advanced manufacturing, and financial leadership, the SEZ framework stands out as a strategic pillar- poised to drive the next wave of investment and reinforce the country's global economic stature.

## Is Capitalism Destroying Our Mental Health? Our economic system is creating three "capitalist syndromes"

Vinita Mehta

Around the world, people are struggling. Rates of anxiety, depression, loneliness, and burnout are on the rise. While these may seem like unrelated phenomena, a recent paper takes the position that they draw from the same well-spring. To wit, capitalism.

How might capitalism be giving rise to the many psychological ills of our day? Karim Bettache of the Chinese University of Hong Kong argues that capitalism as a systemic structure does more than just organize our society. It's shaping our psychology—how we feel, what we believe, and how we behave.

In particular, he zeroes in on key principles of capitalism, and makes a case for how they are fomenting mental health problems. His three "capitalist syndromes" are summarized below.

Gain Primacy Syndrome. This malady

derives from the profit motive of capitalism, that is, the drive for continuous capital accumulation and economic growth. Dr. Bettache argues that it governs how we think about ourselves and the world. For example, education is framed as investing in human capital, career success is measured in terms of income and net worth, and people internalize societal messages that they are a "brand" that constantly needs to be improved upon.

How does a capitalist mindset permeate our psyche? Dr. Bettache maintains that the very language of investment, returns, and optimization has become the prism through which we see the world. We talk about investing in relationships, the return on investment in our education, and building our personal brand.

Zero Sum Rivalry Syndrome. This affliction is borne from market competition—the need to beat out rivals for advantages in the marketplace. Dr. Bettache contends that the competitive mindset of capitalism is making

us more adversarial with each other, and damaging our relationships as a result.

In support of his argument, he cites research demonstrating that competitive environments heighten negative feelings, decrease trust, and harm social bonds when compared to cooperative environments. People in more market-oriented societies are also more prone to zero-sum thinking, seeing others gains as taking something from them. Such thinking erodes empathy and mutual support, which are essential for healthy relationships.

Ownership Syndrome. This condition stems from capitalism's core tenet that private ownership is the foundation of an economic system and personal freedom. Pursuit of ownership ultimately leads to materialism, in which people prioritize possessions and wealth. The research on materialism's negative mental health effects is well-established: It is linked to lower self-esteem, greater anxiety and depression, and

increased substance abuse.

The pressure to buy and have more is all around us. Dr. Bettache points to the car industry, as an example, which sells an identity as much as it does a mode of transportation. Luxury automobiles are a signal of status and success. High fashion similarly communicates exclusivity and belonging to a particular social tribe. We live in an environment saturated with messages that possessions and presentation is the road to self-worth.

Dr. Bettache concludes his article by suggesting ways to mitigate capitalism's effects on mental health. For instance, within education, learning has become secondary to ranking, test scores, and the like. But research shows that cooperative learning doesn't compromise academic performance—and it promotes social bonds.

Similarly, at the workplace employee ownership and worker cooperatives could motivate workers more than the pressures

of individual competition and performance.

And within the practice of psychology, Dr. Bettache proposes something radical. Perhaps clinicians should help their clients distinguish between what constitutes personal issues and those that require a collective response. It may well be that the distress people are feeling is a proportionate response to an economic system that undermines mental health.

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## Take firm action against Private schools indulging in arbitrary fee hikes: Sakeena Itoo

### Calls for strict monitoring of Private schools across J&K

KT News Desk

JAMMU, MARCH 30: Minister for Education, Social Welfare, Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo Monday directed the Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (JKBOSE) authorities to take firm action against Private schools indulging in arbitrary fee hikes and found violating prescribed norms or imposing unjustified financial burdens on parents.

The Education Minister, as per an official statement, passed on these directions while chairing a comprehensive review meeting at Civil Secretariat here to assess the performance, administrative functioning and ongoing academic reforms of JKBOSE.

The meeting was attended by Commissioner Secretary Education, Ram Niwas Sharma; Chairman JKBOSE, Ghulam Hassan Sheikh; Director School Education Kashmir, Naseer Ahmad Wani; senior officers of school education department and JKBOSE as well as other concerned officers.

During the review, the Minister evaluated the Board's preparedness for upcoming examinations, timely declaration of results, curriculum implementation and grievance redressal mechanisms. She emphasized the need for adopting technology-driven solutions to enhance operational transparency and improve coordination between schools and JKBOSE.

Highlighting the critical role of JKBOSE in shaping the academic future of students, the Minister directed officials to maintain strict quality standards and ensure accountability at all administrative levels.



"JKBOSE must continue working towards a student-centric system that promotes fairness, accessibility and academic excellence", she maintained.

Expressing concern over complaints regarding arbitrary fee hikes by certain private educational institutions, the Minister issued clear directions for constant monitoring and regular inspections of private schools. "Take firm action against Private schools indulging in arbitrary fee hikes and found violating prescribed norms or imposing unjustified financial burdens on parents", she stated.

The Minister asked the Commissioner Secretary to form committees, comprising of School Education department and JKBOSE officers, for regular inspection and monitoring of Private schools across Jammu and Kashmir, including CBSE affiliated schools.

"Schools must function with responsibility and transparency. Any attempt to exploit students or parents through unauthorized fee structures will not be tolerated," she asserted, adding that strict enforcement of existing regulations is essential to protect public trust.

The Minister called for

strengthening coordination between district education authorities and regulatory bodies to ensure compliance with government guidelines. She also emphasized on establishing a robust feedback and grievance redressal mechanism to identify gaps and improve service delivery within the education system.

The Minister further directed the JKBOSE authorities to declare 10th class results of Summer zone areas timely. She also appreciated the Chairman JKBOSE for streamlining the availability of textbooks in all educational institutions and commended him for bringing various initiatives in the Board which has contributed to its overall operational efficiency.

Reaffirming the government's commitment to equitable and quality education, the Minister urged all stakeholders to work collectively towards building a transparent, accountable and student-friendly educational ecosystem in Jammu and Kashmir.

During the meeting, Chairman JKBOSE, Ghulam Hassan Sheikh gave a detailed presentation on various functional domains of JKBOSE. He informed the Minister about

various initiatives undertaken by the Board under NEP-2020 like curriculum and textbook development, Foundation Stage (ECCE), Vocationalisation of Education, Equitable & Inclusive Education, Examination Reforms, State Institute of Open Schooling, IT Interventions and Energised Textbooks.

He also informed the meeting about other initiatives like integration of Vocational Subjects at Secondary and Higher Secondary Levels in various trades like Agriculture, apparels, Made ups & Home Furnishing, Automotive, Beauty & Wellness, Electronics & Hardware, Healthcare, IT/ITeS, Retail, Physical Education & Sports, Plumbing Assistant, Telecom, Tourism and Hospitality, Media & Entertainment as well as Power sector.

Further, the Chairman outlined about the Energized Textbooks initiative under DIKSHA, informing that 71 out of 89 JKBOSE published textbooks have been Energized under DIKSHA, a national digital platform for knowledge sharing for teachers for learning and professional development.

He also briefed the Minister about the various measures for Equitable and Inclusive

Education (Exemptions in JKBOSE Examinations) like facility to use an amanuensis, scribe, Prompter/ Sign Language interpreter and Computer Facility to use assistive devices to write Board examination, flexibility in curricular choices (Exemption from Second language), accommodation & exemptions for Divyang/ CWSN in Board Examinations Under RPWD Act - 2016, exemption of Registration/ Examination Fee as well as relaxation in Pass Percentage with extra time in examination.

The Chairman also outlined various IT Interventions and Digitisation services in JK BOSE like full-scale functionality of e-Office in JKBOSE Central and Divisional Offices, real-time integration of Student Records with DigiLocker, besides comprehensive online services for affiliation, registration, migration, eligibility, examination forms, photostat and re-evaluation facility as well as declaration of results. He added that around 9 Lakh students/beneficiaries availed JKBOSE services in Academic Year 2025-26, besides 51.65 lakh student records are available on Digi Locker.

Regarding upcoming initiatives, the Chairman informed the Minister that introduction of Two Level of Mathematics at Secondary stage is on anvil, MoU for Strengthening Skillung Programme after DUAL Recognition with NCVET, New Delhi is in final stage, implementation of Holistic Progress Cards (HPC) is being launched in PM Shri schools on pilot basis, besides Certificate and Diploma courses in ECCE is also being introduced soon.

BUDGET SESSION 2026 CALLING ATTENTION

## Buffer zone norms being eased for SDH Hazratbal construction: Govt

KT News Desk

JAMMU, MARCH 30: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, Monday informed the House that the process for relaxation of buffer zone restrictions under Srinagar Master Plan-2035 for construction of SDH Hazratbal is ongoing and the matter is currently in General Administration Department (GAD) for its placement before the Council of Ministers.

The Minister, as per an official statement, stated this in reply to the Calling Attention Notice moved by Salman Sagar in the Legislative Assembly Monday.

She informed that the new hospital site of SDH Hazratbal falls within the 200-meter buffer zone of Dal Lake, requiring clearance from the Lakes Conservation and Management Authority (LCMA).

She added that after pursuing the matter with the LCMA through GMC Srinagar, LCMA has advised the department to place a formal proposal before the Cabinet seeking relaxation of the 100-meter buffer restriction for this project.

The Minister said that, thereafter, the matter of relaxation of buffer zone restrictions under Srinagar Master Plan-2035 for construction of SDH Hazratbal, was taken up with the General Administration Department for its placement



before the Council of Ministers. They advised the department to approach the Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs for legal opinion prior to the re-submission of the case file to GAD for placement before the Council Ministers. She added that the Law Department suggested proceeding with a draft Memo/Coordination note to be placed before the Council via GAD, after vetting by HUDD and departmental approval.

The Minister added that the matter was subsequently taken up with HUDD and based on their advice, revised draft memo has been prepared by incorporating the opinion. She added that the revised draft memorandum has been submitted to General Administration Department for consideration and placement before the Council of Ministers in the ensuing meeting.

## Around 150 principals, lecturers, teachers being detached to their original postings: Education Minister

KT News Desk

JAMMU, MARCH 30: Minister for Education, Sakeena Itoo Monday informed the House that around 150 Principals, Lecturers and Teachers are being detached to their original postings in School Education department to streamline the academic activities in Gurez, as well as other far flung and rural areas.

The Minister, as per an official statement, stated this in Legislative Assembly Monday during Zero Hour in response to issue of non-availability of teachers in Gurez area, raised by Legislator, Nazir Ahmad Khan (Gurez).

The Education Minister underlined that the step is being taken to ensure smooth educational activities in these areas and ensure equitable education for the students. She further said that the Director School Education Kashmir has already been instructed to complete the process of detachment, particularly in the districts of Baramulla, Bandipora and Srinagar and post them in original place of postings.

She added that no representations from any quarters regarding transfers will be entertained in education department, except on the grounds of health emergency or marriage.

## Import of New Zealand apple having minimal impact on J&K: J&K Govt

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Mar 30: The Government on Monday said that apple imports from New Zealand under the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) have a minimal impact on the domestic apple industry, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir, where horticulture remains the backbone of the economy.

Replying to a question by MLA Shabir Ahmad Kullay, Agriculture Production Minister Javed Dar informed the House that a tariff-rate quota (TRQ) has been introduced under the agreement, allowing concessional import duty on a limited quantity of apples from New Zealand.

He said that while apples imported into India currently attract a 50 percent customs duty, a reduced duty of 25 percent will apply only within a specified quota—starting at 32,500 metric tonnes (MT) in the first year and gradually increasing to 45,000 MT by the sixth year. Imports beyond this quota will continue to attract the full duty.

The Minister emphasized that the volume of apple imports from New Zealand remains negligible when

compared to the production in Jammu and Kashmir as well as at the national level. He said that such imports accounted for just 0.97 percent of J&K's apple production in 2023-24 and 1.46 percent in 2024-25. Similarly, at the national level, imports constituted only 0.77 percent and 1.17 percent of total production during the same period.

"No specific study has so far been conducted to assess the impact of New Zealand apple imports on local production, prices, sales, or employment in Jammu and Kashmir," Dar said, adding that the government continues to monitor the situation closely.

The Minister said the apple industry is a major source of income and employment in the Union Territory. Apple production in J&K has shown a steady rise over the past three years, increasing from 20.40 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) in 2022-23 to 21.10 LMT in 2024-25. However, exports have seen a decline from 18.14 LMT to 13.34 LMT during the same period.

To safeguard the interests of local orchardists and boost the sector, the government has rolled out a series of initiatives aimed at improving productivity, strengthening infrastructure, and enhancing market access.

## NC questions PDP for opposing Rajbagh-Sangarmal Flyover, calls it politics over people

KT News Desk

Srinagar, 30 Mar: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference Monday launched a sharp attack on the People's Democratic Party, terming its protests against the Rajbagh-Sangarmal flyover as "fabricated outrage".

In a statement issued from the party headquarters Nawae-Subha, State Spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar said the PDP has reduced itself to a cycle of theatrics, misinformation and staged dissent in a desperate attempt to stay relevant.

Imran underscored that the Rajbagh-Sangarmal flyover is not merely a construction project but a critical urban intervention aimed at easing traffic congestion and improving connectivity in Srinagar. He questioned the logic of opposing such a project, saying that when development becomes discomfiting, it often exposes deeper political insecurities.

Recalling the project's origins, Imran noted that it was first conceived in 2011 under a National Conference-led government.



Despite attempts by certain vested-interest groups to stall it through legal means, the court dismissed their petition and imposed a fine of Rs 50,000, observing that the challenge lacked genuine public cause.

He further pointed out that the project's trajectory was altered during the PDP-BJP alliance, when the proposed flyover was scaled down to a footbridge, a move he described as "a telling metaphor for shrinking vision."

Reaffirming the party's developmental commitment, Imran said the National Conference had promised to restore the project to its original vision, a promise

now fulfilled with Chief Minister Omar Abdullah approving it in a recent cabinet meeting.

While welcoming this as a long-overdue corrective step, Imran expressed concern that the same vested interests have resurfaced, this time with the PDP at the forefront. He remarked that opposition for relevance is easy; opposition with credibility is not.

He said that the public has not forgotten the political choices that enabled the BJP's entry into power in the region, adding that those who scripted that chapter can scarcely claim to be custodians of public interest Monday.

## Super Bazar Jammu to get modern makeover: Yasha Mudgal

KT News Desk

JAMMU, MARCH 30: Commissioner Secretary, Cooperative Department, Yasha Mudgal, Monday chaired a comprehensive review meeting at the Civil Secretariat to assess the overall functioning and performance of Jammu Cooperative Wholesale Limited (JCWL), Super Bazar Jammu.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Mohammad Shafiq Chak, Registrar Cooperative Societies, J&K; Bhawani Attri, Deputy Registrar (Agri), Cooperative Societies Jammu and Member, Board of Administrators, Super Bazar Jammu besides other senior officers of the Cooperative

Department.

The General Manager, Super Bazar Jammu, presented a detailed overview of the institution's current status, financial performance and operational challenges. This was followed by an in-depth discussion on various aspects of its functioning.

The meeting reviewed the functioning of all the outlets and branches of Super Bazar Jammu, including the physical progress of the ongoing renovation and upgradation works at the Gandhi Nagar branch being carried out under the CAPEX budget.

The Commissioner Secretary directed for timely and quality completion of the renovation



work at Gandhi Nagar branch, ensuring early commissioning of the upgraded facility.

Emphasizing the urgent need for business diversification, Yasha Mudgal directed the management to immediately explore and implement

new revenue streams such as introduction of organic and specialty products, household utility sections and value-added services. She stressed that Super Bazar Jammu must be developed into a vibrant, customer-centric and financially sustainable economic entity that can compete effectively in the modern retail market.

She further directed that concerted efforts be made to enroll all the eligible Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS) and Cooperative Marketing Societies (CMS) as members of Jammu Cooperative Wholesale Limited to strengthen the supply chain and provide direct market access to the

farmers, in line with the principle of "Cooperation among Cooperatives." She asked the Registrar Cooperative Societies to personally monitor the membership drive and ensure tangible progress within the next two months.

Reviewing the sales performance of various outlets, the Commissioner Secretary expressed concern over the current revenue trends. She directed the management to prepare a detailed action plan within 15 days for increasing sales by at least 25 percent in the next financial year. She specifically instructed that aggressive marketing strategies, attractive discount schemes and promotional campaigns

be launched to boost customer footfall.

Yasha Mudgal also directed the revision of working hours of all the outlets and branches to align with public convenience and peak shopping hours. She emphasized that outlets should remain open till late evening on weekdays and maintain extended hours on weekends to maximize the business opportunities.

Highlighting the importance of innovation and modernization, the Commissioner Secretary called for immediate introduction of modern business practices. She further directed for optimal utilization of the available space in the main Super Bazar complex

by setting up additional commercial kiosks and other public utility services to generate supplementary revenue.

She instructed all the concerned officers to ensure strict inventory management, reduce wastage and maintain proper hygiene and cleanliness standards across all outlets. She also emphasized the need for regular training and capacity building of staff to improve service quality and customer satisfaction.

The Commissioner Secretary urged all the stakeholders to work with full dedication, coordination and accountability to turn Super Bazar Jammu into a model cooperative retail institution in the Union Territory.

## Projects worth Rs. 1503.146 lakh being executed for preservation, beautification of Brari-Nambal: Govt

'Rs. 212.38 cr project approved for conservation of Dal-Nigeen Lake ecosystem'

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Mar 30: The Jammu and Kashmir Lake Conservation and Management Authority (JKLCMA) has executed various projects under Atal Mission for Rejuvenation & Urban Transformation (AMRUT) and PMDP for preservation, conservation, beautification and development of Tourist facilities at Brari Nambal.

This was stated by Minister for Health and Medical Education,

Sakeena Itoo, in Legislative Assembly today while replying to a question of Legislator Shamim Firdous on behalf of Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah regarding beautification of Brari-Nambal.

The Minister informed the House that under AMRUT an amount of Rs. 876.024 Lakh is being spent on rejuvenation and revival of Brari-Nambal Lagoon through various means like dredging of main water body, dredging of its connected channels viz. Rainawari and Nowpora Channels, construction of 1000 meters walkway and slope stabilization, improvement to temple, removal of solid waste, restoration of damaged electric poles, repairs and renovation of existing grill fencing and

installation of aerators.

It was also informed that for integrated development of Tourist facilities at Brari-Nambal Lagoon, Rs. 627.122 Lakh is being spent under different initiatives like construction of food court near MP School, installation of fountain near Shehri Khas Gate, construction of central verge, construction of Jetty near Shehri-Khas Gate, construction of inner and outer pathways and providing of ornamental grill fencing.

In addition, the J&K LCMA has proposed to frame a DPR for further development and beautification of the Brarinambal for which RFP is under preparation and shall be floated in the next financial year.

The Minister also informed

the House that for tackling pollution and encroachment issues/factors affecting the Dal Lake's ecosystem, Jammu & Kashmir Pollution Control Committee (JKPCC) actively monitors water quality of Dal Lake on a monthly basis with samples collected and analyzed for various physico-chemical and biological parameters like DO, BOD, COD, pH, Fecal and Total coliform.

It was also informed that during April-December 2025, water quality monitoring at Dal Lake's 21 locations revealed that none met the 'Class B' criteria for BOD while 19 locations met the criteria for fecal coliform.

It was further informed that approximately 3108 families shifted from inside Dal Lake had

been rehabilitated at designated housing colonies as a conservation measure. Besides, continuous de-weeding and cleaning is being undertaken throughout the year both manually and mechanically for conservation of Dal Lake.

It was also given out that five Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) have been constructed with total treatment capacity of 36.73 MLD for domestic sewage from peripheral/adjoining areas. Besides, 721 houseboats in Dal-Nigeen Lake have been connected to existing STPs to prevent direct discharge of sewage into the lake.

The Minister also informed that 100 bio-digesters have been installed on pilot basis in Tailbal area for scientific sewage

handling, while upgradation of two STPs at Brarinambal and Nallah Amir Khan is in progress to meet NGT norms under AMRUT 2.0.

Further, it was given out that 30 MLD STP is being constructed at Guptganga by J&K UEED to arrest sewage from left-out areas, besides fencing works have been undertaken in various catchment areas, maintenance and development of inflow channels/nallahs to reduce silt load as well as regular water quality testing as per CPCB norms by Research & Monitoring (R&M) Wing of J&K LCMA.

To prevent illegal constructions and encroachments in and around Dal Lake, no new construction is being permitted within the lake area and

200 meters buffer zone (as declared by the High Court, J&K). Also, regular anti-encroachment drives are being conducted and routine enforcement nakas are enforced to curb transportation of illegal construction material.

For integrated Management Plan for conservation of Dal Nigeen Lake Ecosystem, the Minister informed that a Project has been taken up under PMDP Scheme for Rehabilitation of Dal Dwellers, adding that a DPR prepared by IIT Roorkee has been approved for 212.38 crore for five years with focus areas like sewerage of internal hamlets, catchment management and mitigation of silt load.

Legislators Mubarik Gul and Tanvir Ali Sadiq raised supplementary questions on the subject.

### CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

#### Draw inspiration

Mataram event and embrace of its values signal a transformative power for the future.

"I firmly believe a region's greatest strength lies in its ability to envision its future. In Jammu Kashmir, I'm witnessing that potential flourish. It's vital to spread the message that true patriotism is the bedrock of peace and progress. It's a sense of responsibility, a spirit of contribution, assuring us that we can better the world together," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor said that Vande Mataram symbolized the dream, goal, and resolve generations fought for and the special week-long phase offered moments to reflect at the confluence of history and aspiration, paying tribute to countless sacrifices that grant us today's freedom, unity, and pride.

"Vande Mataram inspires us to honor our past, empower our present, and pledge a bright future. This was a UT-level introspection, reviving cultural roots through public participation and enlisting every citizen in nation-building," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor also called upon the political parties, civil society members and all sections of society to join the fight against drug menace and transform Nasha Mukta campaign into People's Movement in Jammu Kashmir.

Earlier, the Lieutenant Governor paid tribute to the great freedom fighters and visited a photo exhibition depicting their historic contributions.

The atmosphere was further enriched by the enthralling patriotic performances by the artists of J&K Academy of Art, Culture & Languages and students of Cluster University of Jammu.

Pertinently, the special phase marking the 150 years of Vande Mataram was organised from March 23 to March 30 2026 to commemorate Shaheed Diwas and honor the great martyrs of the freedom struggle, whose immense sacrifices paved the way for India's independence.

Members of Legislative Assembly, Yudhvir Sethi, Vikram Randhawa and Arvind Gupta; Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo; Additional Chief Secretaries, Shaleen Kabra and Shailendra Kumar; Principal Secretary Culture, Brij Mohan Sharma; Commissioner Secretary, School Education, Ram Niwas Sharma, Vice Chancellors of various universities and senior officials were present.

Padma Shri Dr Jitendra Udhampuri; Padma Shri Dr SP Varma; prominent citizens from different walks of life and youth in large number also attended the closing ceremony organised by Culture department. (KNO)

#### Mission YUVA to

facing Jammu and Kashmir.

"I would like to say a few words about the importance of this mission. We all know that there is a very big and complicated issue of unemployment in Jammu and Kashmir. You can see this issue everywhere in Jammu and Kashmir—whether in the plains, hilly or remote areas," he said.

He reiterated that no country has solved unemployment solely through government jobs.

"I have always said that no country has solved the issue of unemployment through government employment. I am not saying that we will not provide government jobs, it is our duty. But we also know that we cannot provide government jobs to everyone. If we cannot provide them, then what? Should the government raise its hands? We cannot do this," he said.

Calling it a failure to do nothing beyond government hiring, the Chief Minister stressed the need to create opportunities for self-employment.

"It is our duty to create a situation where people can create their own units. Instead of asking for jobs, you should be the ones who provide the jobs," he added.

He said the government aims to empower youth so that they transition from job seekers to job providers.

"We want to strengthen your hands so much that instead of asking for jobs, you yourselves start providing jobs to people," he said.

The Chief Minister highlighted that the scheme's success lies in its mission-mode implementation.

"Within a year, if this scheme distributes 1,000 crore. We could have called it a youth scheme or programme, but we used the word 'mission' because we have taken it in a mission mode," he said.

He added that working in mission mode brings seriousness, energy and renewed focus.

"Schemes will continue, but taking

something in a mission mode is different. A new life and seriousness come into it," he noted.

The Chief Minister expressed gratitude to J&K Bank for its crucial role in implementing the scheme.

"I am very thankful to J&K Bank because this is not possible without their support," he said.

He acknowledged the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in securing loans, including collateral requirements, guarantees and associated risks.

"Those who have opened units know how difficult it is to take a loan—where to get collateral, who will guarantee it. There is always fear that if the business fails, families may lose their assets," he said.

He pointed out that even large industrialists face uncertainties, making risk a universal factor.

"Even big industrialists in this country have seen their businesses shut down. So, the fear is real," he said.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah emphasised that the government's role goes beyond financial support.

"Our work is not just to give you a cheque. Even after that, we must support you, whether in marketing or expansion," he said.

Referring humorously to his own efforts to promote businesses, he said even small gestures can help.

"If from my one tweet, their OTT platform gains two viewers, it is still something. If I go and eat ice cream somewhere and more people follow, that is also our work," he remarked.

He acknowledged that entrepreneurship is challenging and not everyone may succeed.

"Opening and running a business is not easy. Not everyone can become an entrepreneur. But those who can should not face obstacles due to funding or DPR issues," he said.

The Chief Minister cited examples of young entrepreneurs, including a PhD from Srinagar who started a mobile car spa service.

"He had the idea and education, but without funding, such ideas remain on paper," he said.

He also referred to the challenges of launching platforms like OTT services, noting their complexity and importance in promoting J&K's culture globally.

Encouraging beneficiaries, the Chief Minister expressed hope that businesses would grow and generate employment.

"Those who have employed five people should employ 10-15 next year so that this process continues," he said.

He assured periodic review of the scheme to improve its effectiveness.

The Chief Minister stressed the importance of constructive feedback.

"In open forums, positive aspects are highlighted. But in closed rooms, we must also listen to those who faced difficulties," he said.

He said identifying weaknesses and addressing them is key to strengthening the mission.

He also called for dovetailing Mission YUVA with other initiatives like Lakhpati Didi.

"If we connect grassroots entrepreneurs with Mission YUVA, provide easy funding, help in DPR preparation and marketing, then one day, inshallah, Lakhpati Didis will become Crorepati Didis," he said.

Highlighting the inclusive nature of the programme, the Chief Minister noted participation across party lines.

"You can see BJP, Congress, Independents, National Conference—all are here. This shows there is no politics in this effort. We are here to reduce unemployment and support your entrepreneurial spirit," he said.

He concluded by thanking the Deputy Chief Minister, Chief Secretary and all departments for their contributions.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister carried out a Single-Day Mega Disbursal covering 3,003 cases amounting to over 100 crore, marking a major milestone alongside achieving 1,000 crore cumulative credit by J&K Bank under Mission YUVA.

He also launched a Credit Guarantee Fund for agri-allied activities and digitally inaugurated 20 Small Business Development Units (SBDUs).

The Chief Minister interacted with entrepreneurs, appreciated their business ideas and distributed cheques among beneficiaries of Neo Innovative Enterprises (Seed Money) as well as those covered under the 3,003 disbursal cases.

Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary said the initiative marks the beginning of a transformative journey and reaffirmed that the Omar Abdullah-led government will deliver on its promise of employment, enabling youth to become self-reliant and both employed and employers.

Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo assured full

government support to youth wherever required.

Managing Director & CEO, J&K Bank, Amitava Chatterjee said that rarely has a government-backed initiative achieved such success in any State or Union Territory.

Ministers Sakina Itoo, Javid Ahmad Dar and Satish Sharma, several MLAs, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, Secretary Labour & Employment Kumar Rajeev Ranjan, Director IIM Jammu, Mission Director Mission YUVA, Deputy Commissioners, entrepreneurs, beneficiaries and other stakeholders were present on the occasion.

Outstation officers and beneficiaries attended the programme through video conferencing.

#### Nine Private Member

Bill No. 11 of 2025".

Legislator, Altaf Ahmad Wani also introduced the Bill which reads, "A Bill to amend the Jammu and Kashmir Preservation of Specified Trees, Act, 1969, to grant owners the free will to cut Walnut Trees standing on their land while ensuring environmental sustainability (L.A. Private Members' Bill No. 13 of 2025)".

Similarly, MLA Mubarik Gul, introduced a bill which reads, "A Bill to provide for the Salaries, Allowances and other benefits of the Chief Whip of the majority party in the Legislative Assembly of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir (L.A. Private Members' Bill No. 19 of 2025)".

Likewise, Legislator, Dr. Bashir Ahmad Shah Veeri introduced a Bill which reads, "A Bill to restore and safeguard River Jhelum and to protect from further degradation, ensuring its ecological sustainability through waste management measures and strict penalties for pollution (L.A. Private Members' Bill No. 23 of 2025)".

After discussion in the House, the Legislators withdrew these bills after assurances from the Government that the existing legal and regulatory framework is addressing these concerns.

Meanwhile, Legislator Waheed Ur Rehman Para moved a bill which reads, "A Bill to provide for establishment of a residential and technical University in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir to offer higher learning in various streams. The University will be set up by utilizing the surplus funds of Kashmir Creative Educational Foundation, a Society (L.A. Private Members' Bill No. 9 of 2025)".

Legislator Balwant Singh Mankotia moved a bill which reads, "A Bill to provide for the protection of temples and retrieval of illegally occupied land in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir (L.A. Private Members' Bill No. 16 of 2025)".

After the discussion in the House, the Members pressed for their introduction, which was subsequently rejected through voice voting in the House.

MLA, Pawan Kumar Gupta, also introduced a bill which reads, "A Bill to provide compassionate appointments to the next of kin of deceased government employees, security personnel and civilians affected by militancy or enemy action (L.A. Private Members' Bill No. 27 of 2025)".

#### Omar urges immediate

simple," he said, adding, "We want the war to end. If any country can help achieve that, let it be. And if India can play a better role, we should take it."

Referring to the BJP's collaborations in Assam, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, he said, "These alliances will ultimately decide outcomes, including in Pondicherry." (KNO)

#### Private Members

Observer (KNO) said it was "unfair" to suggest that such bills are opposed routinely without application of mind.

Bhat, who represents Bandipora Assembly segment, had submitted a private member bill seeking equitable employment opportunities in civil services.

"It may appear as if we simply rise to oppose a bill, but that is not the case," Omar said, adding that all proposals reaching the government are studied in detail, including their feasibility, advantages and drawbacks.

He said the government supports proposals where benefits outweigh concerns, but noted that Congress legislator's bill, after examination, presented more challenges than advantages.

Acknowledging the concern raised by the legislator, the chief minister said the issue of employment equity requires attention, but maintained that the current bill was not a workable solution.

The CM said restricting recruitment or postings to the local level could create

administrative complications.

He assured the House that the government would explore alternative measures to address the issue raised by the legislator.

Bhat later withdrew the bill after assurance by the Chief Minister. (KNO)

#### LG, CM greet

selflessly for the upliftment of the downtrodden and the collective welfare of society."

CM Abdullah extended warm greetings to the people on the auspicious occasion of Mahavir Jayanti, wishing them happiness, peace and prosperity.

In his message, Abdullah said Jammu and Kashmir has a rich legacy of celebrating festivals and sacred occasions in an atmosphere of unity and harmony. He called upon the people to further strengthen this cherished tradition, adding that such occasions offer an opportunity to deepen mutual bonds of love, reinforce communal harmony and promote brotherhood across society.

The Chief Minister prayed for sustained peace, prosperity and progress of Jammu and Kashmir and the nation.

#### Snowfall, rain disrupt

added to the challenges faced by rescue teams.

Deputy Commissioner Bandipora Indu Kanwal Chib monitored the operation and directed all departments to ensure the safe evacuation of passengers. The teams worked continuously to clear snow and debris, restoring partial connectivity and facilitating movement.

All stranded tourists were evacuated safely and provided necessary assistance, including medical aid, officials said.

The Meteorological Department has predicted that erratic weather conditions across Jammu and Kashmir will continue till April 10.

Meanwhile, a massive landslide hit Uri in Baramulla, blocking the road, with authorities deploying men and machinery to clear the debris.

According to the MeT Centre, intermittent light to moderate rain and snowfall in higher reaches, accompanied by thunder and gusty winds with speeds of 40-50 kmph, is likely to continue till Monday evening, with improvement expected thereafter.

From March 31 to April 2, brief spells of light rain or snow may occur at isolated places, particularly during late afternoon hours, while generally cloudy conditions with scattered precipitation are expected on April 3 and 4.

Partly cloudy weather is likely between April 5 and 7, followed by fresh spells of light rain or snow at scattered locations from April 8 to 10.

The MeT office has warned of the possibility of moderate rainfall at a few places and moderate snowfall over higher reaches of north and central Kashmir, along with thunder, lightning and gusty winds.

It also cautioned about the risk of landslides at vulnerable locations and advised travellers to follow traffic advisories.

Authorities in Ganderbal, Anantnag and Kupwara districts have issued avalanche warnings in prone areas, urging residents to avoid unnecessary movement until conditions improve.

Farmers have been advised to suspend agricultural activities till April 1 and resume operations between March 31 and April 2 where conditions permit.

Independent weather observers said the current system is expected to weaken from Tuesday morning, although isolated light showers may continue at some places, with largely dry weather expected by mid-week. (KNO)

#### J&K Lok Bhavan

and Punjabi have enriched its literary and cultural traditions.

"Rajasthan shines as a treasure trove of spirituality, valor, heroism, and folk arts. Since ancient times, the Aravalli hills and Thar Desert have witnessed its cultural wealth, with its brave sons dedicating their prowess to Mother India's honor and glory," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor stated that during the Bhakti era, luminaries from Rajasthan spread fresh ideas and awakened self-confidence. "Born in Pali, Meerabai is revered as the torchbearer of Bhakti. Ancient sages declare her the embodiment of devotion itself—synonymous with surrender and sacrifice," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor also spoke on Odisha's rich tapestry of cultural, spiritual and artistic traditions.

"Odisha stands as a testament to millennia of India's cultural and spiritual golden age. From Emperor Ashoka's era in 261 BCE—when it was

known as Kalinga—to the 21st century, this sacred land has invaluable contributed to forging a mighty Bharat," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor paid tribute to the towering personalities and luminaries of the two states and recalled their significant contribution to nation building.

"Great figures from both states fueled goal-oriented devotion through Bhakti. Their vibrant folk arts, music-embedded culture, life values, and industrial feats have fortified the "Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat" ethos, preserving social principles," the Lieutenant Governor said.

Officials, Students, Faculty members from various educational institutions and the people of Rajasthan and Odisha living in J&K UT were the special invitees on the occasion.

#### Govt examining

Democratic Party legislator Waheed-Ur-Rehman Para accused the Jammu & Kashmir government of lacking intent to take new initiatives.

Para, as per KNO said, the government was failing to run and protect its own institutions while also ignoring proposals aimed at strengthening the education sector.

He said the bill proposed to set -up Sheikh-ul-Alam University at Pulwama would not have imposed any financial burden on the government.

He said the proposed university could have emerged as a major center of higher learning and excellence in the region.

He said that such an institution was needed at a time when Kashmiri students studying outside the Valley face safety concerns.

He said around one lakh students from Kashmir are pursuing education outside the region.

The legislator termed the government's decision to oppose the bill as unfortunate, stating that it contradicted claims of improving the education sector. (KNO)

#### J&K example of

on religious land across the Jammu and Kashmir, asserting that existing laws are sufficient to safeguard all religious properties.

He stressed that the government maintains a zero-tolerance approach towards illegal occupation of land belonging to religious institutions and acts promptly in such cases, adding that the government remains focused on upholding communal harmony and safeguarding the pluralistic ethos of Jammu and Kashmir.

Calling the proposed bill unnecessary, the Deputy Chief Minister said the government's commitment to protect religious places and maintain brotherhood in the Union Territory is firm and consistent. He described Jammu and Kashmir as an example of coexistence where all faiths are respected and protected. (KNO)

#### Govt orders

Production Department. He shall also hold the charge of the posts of Mission Director, Holistic Development Agriculture Programme (HADP) and Jammu and Kashmir Competitiveness Improvement Project (JKCIP), relieving Sandeep Kumar, IFS (AGMUT: 2011), of the additional charges, who shall await further orders of posting in the Forest, Ecology and Environment Department.

Shreya Singhal, IAS (AGMUT: 2020), Managing Director, J&K Tourism Development Corporation, holding additional charge of the post of CEO, JK ERA, shall also hold the charge of the post of Director, Information, J&K, in addition to her own duties. She shall assume the charge of the post of Director, Information, J&K on April 1, 2026.

Mahima Madan, IAS (AGMUT: 2021), Additional Secretary to the Government, Information Technology Department, holding additional charge of the posts of CEO, JaKeGA and Additional Secretary, Resident Commission, New Delhi, is divested of the additional charge of Additional Secretary, Resident Commission, New Delhi.

Amit Gupta, IAS (AGMUT: 2023), awaiting orders of adjustment in the General Administration Department, is posted as Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Pahalgam vice Qaiser Mehmood, JKAS, who shall await further orders of posting in the General Administration Department.

It further says, Rajesh Kumar Shavan, JKAS, Special Secretary to the Government, Tribal Affairs Department, is transferred and posted as Director, Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department, Jammu vice Rifat Kohli, JKAS, who shall await further orders of posting in the General Administration Department. By order of the Lieutenant Governor. (KNO)

## Congress did nothing to end Naxal violence: Amit Shah in Lok Sabha

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 30: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday blamed the Congress for the long spell of Naxal violence, saying it did "nothing" during its rule to end the menace despite acknowledging the gravity of the problem, and declared that Maoists are almost eradicated now from their den Bastar in Chhattisgarh.

Replying to the debate in the Lok Sabha on 'Efforts to free the country from left-wing extremism (LWE)', Shah said that 12 states had turned into the Red Corridor with no rule of law, 12 crore people lived in poverty for years and 20,000 people, including 5,000 security personnel, were killed due to the Naxal violence.

"In the end, who is responsible for this. I want to ask, in 75 years, you ruled for 60 years, why have the tribals still been deprived of development? The development of tribals is now being done by Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

The Home Minister alleged that for 60 years, the Congress "did not give the tribals houses,



didn't give them water, didn't build schools, didn't extend bank facilities".

"So first look a little into your own reign and see who is at fault," he said in response to some opposition members blaming the Modi government for the violence.

Shah said the then prime minister Manmohan Singh had acknowledged that Naxalism was a bigger challenge than the

Kashmir and North-East problems before the nation, but the "Congress did nothing about it".

The debate was held a day before the deadline declared by Shah for the elimination of Naxal violence.

Last year, Shah had announced that the LWE would end in the country by March 31, 2026, and a major operation had been organised against the Naxals.

Be it in Naxal-affected

areas, Jammu and Kashmir or the Northeast, the Modi government will not tolerate any kind of violence and will take strong action against anyone indulging in such acts, the home minister asserted in the Lok Sabha.

He said that the development in Bastar had stalled because the shadow of red terror loomed there. "Now this shadow is lifting and Bastar is developing," he said while lauding security forces and

tribals for the success against the Naxals.

The Home Minister made it clear that the Modi government will not spare anyone who picks up arms.

"The biggest achievement of the Modi government is a Naxal-free India; any researcher will accept this," he said.

He said those advocating Naxalism should know that people who take up arms will have to pay a price.

The solution for addressing injustice is prescribed in the Constitution. Taking up arms is not the answer, he said.

"Today, Naxalism has been almost completely eradicated from Bastar. A campaign was launched to build a school in every village in Bastar. A campaign was launched to open ration shops in every village in Bastar," he said.

Shah also said that all credit for the success against the Maoists goes to the Central Armed Police Forces personnel, especially the brave soldiers of Cobra and CRPF, security agencies, Chhattisgarh Police, DRG personnel and tribal inhabitants.

## Modi, Dutch PM discuss strategic ties in phone conversation



PTI

New Delhi, Mar 30: Dutch Prime Minister Rob Jetten on Monday held a phone conversation with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi that focused on boosting India-Netherlands strategic partnership including in areas of defence, innovation and trade.

Jetten was sworn in as the prime minister of the Netherlands last month. He is the youngest leader to hold the top post in the European nation.

It is learnt that the West Asia crisis and its economic impact figured in conversation between the two prime ministers.

"Our ties with India are growing stronger and stronger. Earlier this year, the EU and India concluded a major trade

agreement, and the Netherlands and India are developing a strategic partnership that includes defence, water management, innovation and trade," the Dutch leader said on social media.

"With everything going on in the world at the moment, now is the time to strengthen our cooperation," he said.

"Prime Minister @narendramodi of India and I discussed this in an introductory phone conversation today. I look forward to welcoming him to the Netherlands soon so we can make further progress on these issues," Jetten said.

India and the European Union (EU) firm up a landmark Free Trade Agreement (FTA) following summit talks between Prime Minister Modi and the EU leadership in January.

## Dalal street ends FY26 with sharp decline

Sensex drops 1,635 points, Nifty below 22,350



Declining for the second day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 1,635.67 points or 2.22 per cent to settle at 71,947.55. During the day, it plunged 1,809.09 points or 2.45 per cent to 71,774.13.

PTI

Mumbai, Mar 30: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended the last trading session of the 2025-26 fiscal year sharply lower on Monday as the ongoing war in West Asia and surging crude oil prices kept investors' sentiment fragile.

Weak trends in Asian markets and unabated foreign fund outflows also added to the bearish trend in domestic equities.

Declining for the second day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 1,635.67 points or 2.22 per cent to settle at 71,947.55. During the day, it plunged 1,809.09 points or 2.45 per cent to 71,774.13.

The 50-share NSE Nifty slumped 488.20 points or 2.14 per cent to end at 22,331.40.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance, State Bank of India, InterGlobe Aviation, Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank were among the biggest laggards.

On the other hand, Tech Mahindra and Power Grid were the gainers.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 2.18 per cent to USD 115.1 per barrel.

In the 2025-26 financial year, the BSE benchmark plunged 5,467.37 points, or 7 per cent, and the Nifty dropped 1,187.95 points, or 5 per cent.

In Asian markets, South Korea's benchmark Kospi and Japan's Nikkei 225 index plunged nearly 3 per cent. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index also settled lower,

while Shanghai's SSE Composite index ended in positive territory.

Markets in Europe were trading marginally higher.

The US market ended significantly lower on Friday. The Nasdaq Composite index tanked 2.15 per cent, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 1.73 per cent and the S&P 500 declined by 1.67 per cent.

"Indian equities extended their decline, with benchmark indices falling over 2 per cent, underscoring a deepening sell-off sentiment driven by persistent global uncertainties and rising crude oil prices," Hariprasad K, Research Analyst and Founder, Livelong Wealth, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,367.30 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs), however, bought stocks worth Rs 3,566.15 crore.

Foreign investors have pulled out Rs 1.14 lakh crore (about USD 12.3 billion) from domestic equities in March, making it the worst monthly outflow, weighed down by escalating tensions in West Asia, a weakening rupee and concerns over the impact of elevated crude oil prices on India's growth.

On Friday, the Sensex tanked 1,690.23 points or 2.25 per cent to settle at 73,583.22. The Nifty dropped 486.85 points or 2.09 per cent to end at 22,819.60.

## Insolvency law main factor in improving health of country's banking sector: FM



PTI

New Delhi, Mar 30: Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said in the Lok Sabha that the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) has been a main and very crucial factor in improving the health of the country's banking sector, including recovery of non-performing assets.

Piloting a bill for further amending the IBC in the Lok Sabha, the minister stressed that companies have been doing well and their corporate governance practices have also improved after coming out of the insolvency resolution process.

She made the remarks while replying to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2025, as reported by the

Select Committee.

The Bill has proposed 12 amendments to the IBC, which came into force in 2016.

The IBC has been a main and very crucial factor in improving the health of the country's banking sector, Sitharaman said, adding that more than half of the NPAs (Non-Performing Assets) have been recovered by the banks through the resolution process.

On August 12, 2025, the government introduced the Bill in the Lok Sabha to amend the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), proposing a raft of changes, including provisions to reduce the time taken for admission of insolvency resolution applications.

The Bill was referred to a select committee of the Lok Sabha, which submitted its report in December 2025.

IBC has been amended seven times so far.

## Rahul Gandhi bats for woman CM in Kerala, rides bicycle



PTI

Kottayam (Kerala), Mar 30: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday drew loud cheers from the crowd when he said he was looking forward to Kerala having a woman chief minister.

Addressing a rally in Puthuppally here, Gandhi spoke about the guarantees announced by the Congress if it comes to

power, including free KSRTC bus travel for women and a monthly assistance of Rs 1,000 for college-going girl students.

He said the Congress wants women to be active participants in Kerala's development.

"In fact, we are looking forward to the day when we have a woman chief minister of Kerala," he said, drawing a loud response from the crowd.

He also remarked

that men were not clapping enough for the statement.

"We want women of Kerala to fulfil their dreams. Whatever they want to do, we want them to succeed," he said.

He said the Congress would ensure that women have the freedom to go wherever they want and pursue the jobs they choose.

"For this purpose, our guarantees include free travel for women

in KSRTC buses," he said.

No woman has so far been elevated to the post of Chief Minister in Kerala, despite prominent leaders, including K R Gouri Amma, playing significant roles in the state's politics.

In this election, the Congress has fielded only nine women candidates out of 92, while UDF allies, the Indian Union Muslim League, have fielded two women candidates, and KK Rama of the Revolutionary Marxist Party is also contesting the April 9 poll.

After the event in Puthuppally, Gandhi joined sitting MLA Chandy Oommen and the Congress candidate for a bicycle ride.

Oommen has been riding a bicycle as part of his election campaign. Both rode for a few miles, giving security personnel a tough time as they had to run behind them.

Crowds gathered on both sides of the road cheered the leaders.

## Phase one of Census 2027 to have 33 questions for citizens: Govt



The Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, Mrityunjay Kumar Narayan, said, according to a January 22 notification, enumerators will collect details such as building number (municipal or local authority or census number), census house number, and the predominant materials used for the floor, walls, and roof. They will also record the use and condition of the house and assign a household number.

PTI

New Delhi, Mar 30: The government has notified a set of 33 questions to be asked during the first phase of Census 2027 -- Housing Listing and Housing Operations (HLO) -- a month-long exercise to be conducted between April 1 and September 30 as per schedules finalised by states and Union Territories, a top official said on Monday.

The Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, Mrityunjay Kumar Narayan, said, according to a January 22 notification, enumerators will collect details such as building number (municipal or local authority or census number), census house number, and the predominant materials used for the floor, walls, and roof. They will also record the use and condition of the house and assign a household number.

They will also ask about the total number of usual residents in the household, name and sex of the head of the household, whether the head belongs to a Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe or other category, ownership status of the house, number of dwelling rooms and the number of married couples in the household, he said.

Enumerators will also gather information on amenities and assets, including the main source and availability of drinking water, source of lighting, access to and type of latrine, wastewater outlet, availability of bathing and kitchen facilities, LPG/PNG

connection, and the primary cooking fuel, Narayan said.

Data on possession of items such as radio, television, internet access, laptop/computer, telephone/mobile/smartphone, bicycle/scooter/motorcycle/moped, and car/jeep/van will also be collected, along with the main cereal consumed and a mobile number for census-related communication, he said.

Citizens can also give information through self-enumeration in 16 languages during the 15-day window preceding the start of HLO in their respective state or Union Territory. For instance, in NDMC and Delhi Cantonment, where HLO is scheduled from April 16 to May 15, self-enumeration will be available from April 1 to April 15, he said.

To self-enumerate, the head of the household or any family member can register on the official portal -- se.census.gov.in -- using a mobile number and other basic details, select the district, mark the house location on a map, and submit the information at their convenience.

A 16-digit unique Self-Enumeration ID will be generated, which will be shared with the enumerator during the field visit for verification.

"Citizens can make corrections during the verification field visit...The option will save a lot of time," Narayan said, adding that individual data will remain confidential and cannot be used in courts or for availing government benefits.

## Long live the shah: Iranian diaspora back war at Washington rally



Washington, Mar 30: More than 1,000 people of Iranian descent gathered in the US capital on Sunday to voice support for the war, riding on calls to bring back Iran's exiled crown prince who has emerged as a figure of intense interest.

Reza Pahlavi, the US-based son of Iran's last shah who was ousted by the 1979 Islamic revolution, has positioned himself as a potential transitional leader following the killing of Tehran's supreme leader in US-Israeli strikes last month.

The rally on the lawn of the National Mall, not far from the White House,

was a sea of Iranian and American flags, with chants of "USA! USA!" and "Javid shah" ("Long live the shah") bolstering the crowd, along with songs in Persian.

The former crown prince entered the global spotlight during anti-government protests in Iran, which peaked in January, where "Pahlavi will return" was among the slogans chanted nationwide.

"I agree with the war, because I think it was the only option," said Sharita Kord, a 25-year-old nurse from New York City who grew up in Iran. As for whether 65-year-old Pahlavi should return to power, Kord said: "In this situation, you don't have any

other choices."

Naz Riz, a 53-year-old attendee wearing a red "Make Iran Great Again" hat, called the conflict in Iran a "rescue operation" coordinated by Israel and the United States.

"They're like cockroaches. They're everywhere," Riz told AFP, referring to those in power in Iran.

"The best option" - Riz said she left Iran almost 30 years ago and thinks Pahlavi returning to power would be "the best option right now" to ensure a democratic transition in the country.

Nissam Crowe, another rally attendee, agreed, saying: "We want democracy. We want freedom."

The 57-year-old from Virginia was critical of the Iranian leadership, calling them "not the government for the people."

While Pahlavi was not at the rally as he was attending the CPAC conservative political conference in Texas, his wife and daughter both addressed the crowd.

Not all supporters of the Iran war back Pahlavi outright, however.

"I'm not a direct supporter of Pahlavi," Ehsan Terani, 45, of Montreal, told AFP. "At least for the transition period, I don't think there is any other alternative."

She added that after the transition phase, she hopes to see "free elections so people can choose the ruling group."

## India, Russia discuss West Asia crisis

New Delhi, Mar 30: India and Russia on Monday explored ways to further expand their already close strategic partnership against the backdrop of the West Asia crisis and its economic fallout.

The escalating conflict in West Asia is learnt to have figured prominently in Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko's meetings in New Delhi including with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

"Good to meet Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko of Russia. Spoke about further advancement of our wide-ranging cooperation. As well as regional and global developments," Jaishankar said on social media.

People familiar with the meeting said the crisis in West Asia figured in the discussion.

Rudenko also co-chaired India-Russia Foreign Office Consultations along with Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri.

"Both sides reviewed the full spectrum of Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership and shared perspectives on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

It is learnt that the two sides reviewed implementation of decisions taken at the summit talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin last December.

Following talks between the two leaders, India and Russia unveiled a raft of measures including a five-year roadmap to build a robust economic partnership and to increase the annual trade to USD 100 billion by 2030.

## Russia expels UK diplomat on spying allegations



Moscow, Mar 30: Russia on Monday ordered a diplomat at the British embassy in Moscow to leave the country over allegations he was working as a spy, Russia's FSB security service reported.

Moscow and London have expelled multiple embassy staff over the last decade, both trading accusations of espionage.

Expulsions from one side have typically been followed by a tit-for-tat response from the other.

The diplomat, whom the FSB named as 29-year-old embassy secretary Albertus Gerhardus Janse Van Rensburg, was expelled for engaging in "subversive intelligence activities that threaten Russia's security," the FSB said.

"A decision was made to strip Janse Van Rensburg of his accreditation, and he was ordered to leave Russia within two weeks," it added. The Russian

foreign ministry said it had summoned Britain's charge d'affaires over the incident and warned the United Kingdom not to retaliate.

The British embassy made no immediate public comment.

Relations between London and Moscow, currently at a low point over the Ukraine war, have been strained by spying allegations for decades.

In 2006, former FSB officer and Russian defector Alexander Litvinenko was killed in London, poisoned by polonium in what British investigators said was a hit by the Russian secret service.

In 2018, the UK said Russian double agent Sergei Skripal was poisoned with a Novichok nerve agent in the British cathedral city of Salisbury.

One member of the public was killed after handling the delivery device, a discarded perfume bottle, triggering the largest Western expulsion of Russian diplomats alleged to be spies in decades.

## Sheetal Devi named 'Para Archer of the Year' by World Archery



Lausanne, Mar 30: India's Sheetal Devi has been named 'Para Archer of the Year 2025' by World Archery, adding to her extraordinary achievements, which also include a historic world championship crown.

The 19-year-old from Jammu & Kashmir became the first and only female armless archer to win gold at the World Para Archery Championships by claiming the top honours in the women's compound individual event in Gwangju, South Korea last year.

Born without arms, Sheetal skilfully uses her feet, legs, and shoulder to draw the bow and shoot.

She also secured a complete set of medals at the World Championships, winning the women's team silver and mixed team bronze.

"India's Sheetal Devi took the honour in the para archer of the year category after another breakthrough season that included a world title in Gwangju," said World Archery.

Beyond her World Championship gold, Sheetal also boasts of a Paris Paralympics bronze in the mixed team event, along with individual silvers from the 2022 Asian Para Games and the 2023 Asian Championships in Bangkok.

"Nominated alongside

the best para archers in the world... and now named the best para archer by @worldarchery - this one feels deeply personal. A heart filled with gratitude, with emotion, with everything this journey has held. Thank you," Sheetal, who is also an Arjuna awardee, posted on 'X' on Monday.

"The 2025 World Archery Awards honour the season's most exceptional athletes and officials for their excellence, fair play and dedication to the sport," it added.

The awards, launched in 2011, honour excellence and outstanding contributions to the sport, celebrating the athletes and support staff who have defined the international archery season.

This year, the awards were presented across eight categories, including 'Archer of the Year,' which went to Emircan Haney of Turkey; 'Young Archer of the Year,' awarded to Baptiste Addis of France; and 'Best Team of the Year,' claimed by Korea's recurve men's team.

## Taiwan opposition leader accepts Xi's invitation to visit China

Taipei, Mar 30: The leader of Taiwan's main opposition party accepted an invitation from Chinese leader Xi Jinping to visit in April, her party and Chinese state media reported Monday.

Kuomintang (KMT) chairperson Cheng Li-wun, who took up her role in November, has insisted on meeting Xi before she makes an official trip to the United States, drawing criticism from inside and outside her party that she is too pro-China.

The KMT advocates closer relations and more exchanges with China, which claims Taiwan is part of its territory and has threatened to use

force to seize it.

Cheng "gladly accepted" the invitation to lead a delegation to China, her party said in a statement, confirming a Xinhua report.

Cheng "looks forward to joint efforts by both parties to advance the peaceful development of cross-strait relations, promote cross-strait exchanges and cooperation, and work for peace in the Taiwan Strait and greater well-being for people on both sides," the statement said.

Xinhua said the delegation would visit "the Chinese mainland" from April 7-12, but did not specify where or if Cheng would meet with Xi, which she has been publicly pushing



for. The KMT statement also offered few details.

There are concerns within the KMT that a Cheng-Xi meeting could trigger voter backlash in Taiwan's district elections later this year.

While the KMT has long supported friendlier relations with Beijing, Cheng has been accused by President Lai Ching-te's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) of doing Beijing's bidding by stalling the government's defense spending plans.

But speaking to foreign media last week, Cheng said talks with Xi would carry "significant symbolic meaning" and could be a "foundation" to peaceful relations across the Taiwan Strait.

"I do not believe a single meeting can resolve all the issues that have been accumulating for nearly a century," Cheng said.

"But... I hope I can successfully build such a bridge."

## World Cup risks being 'stage for repression': Amnesty



London, Mar 30: Amnesty International warned this summer's football World Cup, spread across three North American countries, risks becoming a "stage for repression" in a report published Monday.

The London-based human rights organization's report - "Humanity Must Win" - called on both FIFA and host countries the US, Canada and Mexico to take urgent action to protect fans, players and other communities.

FIFA has promised a tournament where everyone "feels safe, included and free to exercise their rights."

But Amnesty said that pledge sits in "stark contrast" to conditions on the ground in all three host nations, especially the US, which hosts three-quarters of the 104 matches.

Amnesty described the US as facing

a "human rights emergency" under the Trump administration, marked by mass deportations, arbitrary arrests and what it called "paramilitary-style" Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operations.

The acting director of ICE said last month the agency will be "a key part of the overall security apparatus for the World Cup."

This comes despite anger at the killing of two American citizens who were protesting aggressive ICE raids in Minneapolis in January.

"Pay the price" Amnesty said none of the published host city plans address how fans or local communities will be protected from ICE operations.

Fans from four nations taking part this summer - Ivory Coast, Haiti, Iran and Senegal - face US travel bans and LGBTQ+ fan groups from England and across Europe have said they will not attend matches in the US, citing risks to transgender supporters in particular.

"This World Cup is very far from the 'medium risk' tournament that FIFA once judged it to be, and urgent efforts are needed to bridge the growing gap between the tournament's original promise and today's reality," the report said.

# MOVIES WATCHLIST

Tuesday, 31 March

**THE DHURANDHAR**

AN ADITYA DHAR FILM

WRITTEN, DIRECTED & PRODUCED BY ADITYA DHAR

PRODUCED BY JETSI DEZHPHARE

PRODUCED BY LOKESH DHAR

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**DHURANDHAR THE REVENGE (A)**

HINDI - 10:05 AM, 11:45 AM, 04:15 PM, 05:45 PM

HINDI ATMOS - 02:10 PM, 06:50 PM

**PROJECT HAIL MARY**

Starring Tom Peck

Original, compelling and fun

Ensal Cine

Her's great work to date!

Brandon Sanderson

**ANDY WEIR**

**PROJECT HAIL MARY (U/A)**

ENGLISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

10:45 AM, 02:35 PM

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